

## Student Complaints Policy and Procedure Policy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University is dedicated to ensuring that all students receive a high quality experience and welcomes comments and suggestions throughout the academic year. However, if you are dissatisfied with any University service, you may decide to make a complaint.

### 2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1 Through the *Student Complaints Procedure* below, the University aims to investigate complaints in a timely, transparent and fair manner.
- 2.2 The University will seek to resolve the matter at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 2.3 Complaints that require particularly swift action will be identified quickly.
- 2.4 The University will investigate fairly and thoroughly.
- 2.5 Each party to a complaint will be given an opportunity to present their case.
- 2.6 If there are allegations of a criminal offence, the University may suspend its own investigations until the outcome of any criminal proceedings are known.
- 2.7 All complaints will be treated with the utmost confidentiality as far as reasonably practicable.
- 2.8 No student will be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint. However, if it materialises that a complaint was not genuine, the University may consider disciplinary procedures.

### 3. Who can complain?

- 3.1 This procedure applies to all registered students of the University of Buckingham.
- 3.2 It also applies to those who have left or graduated within the 3 months prior to lodging the complaint.
- 3.3 Where the complaint involves a group of students, all correspondence must be handled by one designated student representative.
- 3.4 Anonymous complaints will not be considered.
- 3.5 Complaints lodged by third parties will not be considered.

### 4. What complaints are not covered by the Student Complaints Procedure:

- 4.1 **Academic Appeals:** If you are seeking a review of a decision about student progression, assessment or awards, please refer to the *Academic Appeals – Policy and Procedure*
- 4.2 **Bullying and Harassment:** Any concerns relating to bullying and harassment should be raised through the *Student Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy* and *Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure*

### 5. Sources of advice and information

- 5.1 Before making a complaint, you may wish to seek advice from one of the following departments who can explain the procedure to you:
  - a) Personal Tutor
  - b) Registry
  - c) Students First
  - d) The Student Conduct Manager's Office

## Procedure

### 6. Informal Stage

- 6.1 In most cases, it may be possible for issues to be addressed at an early stage by discussing them with a member of staff in the department concerned. For example, if you have an academic concern, this can be discussed with your Personal Tutor, Subject Tutor, Programme Director or Research Supervisor; if you have a concern about your accommodation, this can be discussed with your Residential Assistant or the Accommodation Officer.
- 6.2 If you do not feel able to raise it with one of these staff members, you may wish to discuss it with a member of staff from Students First or the Student Conduct Manager's Office.
- 6.3 Issues must be raised within one month of taking place and the staff member will aim to resolve the issue, where practicable, within 2 weeks.
- 6.4 Any delay to this timing will be communicated to you by the staff member you have consulted.
- 6.5 You are advised to keep a record of any informal contact with staff.
- 6.6 Staff will keep a record of action taken in response.

### 7. Formal Stage

If your concerns remain unaddressed after the informal stage, or if resolution is not possible due to the complexity or seriousness of the case, you can lodge a formal complaint as follows:

- 7.1 The Student Complaints Form must be completed and submitted to the Student Complaints Officer ([student-complaints@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:student-complaints@buckingham.ac.uk)), together with evidence that you have previously raised the issue informally.
- 7.2 The Student Complaints Officer will check the eligibility of the complaint to ensure that the *Student Complaints Procedure* is applicable.

#### *Eligible complaints:*

- 7.3 You will be provided with written acknowledgement by the Student Complaints Officer of receipt of your complaint within 5 days of submitting your form.
- 7.4 The complaint will be delegated to an appropriate member of staff for investigation.
- 7.5 You may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint where an administrator will be present to take notes.
- 7.6 If you wish, a fellow registered student or a member of staff may attend the meeting with you.
- 7.7 The University seeks to resolve all formal complaints **within one calendar month** of receipt of a Student Complaints Form.
- 7.8 Any delay to this timing will be communicated to you.
- 7.9 You will be notified of the outcome by the staff member investigating your complaint in a Completion of Investigation Letter, detailing the decision and an explanation for it.

#### *Ineligible complaints:*

- 7.10 You will be directed to the relevant procedure which may include the *Academic Appeals – Policy and Procedure* or the *Student Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy*
- 7.11 Malicious or vexatious complaints will not be considered.
- 7.12 If a complaint is deemed to be malicious, frivolous, vexatious or ineligible, the Registrar and Director of Professional Services will inform the student.
- 7.13 In such circumstances, the student will have the right of appeal to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor.
- 7.14 Such appeals must be made in writing to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor within 14 days of the decision of the Registrar and Director of Professional Services.
- 7.15 Any delay to this timing will be communicated to you.
- 7.16 The decision of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor will be final.

## 8. Review Stage

- 8.1 If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of the investigation into your complaint, you have the right to ask for a review of your case **within 2 weeks** of receiving your Completion of Investigation Letter.
- 8.2 You will need to complete The Student Complaints Request for Review Form and submit it to the Student Appeals and Complaints Officer at [student-complaints@buckingham.ac.uk](mailto:student-complaints@buckingham.ac.uk).
- 8.3 No new grounds may be raised, but new evidence can be submitted.
- 8.4 You may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint where an administrator will be present to take notes.
- 8.5 If you wish, a fellow registered student or a member of staff may attend the meeting with you.
- 8.6 The Registrar and Director of Professional Services will review the case **within one month**.
- 8.7 Any delay to this timing will be communicated to you.
- 8.8 She may uphold the complaint in part or whole and take appropriate action or dismiss the complaint if there is no case to answer.
- 8.9 If the Registrar and Director of Professional Services has a conflict of interest, the case will be referred to  
the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor for review.
- 8.10 You will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter from Registry informing you of the outcome and your right to refer the complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) if you are still unsatisfied with the outcome.
- 8.11 Registry will keep confidential records of all formal complaints that have been lodged.

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Related Documents:

*Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure*

*Student Ant-Bullying and Harassment Policy*

*Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure*