**Complaints Policy**

**1. Definitions**

*Complaint*

For the purposes of this policy a student complaint, as defined by the OIA, is "an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a university's action or lack of action, or about the service provided by or on behalf of the university."

*Feedback*

A student may provide feedback which will be useful to a school or service when reviewing its policies and operations, without invoking this policy.  Students are encouraged to provide feedback at a Local Level to the appropriate school or service provider in a prompt and constructive manner.

**2. Overview of the Student Complaint Procedure**

There are 3 Levels to the University complaints procedure:

Level 1: Local Level

Level 2: Head of Unit review

Level 3: Principal/Registrar Review

After the internal University processes have been exhausted, complainants have the opportunity to have their complaint independently reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

**3. Who can use the Student Complaint Procedure?**

All Amity students and recent graduates can use the Student Complaint Procedure.

This complaints procedure may only be used by an individual who is, or has been, registered as a student of the University and who is not recorded as being a leaver (or, if they are a leaver, is complaining about events that occurred before they were a leaver, within the permitted timescales).  Applicants wishing to make a complaint should address the Complaints and Appeals Procedure for Applicants.

A group of students may use this procedure to make a collective complaint provided that one student identifies him/herself as the main contact for purposes of communication.

Anyone wishing to make a complaint is encouraged to do so personally.

Anonymous complaints will not be considered unless there are exceptional and evidence-based reasons to do so.  In many circumstances, raising a concern anonymously could impede investigation and communication of the outcome.

**4. What issues constitute grounds for complaint under this policy?**

The subject of the complaint should relate specifically to one or more of the following, or comparable issues:

* Failure of the University to meet obligations including those outlined in course/student handbooks
* Misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by the University
* Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, supervision or administration.
* Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by the University
* Complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of the University
* Complaints relating to allegations of bullying, harassment or victimisation by members of staff

Complaints about the behaviour of students towards other students are within the scope of the University Code of Discipline for Students.

**5. What issues do not constitute grounds for complaint under this policy?**

Challenges to the academic judgement of a member of staff. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator will not interfere with the operation of a University's academic judgement.  Dissatisfaction with a mark and/or the academic judgement of the University is not covered by the University's policies.  Cases where complaints are upheld and there has been a clear impact on an academic outcome may, however, lead to an academic conclusion e.g. allow a student a further attempt at an assessment.

Cases better suited to consideration under the Academic Appeals Policy including:

* A concern about a decision made by an academic body regarding student progression, academic assessment and award.
* A concern about a decision made under specific regulations, such as fitness to practise
* A concern about a decision relating to an extenuating circumstances claim on the basis of a procedural irregularity

Disagreement with a policy/regulation rather than its application.  In this instance, the matter should be raised by the student with the relevant student representative to raise it at the Student Committee or another appropriate committee or group.

A matter of public interest which may be better suited to Whistleblowing Policy (add hyperlink).

Where a student raises issues which do not fall neatly into the category of either complaint or academic appeal, the University will notify the student which specific issues will be considered under which specific procedure and direct the student to the alternative appropriate procedure, for example the academic appeals procedure, for the remaining issues.

**6. Principles of this policy**

Complaints should be treated seriously and students must not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making a complaint in good faith. However, it is expected that students or people communicating on behalf of a student will conduct themselves responsibly and treat the process and those members of the University involved in the process with respect at all times.

In all cases, it is desirable that complaints are resolved informally and quickly between the relevant parties, and that the formal process is only started if that fails. Evidence of an attempt at informal resolution will be required.

Mediation can be a useful means of resolving matters of complaint where the parties involved are willing to engage voluntarily in the process in an attempt to work things out.  The University may make an offer of mediation to students at any stage of the Complaint Procedure.

Complaints must be substantiated with evidence, expressed in clear and succinct English and submitted within prescribed timescales.

Complaints submitted outside of the timescales stipulated in the procedure will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances and where there is good reason, supported by evidence, for the late submission.

Students are encouraged to seek advice from a member of the Student Union at any stage in the process, including seeking advice on how to present their case effectively.

The University is committed to ensuring that complaints are handled in accordance with its published procedure.  Occasionally, it may be sensible for the University to deviate from procedure if strict adherence to it could give rise to perceptions of prejudice or bias.

The University will not accept or investigate complaints which it considers to be in breach of the standards set out in the [Unacceptable Behaviour Policy](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/academicservices/documents/unacceptable-behaviour-policy.pdf).

Complaints form part of the University's process of quality review and improvement and are considered as providing valuable feedback rather than criticism.  We will widely publicise information about procedures to students and staff and a link to them is provided on our website.

Students will be notified early in the process if the remedy sought within the complaint is beyond the power of the University to deliver.

It is important for students to note that the Office of the Independent Adjudicator cannot consider matters which are or which have been the subject of court proceedings.  Similarly, the University reserves the right to decline, suspend or to discontinue a complaint under the Student Complaint Procedure, in the event that legal proceedings are commenced and the claim concerns the same subject matter as the complaint.

**7. Recording and monitoring of complaints**

It is important that complaints are monitored in order to improve the student experience. The Student Services Unit will record and provide reports to indicate the nature of complaints and complainants, and resultant action. Such reports will:

* Feed into the monitoring and evaluation procedure
* Feed directly into appropriate University-wide committees;
* Assist in identifying problems and trends across the University;
* Form the basis of positive publicity, in demonstrating that identified issues have been resolved;
* Be made available to the Student Committee.