

Student Complaint Procedure

Stage 2 Complaint – Guidance for Investigating Officers

At Stage 2 of the Student Complaint Procedure, an independent investigator is appointed by a Head of School/Division or Head/Director of Professional Service to investigate issues raised by a student (or group of students who would normally be represented by a nominated student) and to make recommendations to the Head/Director about outcomes.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for anyone acting as an investigator at Stage 2 of the Procedure.

1 Determine the exact nature of the complaint and the outcome which is being sought by the student.

- This is likely to involve clarifying the written complaint with the student, summarising and agreeing the key issues of concern.
- Determine what the student is expecting as an outcome (e.g. an apology, a change in process, another type of redress) and agree whether this outcome is realistic and/or possible. If not, advise the student about what might be a possible outcome. For example, if the student is expecting a change in mark or similar, this would not be possible through the complaints procedure.
- Agree any revisions to the complaint in writing.
- If there are multiple issues, it may be helpful to group these together in themes, however each theme needs to be clearly identified so that each area of complaint can be responded to clearly.
- Ensure that students know they can be accompanied at any meeting they attend by their representative who will normally be a member of the University of Bolton Students' Union. Legal representation is not permitted.
- You may feel confident in taking notes yourself or you may find it helpful to ask a colleague to take notes during an investigatory meeting. A copy of the notes should then be sent to all parties to confirm the content.

2 Establish the facts of the complaint and review relevant documentation and interview others involved, who may include staff and/or other students

- Ensure that you interview all relevant members of staff or other students connected with the complaint. It is very important to take notes at these meetings and remember that any notes are subject to DPA (Data Protection Act) requests.
- All parties should be able to see information which relates to them. Be mindful that, if a complaint relates to numerous members of staff/students, it may not be appropriate for the full complaint to be released but to let them see the elements which relate to them.
- Ensure that you address all issues raised by the student in your investigations.
- Use an evidence based approach to your investigation. Ask all parties to provide you with relevant evidence/information to confirm key facts.
- Reach a recommendation on each of the issues and, if necessary, seek advice from the Standards and Enhancement Office on any specific procedural or policy matters.

3 Produce Written Report

- When you have concluded your investigation, you will need to prepare a report with your findings using the **Investigator's report template**. Remember that the report will be seen by the student and possibly by others who are involved in the complaint via a DPA request. If a student decides to take their complaint for external review to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, once internal procedures have been exhausted, any documentation will be provided as part of the process.
- The report should include a list of the meetings held, the documents reviewed and the dates.
- Where possible, copies of relevant documentation should be attached as appendices.
- You should identify the nature of the complaint and the outcome sought by the student.
- The main section should address each element of the complaint, providing appropriate commentary.
- The report should conclude with a short summary of each issue and your recommendations relating to each issue – you may wish to suggest that each aspect of the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or rejected.
- If you would like to see a redacted copy of a completed report produced for another investigation, please contact the Standards and Enhancement Office for an example.
- Make sure you are aware of the timescale for completing your investigation. Currently, the procedure states that a student should normally be notified of the outcome of a Stage 2 complaint within 28 days of the Head receiving the complaint. If there are any delays, it is important to notify the student and any other relevant parties with an explanation.

If you have any queries about the process, further guidance is available from the Standards and Enhancement Office:

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Standards and Enhancement Office

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