



Student Complaints Procedure Guidance for Students/Apprentices

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Introduction

While the University seeks to ensure that all students have a positive experience throughout their time studying and living here, it acknowledges that sometimes there are occasions where things go wrong, or you may feel dissatisfied with an element of the University's provision. This procedure is designed to ensure that any student complaints are considered in a fair, reasonable, and timely manner.

The University, in developing this procedure, has taken into account the provisions of:

- The [Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals](#) published by the OIA
- The UK Quality Code for Higher Education's [Advice and Guidance on Concerns, Complaints, and Appeals](#)
- Competition and Markets Authority [Higher Education Providers: Consumer Law Advice](#)

The University is also mindful of its legal obligations and duty of care to students with one or more protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Who can use this procedure?

This procedure is available for use by any Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Research or Apprenticeship students currently enrolled at the University, or who have graduated within the last three months.

Any past students who wish to submit their complaint more than three months after graduation must provide a valid, evidenced reason why they were unable to raise the issue at an earlier point in time.

What can you complain about?

A student, or group of students, can use this procedure to express their dissatisfaction with the University's action or lack of action in a certain situation, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University.

Some examples of issues which may be eligible for consideration under the Student Complaints Procedure include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to meet obligations set out in course materials, student handbooks, or the Terms and Conditions of the University;
- Misleading or incorrect information in promotional or informational materials, including on the University's website;
- Concerns about the delivery of a programme, including teaching or administration;
- Poor quality of facilities, resources, or services provided by the University
 - This can include non-academic services, such as the Library or particular facilities/resources not directly related to your study;
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination by students or members of staff.

- For more information about bullying, harassment, or discrimination, the University recommends that you also consult the Bullying and Harassment Procedure.

Where a complaint concerns the behaviour of members of staff, the Complaint Handler will seek advice from the University's Human Resources Department on how to handle that aspect of the complaint. This may result in the complaint being referred to the Human Resources Department for consideration under the relevant HR policies and procedures.

This list is not exhaustive and other matters may be considered under this procedure if appropriate.

What can't you complaint about?

There are some issues which are ineligible for consideration under the Student Complaints Procedure. These include:

- Academic Judgement
 - The University is unable to consider complaints about academic judgement under its Student Complaints Procedure. Academic Judgement is considered to be a decision in which only the opinion of an academic with expertise is sufficient to reach an informed outcome. For example, decisions about the following may be matters of academic judgement:
 - Assessment grades/marks or degree classifications;
 - Content of feedback;
 - Content of lectures or seminars;
 - How best to teach a certain subject;
 - Research methodology;
 - Professional Suitability.
 - If you raise an issue about a matter of academic judgement, the Student Complaints Officer may ask the relevant Department for their comments on the issue as part of the Stage 2 investigation. They may also be able to consider other related matters, such as whether the University has provided what it promised in its published course materials, or whether it has followed appropriate procedures properly.
- Student Employment/Placements
 - If your complaint relates to your employment, even if this employment is with the University, this should be raised via alternative methods either through the University's Human Resources Department, or the University's Job Shop depending on which is most appropriate.
 - If you are on a professional programme, where placements are an integrated and assessed element of your programme, you should report any complaints relating to the placement to the provider in the first instance, unless it directly

relates to communications or interactions with the University. You may, however, also wish to inform your Personal Tutor in order to obtain appropriate support.

- If you are completing a 'placement year' which is not essential to your programme of study, you should report any complaints to the placement provider rather than the University.
- Matters considered under other procedures
 - The University's complaints procedure should not be used for any of the following:
 - Review of Admissions decisions – for this, you should refer to the [Admissions Complaints Procedure](#) or contact admissions@brunel.ac.uk
 - Appeals against Disciplinary or Misconduct outcomes – for this, you should engage with the appeal process set out in [Senate Regulation 6](#);
 - Appeals against Academic Appeals outcomes – for this, you should engage with the review process set out in [Senate Regulation 12](#);
 - Appeals against Professional Suitability outcomes – for this, you should engage with the appeals process set out in [Senate Regulation 14](#);
 - Decisions made under the Fitness to Study procedure – for this, you should engage with the appeal process set out in [Senate Regulation 11](#);
 - Complaints relating to the Union of Brunel Students or associated activities – for this, you should refer to the [Student's Union website](#);
 - Complaints about Brunel Medical Centre should, in the first instance, be raised in line with the [Medical Centre Complaints Procedure](#).
 - Decisions which are made during these procedures cannot be overturned by the Student Complaints Procedure. If you have received a Completion of Procedures Letter from any of these processes, your complaint should usually be submitted to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, rather than to the University's Complaints Procedure.

When you can complain

Stage 1 – Early Resolution

You should submit your Stage 1 Complaint to your College/Service Area within 3 months of the incident about which you are complaining. If you are seeking to submit a complaint outside of this timeframe, you must provide a valid, evidenced reason in your complaint.

Your Stage 1 Complaint should normally take no longer than 14 calendar days to conclude.

Stage 2 – Formal

You should submit your Stage 2 Complaint to the University within 21 calendar days of the conclusion of your Stage 1 Complaint and (where possible) within 3 months of the incident about which you are complaining. If you submit a complaint outside of this timeline, you should provide a valid, evidenced reason in your complaint.

Your Stage 2 Complaint should normally take no longer than 49 calendar days to conclude.

Stage 3 – Review

You should submit your Stage 3 Complaint within 14 calendar days of the conclusion of your Stage 2 Complaint. If you submit a complaint outside of this timeline, you should provide a valid, evidenced reason in your complaint.

Your Stage 3 Complaint should normally take no longer than 21 calendar days to conclude.

Group Complaints

It should be noted that we will not accept complaints made on behalf of another student. However, if a group of students have experienced the same issue, you can submit a group complaint. When submitting a group complaint, you should ensure that:

- All students have provided their names and student numbers and have signed the Stage 2 Complaint Form; and
- One of the students has been clearly nominated as the Group Lead
 - The Student Complaints Officer will only communicate with the Group Lead about the complaint, and they will be expected to distribute these communications to the Group. The University cannot be held responsible if the nominated Group Lead fails to communicate any information.

Confidentiality and Anonymous Complaints

The University is not normally able to investigate complaints which are submitted anonymously, or where the complainant is not willing for their details to be known by others, because this may impede the Student Complaint Officer's ability to investigate the complaint effectively.

By submitting a complaint, the University considers you to be giving permission for us to inform relevant members of staff of your complaint in order for it to be effectively investigated. The full details of your complaint and evidence submitted will remain confidential as far as the Student Complaints Officer is able to, but in many cases it will be necessary for some elements of your complaint to be shared.

If you have any objections to details of your complaint being shared with any particular member of staff, this should be clearly indicated on your Complaints Form, and the Student Complaints Officer will discuss with you the extent to which they can consider your case in this case.

While the University may not be able to provide you an individual, specific outcome if you wish for your complaint to be considered anonymously, the University may be able to provide general feedback to relevant parties on the area about which you are complaining.

Fair Dealing

The University seeks to ensure that any formal investigation into your complaint is handled in an independent and impartial manner by someone who has not previously been involved in your case. You should not suffer any disadvantage as a consequence of making a genuine complaint, and if you believe that you are being disadvantaged by any other student or member of staff as a result of making a complaint, you should contact the Student Complaints Officer immediately.

Behaviour

You should be aware that the University expects students engaging in the complaints procedure to act in a respectful manner towards the staff involved. The University has a responsibility to protect its staff as well as its students against unacceptable or abusive behaviour and may suspend or terminate your complaint if you behave in a manner that the University considers unacceptable.

The University also reserves the right to terminate its consideration of your complaint at any point if it considers it to be frivolous, vexatious, or unreasonable. Examples of such complaints include:

- Those which are obsessive, harassing, or repetitive;
- Insistence on pursuing unreasonable complaints and/or non-realistic outcomes;
- Insistence on pursuing what may be a reasonable complaint in an unacceptable or unreasonable manner;
- Those which are designed to cause annoyance or disruption;
- Those including demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value.

If your behaviour towards any member of staff during the complaints process is considered to be in breach of the University's rules of student misconduct, you may be referred for disciplinary action under Senate Regulation 6.

Evidence

It is important that you provide evidence in support of your complaint, otherwise the Student Complaints Officer may be limited in the extent to which they can investigate your complaint. Evidence can include, but is not limited to:

- Email correspondence
- Text or Social Media messages
- Receipts or invoices
- Letters from a medical professional
- Witness statements
- Procedure or guidance documents

Evidence should be submitted alongside your complaints form, but you are welcome to submit additional evidence during the investigation of your complaint. However, you should be aware that doing so may result in your complaint outcome being delayed.

Audio or video recordings are not permissible as evidence unless express consent was given by all parties involved in the recording for it to be used as complaint evidence.

If your preferred remedy includes a claim for actual financial loss that you have suffered as a result of the actions of the University, you will need to provide documentary evidence of this loss, such as payment receipts.

You should note that the University reserves the right to investigate the authenticity of any documents submitted in support of a complaint. Submission of forged documents may lead to a complaint being suspended and action being taken under [Senate Regulation 6](#).

Legal Proceedings

While the University does not encourage this, you may choose to pursue legal action relating to the issues relating to your complaint. However, you should be aware that the University reserves the right to request that legal proceedings be suspended if its internal procedures have not been completed. You should also be aware of the position of [the Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#) on such matters.

We also do not usually expect students to access legal support or advice in order to pursue a complaint through the Student Complaints Procedure.

Advice and Support

The University appreciates that submitting a complaint may be a difficult and stressful experience for students and you may require welfare support, or advice on your complaint submission. This support can be obtained from the following places:

- The Union Advice Service (UAS) – The UAS in the Student’s Union provides free, impartial advice to students on a number of University issues, processes and procedures, including the Student Complaints Procedure. Information about the UAS can be found at their [website](#) and you can contact them by filling out an [Enquiry Form](#).
- Student Support and Welfare – If you require any additional welfare support, support with a disability, or counselling during the process of submitting your complaint, you may wish to contact the [Student Support and Welfare Team](#). They can be contacted by emailing studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk or by telephone on 01895 268268.

Mediation

The University has a free mediation service run by the Student Support Team to help resolve issues quickly with an independent and impartial mediator. If you would like to find out more about mediation, or if you think mediation may help resolve your complaint, information can be found [here](#) or by contacting the Student Support and Welfare Team on studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk.

If you engage with mediation but are not able to resolve the issue, you will still be entitled to submit a complaint. You are also welcome to put your complaint on hold at any point in the procedure to engage with mediation, and continue with your complaint afterwards if you are unable to resolve the issue.

Disclosure

The University operates a disclosure policy, meaning that you can request a copy of all the information and evidence considered during the investigation of your complaint at any stage. To obtain this, you should make a request in writing to student-complaints@brunel.ac.uk. However, some documents may have information deleted if it relates to and other students or third parties.