


# Student Complaints Procedure

2023-26

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Policy Manager	Head of Student Casework
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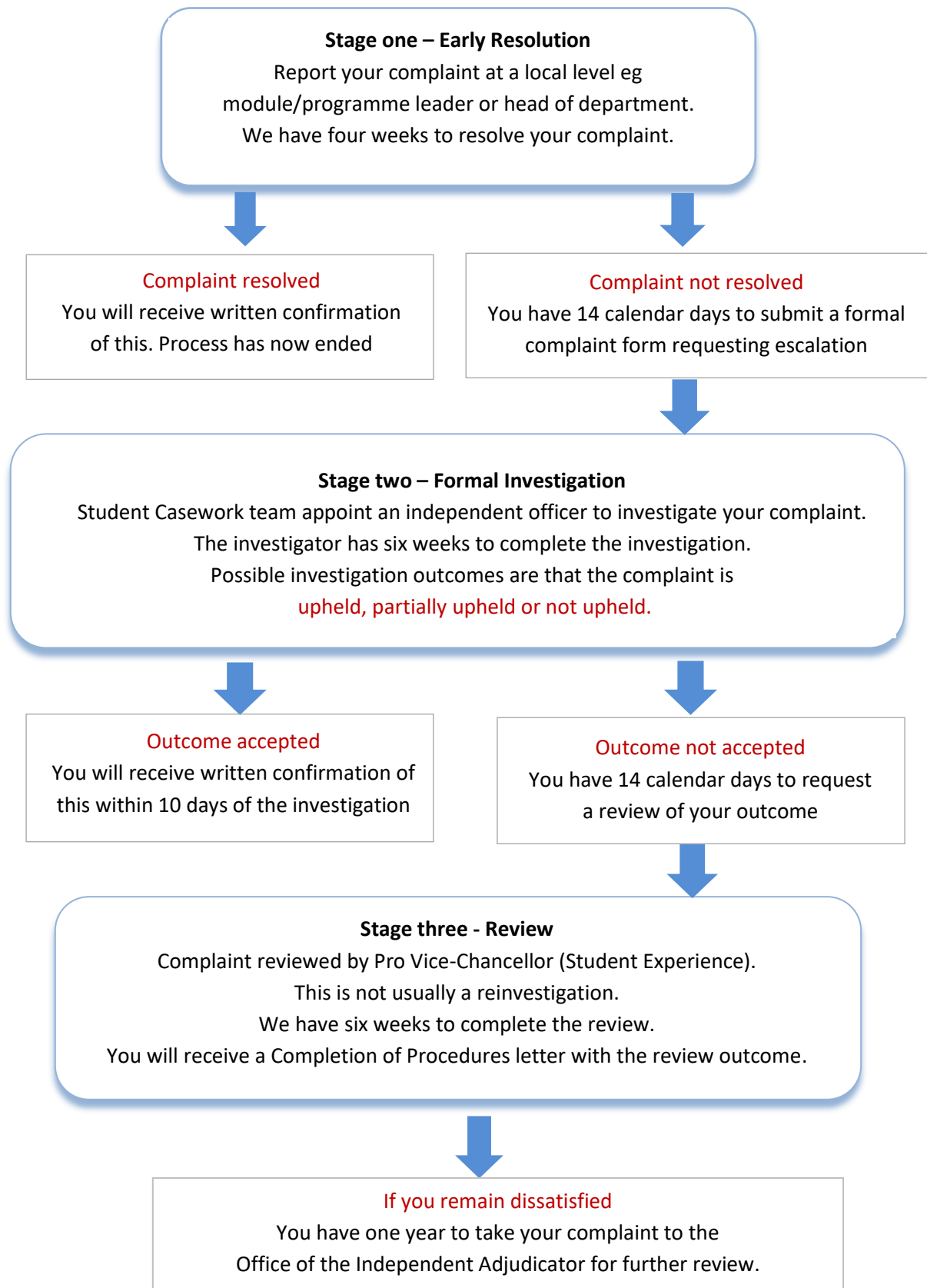
Edge Hill  
University

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## Summary - a guide to the complaints process

Your initial complaint must be made within three months of the incident affecting you or within one month of leaving the University.



## Purpose

This document outlines the procedure to follow for students who wish to make a complaint about the University.

## 1. Our approach to complaints

Our core values lie in our wholehearted commitment to our staff, students and partners, and our constant efforts to improve in all we do.

Edge Hill University 'Vision and Values'

We aim to give you an outstanding student experience. We recognise that things can go wrong and that sometimes standards can fall short of what we expect. We take complaints seriously and will work with you to resolve your complaint. We want to learn from problems to make improvements for you and for all students.

We want to resolve your complaint quickly and informally so that we have the chance to put things right and so you are not distracted from your studies.

During the complaints process, we expect staff and students to be reasonable, act fairly and show respect for each other and the process.

## 2. About the Student Complaints Procedure

The University is guided by the good practice framework on handling student complaints, published by the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#).

This Complaints Procedure is approved by the University's Academic Board and sets out:

- what we mean by a complaint
- who can complain
- the time limits for making and responding to a complaint
- how we will deal with your complaint
- how to make a complaint
- where to get help, guidance and support to make a complaint; and
- where you can complain if you are not satisfied at the end of this procedure

## 3. About this document

This policy is for 'you' as a student at Edge Hill University or a partner of the University, making a complaint.

Any reference in this procedure to 'we' means the University, which includes the Student Casework team.

Any reference in this procedure to named officers also refers to their nominated delegate(s).

## 4. Sources of support and information

If you want to make a complaint, we advise you to contact the [Edge Hill Students' Union](#) in the first instance. The Student's Union is independent from the University and provides free, independent advice, guidance and support. You can find additional information in our [Student Guidance Notes](#).

For advice about this complaint procedure, please contact the [Student Casework Team](#): [complaints@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@edgehill.ac.uk).

If you have a disability and need support to help you make a complaint, or to discuss adjustments to usual procedures, please contact the [Student Services Inclusion Team](#). Further information about disability support is included at Section 7 of this document.

For emotional support during the complaint process, please contact the [Wellbeing Team](#).

You can also refer to the [Student Casework website](#), where you'll find an overview of the process, a link to the [Student Guidance Notes](#), and links to the [Complaint form](#).

## 5. How we will communicate during this process

The role of the Student Casework team is to ensure the procedure and process of making and investigating a complaint are followed correctly.

Our communications with you will generally be in written format – that is, via email, formal letter or via a form. However, where appropriate we can meet with you to discuss your concerns. We will agree with you whether a face to face, phone call or online meeting is appropriate.

Our primary means of communicating with you is through your Edge Hill University email account. Please check your email account regularly to ensure you do not miss any important information. If you no longer have access to your university email account, you will need to provide us with an alternative email address.

When you communicate with us during this process, please use the email address [complaints@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@edgehill.ac.uk). This is the email address the Student Casework team uses to manage complaints.

If you prefer to communicate in hard copy, please advise us and correspondence will be sent to the term-time and / or home addresses we have recorded on our student record system, unless you tell us otherwise. Please address your correspondence to us as follows:

Head of Student Casework  
Edge Hill University  
St Helens Road  
Ormskirk  
L39 4QP

## 6. What is a complaint?

We treat something as a complaint if you tell us you are not satisfied with any of the following:

- The standard of service we provide, or is provided on our behalf
- Something we have done or have not done
- An action we should have taken but did not

### What a complaint is not

A complaint is not the same as giving us feedback or commenting on or telling us your views or opinions. If you have concerns or queries about whether something is a complaint, please contact the [Student Casework team](#). We will advise you of the most appropriate procedure to follow based on your circumstances.

### Feedback

We encourage members of the Edge Hill University community to be open and honest about what is going well and what needs improvement. Throughout the year we will invite you to give us feedback on your programme and on your experience of being a student at our university.

You can provide feedback by:

- speaking informally to a member of staff
- attending a Staff-Student Consultative Forum (SSCF)
- asking your student representative to give your view at the next Programme Board
- taking part in surveys and/or course evaluations

All of these processes provide valuable information to help us identify where we can improve your student experience.

You do not have to wait for us to ask you for feedback. If you would like to provide feedback, we recommend you approach your Module Leader first but you can also tell your Programme Leader. If your feedback is about any of our centrally provided services, contact that service's Helpdesk. If you are at all unsure about where to provide feedback, [contact the Student Casework team](#) for advice.

### Comments, queries and concerns

From time to time, you may wish to provide comments about your experience at Edge Hill but are unsure which channel to use. Or, you may have a query or concern and are unclear about which procedure to use.

In these cases, please contact the [Student Casework team](#) and we will advise you on the most appropriate procedure to follow, based on your circumstances.

### Deciding which process to use

Sometimes you may be unsure whether your situation is covered by a complaint, an academic appeal or another procedure. If you do not know which procedure to use, please [check with the Students' Union](#) in the first instance or ask [the Student Casework team](#) for clarification.

If you submit an academic appeal, we will check it and let you know if you should use a different procedure. If you have an academic appeal *and* a complaint, we will discuss with you the most appropriate way to proceed. For example, your faculty may determine that your complaint requires an investigation, or we may advise a specific issue is considered under one procedure and the remaining issues considered under a different procedure.

We may also pause one process until the other is concluded. The University does not normally run more than one procedure at the same time for the same case, because each procedure has its own detailed regulations. We will tell you if this applies to your case, explain how we will proceed and keep you informed throughout the process.

If your matter falls within a number of procedures, it may be appropriate to deal with it collaboratively across different departments. We will obtain your approval to do this before proceeding. With this approach, we will appoint a single point of contact who will lead the process, update you of progress throughout and inform you of the outcome. If you have more than one matter, please tell the person dealing with your complaint, so that we can discuss with you how best to deal with your situation.

### Matters not dealt with under the Student Complaints Procedure

Some matters are not suitable for resolution through this procedure. Please refer to the table at Annex A for a list of those matters which normally cannot be considered using this complaints procedure and advice on where to raise those matters.

If your complaint, or part of it, is about the perceived misconduct of a member of staff, we may need to involve our Human Resources department who will use their own procedures. Submit your complaint to [the Student Casework team](#) in the usual way and we will advise you on how it will be dealt with and which Human Resources procedures may be required.

## 7. Disability

### Telling us about a disability

We understand that the decision to tell us about a disability is a personal one and something you may prefer to keep confidential. However, we encourage you to let us know about any disabilities or health conditions you may have when you make a complaint, even if you have not previously told the University. We ask this because we want to ensure you can participate fully in the complaints process by offering you effective support.

If you have any concerns, we are happy to discuss this further with you. We can also offer reassurance about the confidential nature of the complaint process and explain how your personal information is managed.

### Reasonable adjustments

If you do decide to share information about a disability or health condition with us, we can talk through what reasonable adjustments can be made during the complaints process. Our aim is to support you by removing any barriers that our usual complaint procedure might cause. Both you and the University can seek advice from the [Inclusion Team](#) or the [Specific Learning Difficulties \(SPLD\) team, based in Student Services](#), on making reasonable adjustments.

Reasonable adjustments could include, for example:

- Extending deadlines if your condition prevents you from meeting a deadline
- Pausing the process and re-starting it when you are well
- Providing documents to you in your preferred format, font, colour or size
- Appointing a representative to act for you in making your complaint, where there is a genuine need

## 8. Who can complain?

You can make a complaint under this procedure if you

- are an enrolled student on a course at Edge Hill University, or
- have left the University no longer than one month after the end of the published term date
- are an external student undertaking reassessment



You can make an individual complaint about something which directly affects your interests. If something affects the interests of a group of students, you can be part of a group complaint.

## Group complaints

Where the subject matter of your complaint affects more than one student, you can submit a group complaint.

It is essential that staff and students are completely clear who is involved in the group complaint. In order to manage a group complaint efficiently, the group must appoint a lead student to act as a representative for the group.

### How we deal with group complaints

- At the start of your complaint the lead student must confirm who is part of the group complaint by completing the [group complaint form](#)
- Each member of the group must provide:
  - their student ID number
  - written consent for the lead student to represent them in the complaint/deal with the complaint on their behalf
  - evidence to demonstrate how they have been affected by the matter, or agree with the evidence provided by the lead student
- Once the group complaint form is submitted, we will not normally allow other students to join the group complaint at a later date
- We will usually only communicate with the lead student and will send all correspondence and documents to them using their Edge Hill email address
- The lead student will usually represent the group at meetings about the complaint
- The lead student must liaise with all the other students in the group complaint, collect and submit evidence and provide regular feedback to the group

#### *Please note:*

- A student may withdraw from the group complaint but must notify the [Student Casework team](#) of this in writing
- In some cases, a complaint outcome may include an offer to all students in the group. If the offer is declined by some of the group, they must confirm this in writing to the [Student Casework team](#). Similarly, if some students in the group decide to escalate the matter, written notification of who is escalating the matter must be sent to the [Student Casework team](#)
- In some cases, a complaint outcome may identify that not all students in the group were impacted equally by the matter. The University reserves the right to consider individual outcomes on a case-by-case basis
- The Student Casework team reserves the right to contact any individual in the group

about the complaint

### Anonymous complaints

The complaint process needs to have a fair investigation process for all parties. For this reason we will not usually accept an anonymous complaint. In addition, it is difficult for us to investigate a complaint properly report the outcome to you, when we do not know your identity. In exceptional circumstances we may consider an anonymous complaint but only if there is a compelling case supported by evidence.

### Advocacy and representation

We do not usually accept a complaint made by a third party (eg a family member, spouse or employer) without your written consent.

However, you do have the right to appoint a representative to act for you in making your complaint. This will usually be a member of the Edge Hill community or Students' Union. Advocates are usually appointed when you are involved in a formal matter with the University and cannot liaise with the University directly for a specific reason or due to additional needs.

Please contact the [Student Casework team](#) for information about how you can appoint an advocate or representative for the complaint process. There is more information in Section 7 about appointing a representative if you have a disability.

Please contact the [Data Protection Team](#) for information about how you can provide consent for us to share information about your complaint with a third party. Alternatively, you can contact the [Student Casework team](#) for further advice.

Please note, as the University's Student Complaints Procedure is not a legal process, legal representation is not usually required or permitted.

## 9. Time limits

### Your time limits

We must receive your complaint within three months of the date the issue first happened. For example:

Date the issue first happened	Time limit starts	Time limit expires
12 September 2023	13 September 2023	13 December 2023

There are other time limits which are linked to the three stages of this procedure. These are explained at the relevant points in this document.

### Extending time limits and late complaints

We do not routinely extend time limits for making complaints. If you have evidence of exceptional reasons for making a late complaint, we may use our discretion to accept it outside normal time limits. The [Student Guidance Notes](#) provide more information on extending time limits.

If you have a disability or health condition which may make it difficult for you to engage with the complaint process or meet usual deadlines, please tell us. We may consider making reasonable adjustments to remove any barriers that our usual complaint procedure might cause. Please also read the information in Section 7.

If we do not accept your late complaint, we will send you a completion of procedures letter explaining why we have rejected your complaint. Please see Section 16 for more information about completion of procedures letters.

### Our time limits

The overall time limit for the University to manage a complaint is 90 calendar days. Within this, we work to the following time limits:

- Stage 1 (Early Resolution). We aim to complete this stage and notify you of the outcome within four weeks of receiving your complaint by email
- Stage 2 (Formal Investigation). We aim to complete this stage and notify you of the outcome within six weeks of the date we received your completed complaint form
- Stage 3 (Review). We aim to complete the review and notify you of the outcome within six weeks of receiving your request for a review

We want to resolve complaints quickly but sometimes we may be unable to complete our investigations in time. Where there is a delay, we will inform you of the delay in writing and keep you regularly informed of progress.

### Complaints requiring a swift response

Sometimes a complaint might need to be dealt with quickly because your matter has become urgent.

Examples of when a complaint might need a swift response include complaints:

- involving a threat of serious harm
- where the impact of issues raised might harm your health
- where you are experiencing significant distress
- relating to disability support, or

- issues of a highly sensitive nature

When you first inform us of your complaint, make it clear that the matter is urgent and give clear reasons why you believe it requires immediate attention.

## 10. Dealing with your complaint

There are a number of overriding principles which inform how we deal with your complaint. It is also important to understand that all parties have responsibilities to ensure a successful process.

### Fairness

You should feel confident that you are able to complain to the University without detriment. All staff must adhere to an employee code of conduct and there are procedures in place to protect and prevent you from being disadvantaged academically.

The Student Casework team provides impartial advice to students and staff in all areas of student casework, to reach fair and reasonable outcomes for all. We expect staff and students to be reasonable and act fairly, showing respect for each other and the process.

All parties will be given a fair and equal opportunity to respond, state their case and provide evidence. This includes the faculty or department concerned. We will give you clear reasons for the decision we reach.

We will not penalise you or treat you any differently because you have made a complaint. If you believe we have not met this standard, please contact the [Student Casework team](#).

### Confidentiality

We will maintain confidentiality throughout the process and only involve people who need to be included in your complaint. Sometimes we may need to obtain information from another area of the University to investigate your complaint properly.

If you give us information in support of your complaint, we will only share this with parties who need to know the details of your complaint, such as the OIA. If you submit sensitive personal information as part of your complaint and would like to limit who sees it, discuss this with the person considering your complaint or the Student Casework team. We may be able to limit who sees the sensitive information, as long as it does not affect the fairness of the procedure.

Confidentiality is a mutual obligation. We expect everyone involved in your complaint to act respectfully and keep matters confidential. This includes, you, any witnesses and people providing evidence, support or advice, and University staff.

Remember that any person named in your complaint has a right to put their side of the case. Any recommendations made as a result of your complaint will be shared with relevant parties but no other elements of the outcome will be disclosed.

If you have named a member of staff or other person in your complaint, we will inform their line manager.

## Conciliation or mediation

At any stage in this process, we may suggest the complaint is resolved through conciliation or mediation.

This allows for an independent person to help us try to resolve the complaint. You do not have to agree to conciliation or mediation, it is voluntary and confidential. The conciliator or mediator is impartial, will not take sides and will not impose a solution.

## Independence

We will make sure that formal complaints are investigated by and decisions taken by people who are *independent of the situation*. Sometimes this might mean asking someone from a different department or faculty to deal with your complaint.

If you believe the person dealing with your complaint has a conflict of interest, please contact the Student Casework team as soon as possible.

## Investigating officers

Investigating officers are senior members of University staff. Their approach to investigating a complaint will normally be determined by the issues raised. An investigating officer will take into account all the issues raised in the complaint and consider your aim in complaining.

Complaints vary and because of this, the way we investigate them might vary but the investigator will usually:

- meet with you
- gather information about the issues by talking to you and other people
- consider the documents you have provided
- consider other documents discovered as part of their investigation

An independent note taker may also accompany the investigating officer to any meeting. This allows the investigating officer to focus on discussing your case.

## Standard of proof

All our decisions are based on the evidence provided and will be considered on the balance of

probability. For example, the outcome of an investigation may determine that we were more satisfied than not that your information and documents show the event or issue to have occurred, and vice-versa.

### Record keeping

We will keep a record of your complaint throughout the process and we advise you to do the same. GDPR legislation requires us to maintain records for a period of six years, after which time the University will destroy the records.

### Frivolous and vexatious complaints

We may reject or terminate consideration of your complaint if, in the investigator's opinion, any of the following apply:

- The complaint has no serious purpose
- The complaint is intended to cause disruption or annoyance
- You are seeking an unrealistic remedy

This includes complaints where, for example

- we have already considered your complaint and made a previous decision
- the complaint is about something which a fair-minded person would consider to be trivial
- where your pursuit of the complaint is having a seriously negative effect on our staff carrying out their work
- if you are looking for a remedy that lacks any serious purpose or value

If we decide to terminate consideration of your complaint, we will write to you explaining why we are doing so.

## 11. Our three-stage complaints procedure

There are three stages in the complaints procedure:

Stage 1 – Early Resolution

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

Stage 3 – Review

### Stage 1 – Early Resolution

It is important that good staff/student relationships are maintained throughout your time at Edge Hill. Early resolution allows you to resolve your complaint quickly and locally with the staff in the programme or service involved and with minimal disruption to your studies.

We strongly encourage you to start your complaint at this stage as experience shows it is the quickest and easiest way of reaching a resolution. However, in exceptional circumstances, you can request to start your complaint at Stage 2 - Formal Investigation.

If you are unsure about how to start your complaint, please contact the [Student Casework team](#).

Occasionally, we may advise that, due to its serious or complex nature, your complaint should start at Stage 2 – Formal Investigation. We will inform you in writing if this is the case.

### Starting your complaint at Stage 1 - Early Resolution

You should first identify a member of staff to direct your complaint to. This will usually be one of the following:

- Your course tutor
- Your module leader
- Your programme leader
- A member of the department or faculty who you feel comfortable talking to
- The faculty administration manager
- A manager or head of department in the University service involved

If you have any concerns or are not sure who to direct your complaint to, please contact the [Students' Union](#) for advice. Alternatively, contact [the Student Casework team](#).

You should complete a [complaint form](#) and email it to the member of staff you wish to raise your concerns with. You can also send it to the Student Casework team.

Alternatively, you can email the relevant member of staff stating you wish to make a complaint and asking for an appointment to discuss it. You should include an overview of your complaint in the body of your email or as an attachment. Please make it completely clear that you wish to make a complaint rather than provide feedback.

Whether you use the form or email the member of staff, you should provide any evidence to support your complaint. For example, independent medical reports/confirmation of a medical or health condition, reports by professionals, emails or text messages from relevant parties.

### Time limits

It is your responsibility to ensure the staff member or the Student Casework team receives your complaint within three months of the date the issue first happened. If you have left the University, you must submit your complaint within one month of leaving. Please refer to Section 9 for full details of time limits.

We aim to complete Stage 1 - Early Resolution and provide a response to you, within four weeks. Day one is the next working day after you submitted your complaint.

### How we deal with early resolution

Early resolution is an informal way of resolving your complaint whereby we usually meet with you to discuss the issues you have raised. By taking this approach, your department or faculty will normally be able to resolve your complaint quickly and easily, whilst maintaining good staff/student relationships and without disrupting your studies.

Sometimes, for example if your complaint is particularly complex, we may not be able to resolve your issue in one meeting. In such cases a more in-depth investigation may be required. We will tell you if this is necessary.

You will receive confirmation of the outcome agreed at the meeting. Where proportionate, we will share a written response or outcome with you.

The written notification confirms completion of this stage of the procedure. The date of this notification is important as it starts the time limit for taking your complaint to the next stage if you wish to do so.

### Possible outcomes

The person dealing with your complaint has the discretion to consider any reasonable option to resolve your complaint.

Experience shows that the majority of complaints are effectively and satisfactorily resolved at this stage without the need to take your complaint further. However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome you can ask for your complaint to be escalated to the next stage.

## Stage 2 - Formal Investigation

You can escalate your complaint to Stage 2 – Formal Investigation if you are not satisfied with the outcome from Stage 1 – Early Resolution.

In exceptional circumstances, you may be able to start your complaint at this stage. Please [contact the Student Casework team](#) and detail why it is not appropriate to try and resolve your issue at Stage 1 – Early Resolution. Note that the Student Casework may still recommend you begin your complaint at Stage 1 – Early Resolution and will discuss the reasons for this with you.

### Making a complaint at Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

You will need to complete a complaint form and email it to [the Student Casework team](#) along with copies of any documents which support your complaint.



Our Student Guidance notes contain more information about the type of documents you can submit as evidence. If you would like help completing the complaint form, please contact the [Students' Union](#).

### Time limits

Time limits differ depending on the stage of the complaints procedure your complaint is being investigated at.

#### *Escalating your complaint from Stage 1- Early Resolution*

You must make sure we receive your completed complaint form within 14 calendar days of the date we notified you of the outcome of your Stage 1- Early Resolution complaint. Please ensure you include any Stage 1 outcome with your complaint form.

#### *Starting your complaint at Stage 2 – Formal Investigation (exceptional circumstances only)*

You must make sure we receive your completed complaint form within three months of the date the issue happened, or one month after leaving the University.

We aim to complete the formal investigation and notify you of the outcome within six weeks. Day one is the next working day after you submitted your complaint.

### How we deal with your formal investigation

Once we have received your complaint form we will:

- check whether the outcome of any early resolution attempt was reasonable and that the complaints procedure was followed correctly
- check you have submitted your complaint using the correct procedure
- check you have submitted your complaint within the time limits
- acknowledge receipt of your form by email
- inform the department or faculty of your complaint

We will appoint a member of staff to investigate your complaint and we will tell you who that person is. The investigating officer will be independent of your situation. Please refer to Section 10 (Independence) for information about investigating officers.

### Possible outcomes

The investigating officer has the authority and discretion to consider any reasonable options to resolve your complaint.

If you accept the outcome at this stage, this will be a full and final resolution of all issues raised in your complaint. The outcome letter will include a date by which you must tell us if you accept the outcome. If we do not hear from you by the date specified, we will close your

complaint.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 – Formal Investigation, you can request a review.

### Stage 3 - Review

A review will focus on how your complaint has been dealt with. It will not usually consider your complaint afresh, nor involve a further investigation. You can request a review of the Stage 2 outcome, but only on certain grounds.

#### Grounds for requesting a review

The grounds for requesting a review are:

- the complaint investigation was not conducted fairly
- the investigation failed to take account of relevant material
- new evidence has since come to light which, for valid reasons, you were unable to provide earlier in the complaints process and which would have materially affected the decision made at Stage 2 – Formal Investigation
- the decision reached was wholly unreasonable

You may also request a review if the complaint is about a non-awarding partner institution and you have exhausted their internal procedures.

Disagreement with the outcome of an investigation is not, in itself, a ground for requesting a review.

#### Requesting a review

You must complete the [review request form](#) and clearly state which grounds (listed above) apply in your case. It is your responsibility to establish a case for each ground. Email your completed form and any supporting documents to the [Student Casework team](#). Alternatively, you can send hard copies to the Head of Student Casework at the address detailed in Section 5.

#### Time limits

You are responsible for ensuring your request for a review reaches us within 14 calendar days of the date we advised you of the outcome of Stage 2 – Formal Investigation.

We aim to complete the review and inform you of the outcome within six weeks of receiving your request. Day one is the next working day after you submitted your complaint. If we cannot meet this timeframe, we will notify you in writing. The notification will explain why it is not possible to meet the timeframe and advise tell you when we expect to complete the review.

## How we will deal with your review

The Head of Student Casework will consider your request for review and determine the appropriate process to follow. Reviews are usually desk-based and conducted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) or their nominee, who will be a senior manager employed by the University.

Alternatively, the Head of Student Casework may determine that a review panel is appropriate for your case. This is also a desk-based process, however in exceptional circumstances you may be invited to attend the panel meeting and present your case. Annex B details the agenda for a complaint review panel meeting.

If a panel is convened, this will consist of three members in total: two senior managers from the University and an elected member of the Students' Union. We may add other panel members if specialist knowledge is required. If we extend the panel membership, we will let you know and explain the reasons for this decision.

We will exclude the following people from membership of the panel:

- anyone who has a vested interest in your complaint
- anyone who has taken part in the investigation of your complaint at earlier stages of the procedure

Whether the review is considered by a sole reviewer or a panel, the remit is the same. The reviewer(s) will

- establish whether your request meets any of the grounds for review
- check that the process thus far has been correctly followed
- consider all the material gathered and assessed by the investigator at Stage 2, together with any supporting documentation you have provided
- determine whether the findings at Stage 2 were adequate, fair and reasonable

The reviewer(s) will not

- reinvestigate the case
- consider a new complaint or any new aspect of the complaint

## Possible outcomes

If any or all of the grounds for review are met, one or more of the following actions may be considered to resolve your complaint:

- Refer the matter back to the Stage 2 investigator, with directions on how to deal with the ground(s) for review which have been established
- Offer a remedy which was offered at an earlier stage in the process
- Instigate a fresh investigation using a different senior manager
- Refer the matter for informal resolution
- Conclude the matter by offering a resolution

- Refer the matter to mediation

In exceptional circumstances, a financial remedy may be recommended if other remedies are unavailable or inappropriate. To ensure consistency and fairness, the University follows the OIA's guidance for such payments and will not make arbitrary payments.

## 12. Complaints against other service providers

We work with a number of partner organisations to provide learning opportunities for students. If you are studying on a course which is part of a partnership arrangement, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may need to complain to the partner institution first.

When we deliver learning in partnership with others, we categorise complaints as being either academic or non-academic:

- academic complaints are about any academic matter relating to your course including the quality or standard of your course
- non-academic complaints are about matters unrelated to your course. For example the provision of café facilities, cleanliness, availability of equipment or access to a building at our partner institution

If a non-academic matter has an impact on your academic progress or results we may treat it as an academic matter. If you are at all unsure, please [contact the Student Casework team](#) for advice.

### Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship combines work and study. Alongside on-the-job training, apprentices spend at least 20% of their working hours completing off-the-job learning, which leads to a nationally recognised qualification.

If you are an apprentice, the University considers you to be a registered student. This means that if you need to make a complaint about the learning part of your apprenticeship you can follow the procedure outlined in this document. The University will determine the issues of your complaint, explain how it will be considered and manage it to completion

If your complaint is about on-the-job training you receive from your employer, you should raise this under your employer's internal procedures.

The nature of your complaint may mean that some matters overlap with your employer. Your employer will need to respond to these and may invoke their own investigation procedure, for example in the case of a grievance. If this happens, the University will ensure a coordinated

approach. However, please remember that the University has no jurisdiction over staff discipline at a third-party organisation.

If you are an apprentice and need to make a complaint, please speak to your personal tutor in the first instance – this will be detailed in your training plan. The [Student Casework team](#) is also available to guide you through the procedure. If your complaint progresses, you will have a point of contact at the University to support you through the process.

If you have any queries about any aspect of your complaint, you can also contact the [Education and Skills Funding Agency \(ESFA\)](#) or call 08000 150 600 for guidance.

### Academic partners

If you are studying with one of the University's academic partners you would normally use the partner's complaints procedure for Stages 1 and 2. If you are dissatisfied with the Stage 2 – Formal Investigation outcome, then you can [request a review](#).

If your complaint is about an academic matter, your review is covered by this procedure and we will conduct the review. Please submit your request to [the Student Casework team](#).

If your complaint is about a non-academic matter, you should use the academic partner's complaints procedure to request a review. When the academic partner has completed its review, it will send you a completion of procedures letter advising of your right to ask the OIA to review the partner's decision.

### Placement providers

If your programme incorporates a placement element, the University still considers you to be a registered student. This means that if you need to make a complaint about the learning part of your programme you can follow the procedure outlined in this document. The University will determine the issues of your complaint, explain how it will be considered and manage it to completion.

If your complaint is related specifically to the placement organisation – for example, the conduct of the organisation's staff, you should raise this under the organisation's complaint procedures. The University can support you through this process. Please contact the [Student Casework team](#) for advice.

### All other partners

Complaints about all other types of partnership provision are considered under this procedure.

If you are unclear about which procedure to use, or how to make a complaint, please [contact the Student Casework team](#).

## 13. Help and support

You may be accompanied by a supporter to any meeting you attend as part of this process. Please refer to [Appendix 23 of the Academic Regulations](#) for details on the role of a student's friend.

Before submitting a complaint, we advise that you read the relevant policies, procedures and regulations, including

- [Student Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Student Charter](#)
- [Student Guide to Making a Complaint](#)
- [Role of the Student's Friend](#) (Appendix 23 to the Academic Regulations)
- [Bullying, Hate Crime and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#)

All these documents are available on our website.

We also advise you to seek early advice, guidance and support from [the Students' Union](#).

### Edge Hill Students' Union

The Students' Union is an organisation which is independent from the University and provides free, independent help to students. You automatically became a member of the Students' Union when you enrolled at the University. Even if you opted out of membership you are still entitled to seek help, support and guidance from them.

Submitting documents to the Students' Union or discussing your complaint with them is not the same as making a complaint to the University under this procedure. Do not assume your Students' Union Advisor has made the complaint for you. Until you have submitted your complaint to your department, faculty or the Student Casework team, this procedure has not started.

If you have a complaint about the Students' Union you should contact them to make a complaint under its own [complaint procedure](#).

## 14. Termination of the procedure

You can appeal for us to reconsider our decision to reject or terminate consideration of your complaint by writing to [the Student Casework team](#). Please clearly explain the reasons why

your complaint should be continued.

We must receive your appeal within 14 calendar days of the date we informed you of our decision to terminate your complaint. Day one is the next working day after you submitted your appeal.

A senior manager who is independent of the situation will consider your appeal, the information we have on file about your complaint and the representations you have made. They will either confirm the decision to terminate your complaint or decide to reopen your complaint.

If the decision to terminate your complaint is upheld, this will conclude the University's procedures. We will send you a completion of procedures letter advising you of your right to refer your complaint to the OIA.

If your request for reconsideration is upheld, we will notify you in writing of the next step in the process.

## 15. Completion of Procedures

When you have exhausted the University's internal complaint procedure and there is no further avenue available to you, we will send you a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter.

You can also request a COP letter if a review or review panel has upheld your complaint but you remain dissatisfied.

The letter advises that the University's internal procedures have been exhausted and that you have the right to ask the OIA to review our decision. It includes the date that our internal procedures ended and provides details of how to contact the OIA.

We will issue a COP letter no more than 28 days after the completion of our internal processes.

## 16. Taking your complaint further

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) is an independent body and its role is to review individual complaints by students.

Although you can contact the OIA for information at any time, their scheme is independent and impartial, therefore they cannot provide advice about your specific complaint or make a complaint on your behalf. Please note that the OIA will not normally consider a complaint

without a COP letter confirming you have exhausted the University's internal processes.

If you decide to refer your complaint to the OIA for review, you must use the [OIA's complaint form](#) which you will find on its [website](#). The OIA has its own rules about dealing with your complaint.

You have one year from the date of your COP letter to ask the OIA to look at your complaint. If you need advice, guidance or support to refer your complaint to the OIA, please contact [the Students' Union](#). You can find further information on the OIA's [website](#).

If you are an apprentice and have exhausted our complaints process, you can report your complaint to the [Education and Skills Funding Agency](#).

### Key to relevant documents

This procedure does not refer to any other documents.



## Annex A: Matters not covered by the Student Complaints Procedure

Concern	Who to contact
A concern about a decision made by an academic body regarding your progression, academic assessment or awards.	You may be able to make an academic appeal. Read: <a href="#">Academic Appeal Procedures</a> Contact: <a href="#">Student Casework team</a>
Dissatisfaction with the outcome of an academic malpractice process.  Dissatisfaction with the outcome of an Academic Malpractice Panel of Inquiry.	You may be able to request an academic malpractice panel of inquiry in the first instance. Read: <a href="#">Academic Malpractice Procedures</a> Contact: <a href="#">Student Casework team</a>  You may be able to submit an academic appeal if you meet the University's grounds. Read: <a href="#">Academic Malpractice Procedures</a> Contact: <a href="#">Student Casework team</a>
Dissatisfaction with the outcome of a disciplinary process.	You may be able to appeal against a decision made against you. Read: <a href="#">Student Disciplinary Regulations</a> Contact: <a href="#">Student Casework team</a>
Dissatisfaction with a decision made under the Fitness to Practise Regulations.	You may be able to appeal against a fitness to practise decision made against you. Read: <a href="#">Fitness to Practise Procedure</a> Contact: <a href="#">Student Casework team</a>
Dissatisfaction with a decision made under the Fitness to Study Regulations.	You may be able to appeal against a fitness to study decision made against you. Read: <a href="#">Fitness to Study Procedures</a> Contact: <a href="#">Student Services</a>
Matters relating to the Student Loan Company or Student Finance England.	These are independent, external organisations with their own complaint procedures. Contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Student Loans Company</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Student Finance England</a></li> </ul>
Bullying and harassment by a member of staff.	We may need to involve Human Resources who will use their own procedures. We will advise you how to proceed. Read: <a href="#">Bullying, Harassment and Hate Crime Policy</a> Contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Student Casework team</a> in the first instance</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Wellbeing team</a> for emotional support</li> <li>• <a href="#">SU Advice team</a> for other support</li> </ul>
Bullying and harassment by another student.	<p>You may be able to make a complaint under the Student Disciplinary Regulations.</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Student Disciplinary Regulations</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Bullying, Harassment and Hate Crime Policy</a></li> </ul> <p>Contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Student Casework team</a> in the first instance</li> <li>• <a href="#">Wellbeing team</a> for emotional support</li> <li>• <a href="#">SU Advice team</a> for other support</li> </ul>
Safeguarding concerns.	<p>Please refer to the <a href="#">University's Safeguarding Policy</a> in the first instance.</p> <p>There is also information on how to contact one of the <a href="#">University's Safeguarding Officers</a> on the <a href="#">Safeguarding webpage</a>.</p>
Dissatisfaction with services such as accommodation or other areas of the campus.	<p>Please contact the <a href="#">Campus Life team</a> in the first instance.</p>
Requests for new or different University services or provision.	<p>Please contact your programme board or staff/student consultative forum.</p>
Complaints about Edge Hill Students' Union.	<p>The SU is an independent organisation which has its own <a href="#">complaint procedure</a>.</p>

## Annex B: Agenda for a complaint review panel with student attending

All documentation relating to the complaint will be provided to the panel members in advance of the meeting.

Before the meeting commences, panel members will discuss the case in private and agree any areas they believe will require discussion.

The panel will proceed as follows:

The Chair will call for the student to enter the room and will

- welcome the student to the meeting and introduce the panel members
- outline the remit of the panel and procedure that will be followed

The Chair will invite the student to present their case and then invite the panel members to ask the student any questions.

When the Chair is satisfied that the panel has received all of the relevant information or evidence, the Chair will ask the student if they have anything further to add. The Chair will also ask the student whether they feel they have had a fair opportunity to present their case to the panel.

The Chair will outline that the panel will now consider their decision in private and that the student will be notified of their decision in writing within four weeks of the meeting.

### Panel deliberation

The panel will reference the information and evidence and discuss whether a case has been made to overturn the decision of the stage two investigator.

The panel will decide whether any follow-up work or further advice from outside the panel is required to reach a decision.

The panel will decide whether to

- dismiss the complaint and uphold the decision of the stage two investigator, or
- uphold the complaint and recommend a resolution to the complaint

The student will be notified of the panel's decision in writing within four weeks of the panel taking place.

## Endmatter

Title	Student Complaints Procedure
Policy Owner	Director of Governance & Assurance
Policy Manager	Head of Student Casework
Approved by	Academic Board
Date of Approval	July 2023
Date for Review	July 2026