

STUDENT COMPLAINTS SYSTEM: PRINCIPLES & PROCEDURE



PURPOSE:

The University is committed to high standards of service and the quality of teaching and learning. However, it is accepted that students may have complaints relating to their course or the services and facilities provided by the University. There may also be times when an issue may arise with other students or members of staff. The University takes such complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination and in a confidential manner. The University is committed to continuously improving our standards and constructively handling any complaints, taking any reasonable action to ensure that similar situations do not occur in the future.

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved by the informal process.

PRINCIPLES:

This complaints system is designed for all our students. This includes students who are

- currently enrolled (undergraduate and postgraduate)
- studying University accredited programmes in Partner Institutions.
- on Placement
- engaged in work-based learning
- on an approved leave of absence
- recent students (where the complaint relates to concerns about service provided within 3 months of the student leaving the University)

A complaint, under this system, is defined as the expression of concern or dissatisfaction with a service provided by the University, the provision of a course or related academic service.

The system does not cover the following, for which separate procedures exist:-

- Appeals against the decision of an Award Assessment Board must be made through the Regulation and Procedure for Academic Appeals. [Available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/>] This applies to all appeals relating to Assessment, Progression and Awards.*
- Allegations of harassment or bullying are handled through a separate procedure and overseen by the Equality & Diversity Unit. [Details are available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/>]*

- iii. *Appeals against the decision of a University Disciplinary Hearing. [See the separate procedure on the University website at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/>]*
- iv. *Appeals against the decision of a University Fitness to Practice Hearing. See the separate procedure on the University website at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/>*
- v. *Complaints about the Students' Union. These should be made directly to the President of the Students' Union. [Contact Information is available at www.wolvesunion.org]*
- vi. *Complaints about Admission to Study. These should be referred directly to the Head of Admissions. See the separate procedure for Admissions at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/policies-and-regulations/>*
- vii. *Also see the Code of practice for postgraduate research programmes. And Research Degree regulations, as relevant. Copies are available on-line at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/governance/legal-information/policies-and-regulations/academic-regulations/>*

Where a complaint is submitted that also includes concerns relating to the procedures above, the Head of Conduct and Appeals will review the complaint and apply the relevant procedures accordingly. The student will be notified in the outcome of the complaint which procedures have been applied.

The University will, where appropriate, seek to identify alternative arrangements for resolving complaints which may be additional to this procedure.

HELP & GUIDANCE:

Students are encouraged to seek help and guidance before and during the complaints procedure. The Students' Union operates an independent Advice & Support Centre where expert, professional staff and elected sabbatical officers are available to give impartial advice on the type of complaint, where to go for help and what to do next. Contact Information is available at: www.wolvesunion.org/advice

University Staff members are also available for advice, help and guidance, both in regard to the complaints procedure and who to complain to – and also in providing solutions and informal resolutions to particular problems.

Where to go for help and guidance: –

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| <p>Faculty Student Services: Located at each campus with direct contact information and on-line help available through e:Vision. https://smsweb.wlv.ac.uk/urd/sits.urd/run/siw_lcm</p> | <p>For advice and information relating to the organisation and management of your course. www.wlv.ac.uk/evision</p> |
| <p>By Academic Faculty: Contact Information is available on line at www.wlv.ac.uk/currentstudents [or follow link from home page to Faculty and Service Departments for your School]</p> | <p>To contact your Faculty, personal tutors, module leaders and other subject support – for advice and information specific to your course, or with other academic matters.</p> |
| <p>University of Wolverhampton Students' Union: www.wolvesunion.org</p> | <p>Including the Students' Union Advice & Support Centre. advice@wolvesunion.org 01902 322038</p> |
| <p>Student Enabling Centre ssw@wlv.ac.uk 01902 321074</p> | <p>The Support Services Team is responsible for managing the support arrangements for students with sensory, physical impairments.</p> |
| <p>Equality & Diversity Unit: Will Cooling 01902 321182 w.cooling@wlv.ac.uk www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity</p> | <p>Advice and guidance relating to equality and diversity issues, including – unfair treatment, bullying, racial, sexual or any other harassment.</p> |

THE INFORMAL PROCEDURE:

Most complaints can be resolved informally, and as close to the origin of the complaint as possible. This is usually the most useful and effective means of resolving a complaint and should be the first recourse. In reviewing a Formal Complaint, consideration will be given, where appropriate, to the extent to which a complainant raised the matter at an informal level. A constructive approach by all parties will most often provide a corrective/preventative solution or an explanation of what has happened and why further action is not appropriate.

In most cases a personal response to the complaint, by staff, may be adequate. But if appropriate, or where requested, a written response (by e-mail or letter) may be provided. Any response should highlight that the complainant has the option to escalate their complaint, should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome, to the formal complaints procedure. In responding to an informal complaint the University standards on the timeliness of acknowledgements, referrals and responses should be also adhered to.

If the complaint is related to an academic issue, in the first instance a student should discuss the matter with their Personal Tutor, Module Leader or Supervisor. The student may then be referred to the Course Leader or the appropriate senior academic staff member / Dean of School/Faculty.

If the matter relates to a service department (for example, Learning Centre's or Facilities, including Catering or Inter-site transport) then it should be discussed with the appropriate manager. If a student is in doubt as to whom to refer their complaint, they should seek advice from any member of staff within that service or the Students' Union.

The Students' Union may contact the relevant University staff on their behalf.

Student Representatives - the University fully supports a wide ranging system of student representation at all levels within the University. An effective and proactive way of addressing informal complaints and concerns may be to raise these with a nominated student representative. Student representatives can most effectively raise the shared concerns of students on a range of issues (informally, anonymously and collectively). Student representatives have regular access to senior staff members through, Course Committees, Student Experience Committees, School Councils or in the case of Postgraduate-research students Student Management Boards.

The Student Voice (through student representatives) is carefully considered, reviewed and listened to within the University. For further information about how to contact the most appropriate nominated student representative you should contact the Students' Union.

THE FORMAL PROCEDURE:

If, having followed the informal route the student believes that their concerns have not been properly addressed or where the complaint is particularly serious or confidential then the formal procedure set out below should be followed.

Group complaints:

This procedure can be used for group complaints. The group should nominate one person to act as spokesperson and primary contact. All group members must be identified in the complaint and must demonstrate that they have been affected by the issue which is the subject of the complaint. All group members must confirm in writing that they agree to the nominated spokesperson acting on their behalf, using the "Group Complaint Form".

Confidentiality

All complaints will be considered with the highest level of confidentiality that can be maintained whilst allowing for a fair and effective investigation. Disclosure is normally necessary to enable the complaint to be progressed and students should be aware that where disclosure is not permitted this may prevent an effective investigation. However if a student does not wish the details of their complaint to be disclosed this must be clearly stated on the Complaint Form. In such circumstances the Head/Deputy Head of Conduct and Appeals will contact the student to discuss the implications of this for the investigation.

The University takes all complaints seriously and the formal procedure provides for independent investigation of the substance of any claims. Students will be protected by the University from any recrimination or victimisation resulting from their complaint.

Third Party complaints

Complaints should be raised by the student rather than by any third party. Where exceptionally a student wishes to raise a complaint through a third party the University will require a signed written statement to that effect from the student. This includes complaints raised by the student's parents, spouse or fee payer.

Anonymous Complaints

The University will not accept anonymous complaints. Anonymous complaints do not allow for an effective investigation to be conducted and a resolution reached. Normally therefore, no action will be taken where a complaint is submitted anonymously. However the University reserves the right to exceptionally investigate an anonymous complaint where this is deemed appropriate.

Complaints made to the Offices of the Vice Chancellor. Complaints made direct to the Offices of the Vice-Chancellor will be acknowledged and referred to the Conduct and Appeals Unit for consideration within these procedures.

Malicious or Vexatious Complaints

The University will not tolerate complaints that, upon investigation, are interpreted as malicious, vexatious, deliberately misleading or frivolous. Under such circumstances complainants may be referred to the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

STAGE ONE PROCEDURE:

The complaint should be set down in writing on the formal complaints form, available from <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/>

The completed form should be submitted to the Conduct & Appeals Unit and an acknowledgement of receipt will be provided within 3 working days.

Letters of complaint (not using the complaints form) that arrive at any other point, should be forwarded to the Conduct & Appeals Unit – where they will be treated as a formal complaint at Stage One.

For good practical reasons, complaints should be identified and investigated as soon as possible after the problem becomes known. Complaints lodged by current students **more than three months** after the event will only be considered in those circumstances where there is a demonstrable reasonable cause for the delay.

Complaints will not be considered from recent graduates or other former students any later than three months after the problem becomes known and/or if three months have expired from the point of formal notification of the conferment of the award or other reason for the expiry of enrolment.

Submitting a complaint –

The University would prefer that complaints are received using the FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM provided for student use (individual or groups) at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/> so as to ensure that all of the relevant details are collected. The formal complaint can be submitted via conductandappeals@wlv.ac.uk or via:

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| Conduct & Appeals Unit |
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| Registry, University of Wolverhampton MX Building, Camp Street City Campus Molineux Wolverhampton WV1 1AD Tel: 01902 323614/2079 |
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The complainant should expect their complaint to be acknowledged as having been received in no more than three working days.

The complainant will normally receive a substantive response within 28 working days. This length of time may be necessary to enable the Conduct & Appeals Unit to investigate the matter with appropriate colleagues. This may take longer during vacation periods. The student may be asked to discuss the matter in person but will always receive a written response. If after this stage the complaint still remains unresolved to their satisfaction, the student may decide to move on to Stage Two (Review) of the procedure.

The student must notify the Conduct and Appeals Unit, in writing, of their intent to raise the complaint at Stage Two within 20 working days of the date of written notification of the outcome of Stage One.

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| CONTACT: Conduct and Appeals Unit |
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| Registry, University of Wolverhampton MX Building, Camp Street City Campus Molineux Wolverhampton WV1 1AD Tel: 01902 323614/2079 |
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| e-mail: Conductandappeals@wlv.ac.uk |
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STAGE TWO (REVIEW):

The Head of Conduct and Appeals will review the case and may request additional documentation to determine whether it is appropriate for the complaint to be considered by a resolution panel.

[A] If the Head of Conduct and Appeals considers that the case requires further review then a Resolution Panel will be convened.

This will consist of three persons:

A Dean/or their nominee from another Faculty to that which the student belongs (Chair)
A representative of the Students' Union
A senior member of staff from another school or service department

The Resolution Panel will be convened by the Conduct & Appeals Unit which shall prepare the relevant supporting documentation. The Head of the Conduct & Appeals Unit will be in attendance to support and inform the panel, with a note taker.

The Resolution Panel will investigate the complaint fully. The student will have the right to present their case in person or in writing to the Panel. Any University staff members who are the subject of the complaint will also have the right to present their case to the Panel.

The student, as complainant, is entitled to be accompanied at this stage of the process by a person of their own choosing.

The Panel at the end of its deliberation will either uphold the complaint in whole or in part, make recommendation for any remedies to be applied or dismiss the complaint.

It is anticipated that the Resolution Panel process will take no more than 28 working days to conclude. At the conclusion a further and final written notification will be issued to the student, by the Chair of the Panel in liaison with the Head of Conduct & Appeals. This may take the form of a completion of procedures letter.

[B] It may be determined that previous investigations by the University have been sufficient and that there is no merit in further consideration. Where this is determined the Head of Conduct and Appeals will issue a written notification of the outcome of this review in no more than 28 working days. This may take the form of a completion of procedures letter.

OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR:

If having exhausted all stages of the University's internal complaints procedure, the student considers that the University has failed to consider and respond to their complaints appropriately, they can refer the case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). This office provides an independent scheme for the review of student complaints.

In order to refer their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator they will require a Completion of Procedures Letter. A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued when all applicable stages of the complaints procedure have been exhausted. The letter will be issued in accordance with the format prescribed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

Details of the rules of the scheme and information about how to make an application for review by the OIA are available at their website - www.oiahe.org.uk.

DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATORY NOTES:

Working Days are defined as normal working days in the University Calendar. This does not include those days where the University is closed down for holiday periods or public holidays. It should be understood that investigations may take longer during vacation periods. The University will always endeavour to keep complainants informed about any delays to published timescales where there is a good and practical reason for the delay.

Collaborative Provision

For students studying for a University of Wolverhampton award at a partner college, complaints relating to a specific service provided directly by the college should be addressed through the college procedures in the first instance.

Complaints relating to the operation of the course should be dealt with under the University's procedure. The informal stage of the procedure should be taken up with the course leader in the first instance.

MONITORING & QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The University will ensure that complaints are handled consistently and fairly. To ensure that complaints are used as a mechanism for continuous improvement and quality enhancement an annual report to Academic Board on the type and volumes of all complaints will be prepared by the Conduct & Appeals Unit. This will include an analysis of the themes and outcomes.

Confidentiality and anonymity of complainants will be maintained throughout the monitoring process and information will be held in accordance with the University's obligations under the Data Protection Act.

| DOCUMENT CONTROL: | |
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| VERSION 3.0 | |
| Author: | Head of Conduct & Appeals. |
| Approved date: | JUNE 2013 VIA Academic Board. |
| Approved by: | Student Experience Committee > Academic Board. |
| Review date: | JULY 2018. |

FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM: FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENT COMPLAINTS

The University is committed to high standards of service and the quality of teaching and learning. However, it is accepted that students may have complaints relating to their course or the services and facilities provided by the University. The University takes such complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination and in a confidential manner. The University is committed to continuously improving our standards and constructively handling any complaints, taking any reasonable action to ensure that similar situations do not occur in the future.

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved by the informal process. In most cases, the University's complaints system requires that complainants will have attempted to resolve the complaint by informal means, before raising a formal complaint. Complainants should have read and understood the University Complaints Procedure which is available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/>

RAISING A FORMAL COMPLAINT:

The following details must be completed on this form and we would ask that you provide as much detail as is relevant including any dates, times and witnesses to any act or incident. Supporting documentation may also be included where relevant.

| YOUR DETAILS - | PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY |
|------------------|----------------------|
| NAME: | |
| CONTACT ADDRESS: | |
| CONTACT PHONE: | |
| CONTACT E-MAIL: | |
| STUDENT NUMBER: | |

DETAILS OF YOUR COMPLAINT: *Please describe the nature of your complaint. (Attach separate sheets if necessary)*

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| Details of your complaint continued... |
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| Who did you approach to resolve your complaint informally? |
| <p><i>Include the staff members name, post, school/department and date raised:</i></p> <p><i>What action was taken to resolve your complaint:</i></p> |

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| How do you propose the complaint could be resolved to your satisfaction? |
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| Your Signature: | DATE COMPLETED: |
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| Where to return this form to: | What happens next: |
| Conduct & Appeals Unit Registry University of Wolverhampton MX Building, Camp Street City Campus Molineux Wolverhampton WV1 1AD e-mail: conductandappeals@wlv.ac.uk | You should receive a formal acknowledgment of your complaint within the next 3 working days. You will then normally receive a substantive response within 28 working days. |

FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM: FOR GROUP STUDENT COMPLAINTS

The University is committed to high standards of service and the quality of teaching and learning. However, it is accepted that students may have complaints relating to their course or the services and facilities provided by the University. The University takes such complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination and in a confidential manner. The University is committed to continuously improving our standards and constructively handling any complaints, taking any reasonable action to ensure that similar situations do not occur in the future.

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved by the informal process. In most cases, the University's complaints system requires that complainants will have attempted to resolve the complaint by informal means, before raising a formal complaint. Complainants should have read and understood the University Complaints Procedure which is available at <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/conduct-and-appeals/>

RAISING A FORMAL COMPLAINT:

The following details must be completed on this form and we would ask that you provide as much detail as is relevant including any dates, times and witnesses to any act or incident. Supporting documentation may also be included where relevant.

For group complaints, the group of students raising the complaint should nominate an individual to liaise with the University on their behalf and to act as spokesperson. This will be the Group Representative.

This form should be completed by the Group Representative.

| GROUP REPRESENTATIVE | PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| NAME: | |
| CONTACT ADDRESS: | |
| CONTACT PHONE: | |
| CONTACT E-MAIL: | |
| STUDENT NUMBER: | |

DETAILS OF YOUR COMPLAINT: *Please describe the nature of your complaint. (Attach separate sheets if necessary)*

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Who did you approach to resolve your complaint informally?

Include the staff members name, post, school/department and date raised:

What action was taken to resolve your complaint:

How do you propose the complaint could be resolved to your satisfaction?

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GROUP CONSENT: *To be completed by all students bringing the group complaint*

By signing this form you are confirming that:

- You have personally been affected by the complaint detailed above
- You give your consent to the complaint being handled collectively
- You give your consent for the named Group Representative to liaise with the University on your behalf and to act as your spokesperson.

| Student ID | Full Name | Signature |
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(Insert rows or attach separate sheet if necessary)

Declaration by Group Representative:

I declare that I have been nominated on behalf of the students listed above to be the spokesperson in relation to this complaint.

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| Your Signature: | DATE COMPLETED: |
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| Where to return this form to: | What happens next: |
| Conduct & Appeals Unit University of Wolverhampton Registry, MX Building, Camp Street City Campus Molineux Wolverhampton WV1 1LY e-mail: conductandappeals@wlv.ac.uk | You should receive a formal acknowledgment of your complaint within the next 3 working days. You will then normally receive a substantive response within 28 working days. |