

# Procedure

## Student complaints procedure

### Contents

Introduction.....	2
Jurisdiction .....	2
General principles.....	3
Procedure .....	5
Complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.....	10
Additional information.....	11
Definitions .....	13
Appendix 1: Student complaints process diagram .....	14
Appendix 2: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).....	15

### Forms and templates

Form 1 - Record of informal complaint (Internal use only)

Form 2 - Formal complaint form

Form 3 - Complaint investigation report (Internal use only)

Form 4 - Request for Review form

Forms are accessible via the [complaints pages](#) of the Academic Advice webpages.

Note: Hyperlinks have been provided for ease of reference. For other documents please see the Policies page on the main University website (<http://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-policies/policies>)

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This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the Academic Registry.

## Introduction

### What is a complaint?

- 1 You may decide to make a complaint if you think the service you have received is unsatisfactory in some way and you want it to be investigated. The University will deal with such matters in a fair and timely manner, keep you updated with the progress of the investigation, and write to you with the outcome. Making a complaint will not disadvantage you as a student (see more information under General Principles).

### What can I complain about?

- 2 You can complain about your experience as a student including:
  - Failure by the University to meet obligations including those outlined in course/student handbooks, the Apprentice Commitment Statement, or the Learning Partnership Agreement.
  - Misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by the University
  - Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration
  - Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided by the University
  - If you feel you have been bullied, harassed or discriminated against<sup>1</sup>

### What can't I complain about?

- 3 There are some things you can't complain about using these procedures:
  - The process or results of the assessment of academic work - instead use the *Academic Appeals Policy*
  - Concern or dissatisfaction about a decision made under another regulation, such as academic misconduct, disciplinary or fitness to practise
  - Accusing another student of misconduct (not academic misconduct) – in that case the allegation will be dealt with under the *Student Disciplinary procedures*.
  - If an employee of the University is accused of misconduct – in that case the allegation will be dealt with under the *Employee Disciplinary procedures*.
  - Any complaint regarding the services provided by the employer of degree or higher degree apprentices should be referred direct to the employer.

### Where to go for help

- 4 If after reading this document you are still unsure about what to do, please call the Student Resolution Manager, tel: 01494 522141 X 4294 or e-mail: [resolution@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:resolution@bucks.ac.uk). Alternatively the Bucks Students' Union Advice Centre can provide you with independent advice and support - email [suadvice@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@bucks.ac.uk).

## Jurisdiction

- 5 The Accommodation Service has a separate complaints procedure for any matters which relate to university accommodation.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information please refer to the Student policy – bullying and harassment.

- 6 Complaints about the admissions process should be directed to the Admissions Service.
- 7 The Students' Union have their own complaints procedure. Only if the matter reaches the appeal stage will it be referred to the University for consideration.
- 8 This procedure applies to all Bucks New University students, including degree and higher degree apprentices.

Note: Where this document refers to 'students' this will include degree and higher degree apprentices unless specified otherwise.

## General principles

- 9 These guidelines are primarily aimed at helping students to understand the process. Additional information for employees is available; see the separate staff guidelines on student complaints. The guidelines have been produced in the spirit of the Learning Partnership Agreement. See the end of this document for further definitions and information.
- 10 All complaints will be treated as confidential, and will be handled with sensitivity by the Student Resolution Manager or any other Bucks New University employees involved, at every stage of the process.
- 11 All Bucks New University enrolled students have the right to complain to the University and to have their complaint taken seriously.
- 12 If other University procedures are in use at the same time as a complaint is submitted the investigation will continue, unless there are good reasons for one of the procedures to be put on hold pending the outcome of a matter.
- 13 Evidence submitted as part of one procedure will be deemed to be available to be used in other procedures as appropriate. The University have the right to consider a complaint under another procedure if it is deemed to be more appropriate to do so. Reasons for this will be noted, and communicated to the student at the earliest opportunity.
- 14 Students enrolled at a partner institution should refer to the procedures of that institution in the first instance. Complaints which cannot be resolved locally and progress to the Formal Stage will be dealt with under these procedures, in conjunction with Partner staff.
- 15 Prospective students (i.e. those at the application stage), cannot use these procedures and should refer to the *Admissions Policy and Procedure*.
- 16 Students who are considering making a complaint should seek the advice and guidance of Student Representatives, as some issues are better dealt with at Program Committee level (or similar).
- 17 A group of students can use this procedure to make a collective complaint. However, the following criteria must be met before the complaint will be accepted:
  - a One member of the group must be identified as the main contact for purposes of communication.

- b Each member of the group must submit their consent in writing and agree to abide by these regulations. The Student Resolution Manager will contact each individual to ensure they have not been coerced into agreeing to the complaint.
  - c The University will work on the assumption that any discussion or agreement with the main contact will be with the consent of the rest of the group.
  - d It should be noted that if this option is taken, the whole group must accept or reject the outcome. A student that has entered into a group complaint may not then decide to make the same complaint as an individual.
- 18 Malicious or frivolous complaints will be rejected at the earliest stage, and written reasons will be given. Students found to have submitted such a complaint may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 19 Students are encouraged to pursue any complaint themselves, however in some instances a complaint can be pursued by a third party, such as a parent or guardian. In such cases the following criteria must be met before the complaint will be accepted:
- The student must provide written confirmation they have given their permission for that person to act on their behalf before the complaint will be considered.
  - The Student Resolution Manager will speak to the student to ensure they are the author of the complaint and agree to abide by these regulations.
  - The complainant must agree to accept that they will be copied in to all correspondence from the University, and the University will not accept any responsibility for the actions of the third party.
- The Student Resolution Manager will accept withdrawal of permission if made in writing by the student.
- 20 Raising a complaint gives the University permission to investigate the facts and to discuss the matter with appropriate people. Information submitted will remain confidential, as far as this is consistent with other party's right to know details of any allegations that are made against them. However, it should be noted that if a complaint names specific members of staff, those staff will be entitled to see the written complaint. If the student is unhappy with such disclosures, he/she must make this clear on the complaint form, and he/she will be advised of the extent to which we are able to process the complaint.
- 21 If a complaint has elements relating to different areas of the University, each area may have to undertake a separate investigation. This may lead to delays in the investigation being completed, although the University will always take steps to try to ensure this does not happen.
- 22 Generally complaints will be treated as being against Bucks New University and not against individual members of staff. Accordingly, any resolution will usually be offered by the University rather than by an individual.
- 23 A written record will be kept of all meetings and telephone calls and retained in a confidential file.
- 24 Every effort to work within the published timescales will be undertaken, however, where necessary timescales may be extended as long as all parties are updated on the progress of the investigation on a regular basis.

- 25 The University will be as transparent as possible in responding to a complaint. Requests for access to certain documents will be considered within the boundaries of the Data Protection Act 1998 or the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 26 New evidence which is relevant to the original complaint may be submitted as it becomes available; however this may increase the length of time taken to deal with the case.
- 27 Investigations into complaints will be carried out in a timely, objective and thorough manner, and any judgment made will be on the basis of the evidence provided by all parties. Whenever possible an investigation will be carried out by a member of staff who is independent of the situation.
- 28 If legal action is pending, the University reserves the right to suspend internal investigations until such a time as the legal action is resolved.
- 29 Complaints will not be rejected on the grounds of minor procedural errors on the part of the complainant. Examples of minor procedural errors may include (this list is not exhaustive):
  - Documents not being signed or dated (they should be returned for completion and then actioned)
  - Complaints being received out of time. The complainant should be asked to explain why they are out of time – if the explanation is reasonable, the complaint should be processed
  - Minor discrepancies in factual data, such as dates, names etc. being incorrect

## Procedure

See: **Appendix 1: Student complaints process diagram**

### Stage 1 - Informal

- 30 Complainants **MUST** attempt to resolve complaints locally before a complaint can be escalated to the formal stage. Complaints will not be accepted straight to the formal stage.
- 31 This approach is generally more effective as it offers a quick solution and avoids the inevitable delays incurred in submitting and processing a formal complaint. The student should raise any concerns as soon as possible, and in any case within 20 days of the issue arising.
- 32 The student should contact in writing the Head of Academic Department, Course Leader or other senior member of staff. They should give full details of their complaint and ensure they include any relevant evidence. Examples of appropriate evidence may be copy emails, screenshots, reference to the specific area of a publication, dates of meetings, etc. An acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint should be sent to the student within 48 hours and confirmation of the expected outcome date which will be within 10 working days of receipt.
- 33 **The outcome must be recorded on the Record of Informal Complaint Form**, see Form 1, and forwarded to the student, along with any additional evidence and including reasons for the decision

- 34 Anonymous complaints are normally ignored and will only exceptionally be progressed if sent through an intermediary such as the SU Advice Centre. Unsigned complaints can only be accepted if they are submitted via email. Hard copy forms (i.e. delivered by hand or post) which are unsigned will be returned to the sender with a request for resubmission (if anonymous they will be ignored). It is a requirement that every area that deals with any student complaints must keep a record of those complaints (please contact the Student Resolution Manager for a template). Those records will be made available to the Student Resolution Manager at regular intervals during the year.
- 35 Students may find it useful to seek initial, independent advice before proceeding with their complaint from Bucks Students' Union Advice Centre, and should be advised to do so.

## Stage 2 – Formal

- 36 If there is no preliminary resolution, or the student remains unsatisfied with the outcome of the informal stage, within 10 days of receiving the University's written response to the informal complaint, the student should submit their formal complaint in writing on a **Notification of formal complaint form** (see Form 2) and send it to the Student Resolution Manager at [resolution@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:resolution@bucks.ac.uk). It is important to include as much relevant information as possible, and submit the form with supporting documentary evidence. If a complaint is about or concerns the Student Resolution Manager, it should be addressed to the Principal Registrar, Academic Registry. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted (see 33 above).
- 37 The Student Resolution Manager will conduct an initial review of the complaint to confirm whether it can be accepted for investigation. If the complaint cannot be accepted, the student will be informed, with full reasons why, and advice on any further action they may take.
- 38 The key questions considered in the initial review will be:
- Is this the appropriate procedure for the matter raised to be considered under?
  - Was early resolution attempted? If not, can it be referred back to that stage?
  - Is it clear what the complaint is about, and which areas of the University are involved?
  - Has appropriate evidence been provided?
  - What outcome is the student hoping for? Can that outcome be achieved?
  - Is the complaint suitable for mediation?
  - Should any assistance or support be provided to the student in taking this forward?
- 39 If the complaint is accepted the Student Resolution Manager will refer the complaint to a Complaint Manager who has had no previous involvement in the subject matter of the complaint.
- 40 The Complaint Manager will appoint an Investigating Officer as soon as possible. They will carry out an investigation into the complaint within the timelines prescribed below. The Student Resolution Manager will offer advice and guidance on any aspect of the procedure as required. The University considers it to be of great importance that a thorough and unbiased investigation is carried out.
- 41 If a complaint is sent directly to the Vice Chancellor or another member of the Senior Management Team, they will refer it to Student Resolution Manager in the first instance.

## **The investigation**

- 42 Within 48 hours of the referral, the Investigating Officer will contact the complainant to confirm the main issues detailed in the complaint, and let them know the expected outcome date.
- 43 The Investigating Officer will undertake a thorough investigation into the matters raised in the complaint, and compile a report setting out their findings and recommendations.
- 44 The Investigating Officer will aim to conclude the investigation within 15 working days of receiving the complaint, however this will depend on a number of factors, for example (this list is not exhaustive): the nature and circumstances of the complaint, the availability of resources and the availability of any members of staff or students who need to be interviewed.
- 45 The Investigating Officer will continue to keep the complainant informed of when they expect to conclude the investigation.
- 46 The investigation report, which must be forwarded to the Complaint Manager (copy to the Student Resolution Manager), must confirm whether the complaint is upheld (fully or partially), or is not upheld, with detailed reasons given to support the decision. Each point raised by the complainant must be addressed individually and a detailed response made within the report. The report must also list details of the investigation, including any meetings held (either in person or by telephone) as well as all evidence considered as part of the investigation.
- 47 All parties to the complaint have the right to see any and all evidence pertinent to the matter.
- 48 In certain circumstances, in order to facilitate the investigation, the Investigating Officer has the discretion to hold a meeting with the relevant parties including:
  - the complainant
  - any employee or student involved in the case

## **Investigation meeting**

- 49 During the investigation, the Investigating Officer may hold meetings with all or any of the parties involved in the matter. The intention of holding a meeting is to give all parties a chance to air their views, and to clarify the salient points the complainant wishes to raise. The meeting should be conducted in as informal manner as possible. Although the complainant and respondent would always be encouraged to present their case in person, all parties can ask to be accompanied to the meeting by one other person for support; this may be a friend, colleague or representative from the SU Advice Centre. Neither party can be accompanied by legal representation. It should be made clear that if either the complainant or respondent choose not to attend the meeting it will not prejudice the investigation; however the outcome will be reliant on the evidence available at the time.
- 50 Meetings will follow the format:
  - Introductions will be made.
  - The complainant (or their representative) will be asked to explain the issue and present any supporting evidence. Questions may be asked to clarify certain points.
  - Other parties to the complaint will be given an opportunity to respond to the complaint. Questions may be asked to clarify certain points.

- 51 Notes must be made during the meeting, which will be held on file and forwarded to the Student Resolution Manager with the investigation report.
- 52 An agreement of the outcome may be made at the end of the meeting. In some circumstances the Investigating Officer will wish to make further investigations, in which case, he/she will confirm to the complainant when the outcome is likely to be known.

### **Outcome of the investigation**

- 53 On receipt of the investigation report the Complaint Manager will consider the case and make a decision whether or not to accept the findings. This decision must be communicated to the Student Resolution Manager within 2 working days.
- 54 The Student Resolution Manager will be responsible for making a formal response to the complainant, and this will be sent to him/her within 3 working days of receiving the written report and confirmation of the decision from the Complaint Manager. The response will include recommendations for resolution, which may include one or more of the following (this list is not exhaustive):
  - That there is no case to answer and the matter should not be pursued; or that it should be pursued under another procedure.
  - That the complaint appears to have substance and is sufficiently serious to warrant an apology.
  - Another form of redress that can be offered to the student in writing.
  - That the matter is a disciplinary one in which case the matter should be referred under the relevant disciplinary procedure and the complaints procedures is discontinued. In that case the complainant will be updated, but may not learn the outcome of the disciplinary procedure, due to data protection legislation.
  - That the complaint is frivolous, malicious or vexatious in which case it will not be pursued and a disciplinary allegation may be made against the student.

### **Correspondence from the University regarding the complaint**

- 55 Every attempt will be made to resolve the complaint within 15 working days of receiving it, although sometimes this time frame may be extended in order for all relevant parties to be allowed time to respond to any queries etc. Where this is the case, the Investigating Officer will email all parties by no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> working day to inform them of the revised timescales.
- 56 Once the investigation is completed a report will be written (using the template at Form 3). The report must include information about why the complaint has not been upheld or confirmation that it has, and details of any redress and/or remedial action which is being offered. Recommendations for improvements in practice or regulations will also be included in the report.
- 57 The report must be submitted to the Complaint Manager, with a copy to the Student Resolution Manager. The Complaint Manager must confirm in writing to the Student Resolution Manager whether they accept the findings within 48 hours of receipt.
- 58 The Student Resolution Manager will write to inform the student of the outcome, and include a copy of the investigation report and any other appropriate documents.
- 59 The outcome letter will also include information about the next stage of the complaints process. The student will be requested to confirm if they accept the proposed



Student complaints procedure resolution and any related form of redress, within 10 days of the date of the outcome letter.

- 60 The student may confirm in writing they wish to accept the recommendations and the redress, in this case the formal complaints procedure is then closed. Alternatively the student may confirm in writing they wish to decline to accept the proposed resolution and the redress. He/she must then decide whether to pursue the matter, or not. If not, no further action is required. If they do wish to progress to the next stage, they should go to Stage 3 – Request for Review (see below) N.B. – this must be done within 10 days of receiving the outcome letter. If a response is not received from the student within 10 days, it will be assumed that the student has accepted the outcome and no further action is required.
- 61 If the student does not respond at this stage a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued once the 10 day deadline has passed which states that the matter is closed and that the complainant has not completed the University procedures in full.
- 62 If the Student Resolution Manager accepts the recommendation that the complaint is frivolous, malicious or vexatious, an allegation may be made against the student under the Student Disciplinary Procedures which will then govern the case.

### **Redress**

- 63 Redress is what is offered to the complainant if the investigation concludes that there should be a remedy offered to address the problems raised. Redress will fit the circumstances of the case and may include one or more of the following:
- an apology
  - an opportunity to repeat the experience under better circumstances (not applicable to academic assessment process or results which constitute academic judgment)
  - the return of tuition fee, or proportion of fee, or other financial compensation
  - the provision of a change to the organisation or nature of the University's service or facilities or regulations if found at fault
  - any other appropriate action such as counselling or other support.
- 64 The Decision letter notifying the redress is kept on the student's personal file and is treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the University's data retention policy. If a request for review (see below) is not received within 10 days then the Decision letter constitutes the final stage of the University's procedures.

### **Other outcomes**

- 65 When a complaint is made about a named member of staff, the investigation will consider the evidence available, including interviews with all parties. If the investigation finds clear evidence of bad practice the matter will be referred to the University Capability or Grievance Procedures (contact Human Resources for more information). It should however be noted that the complaint investigation in no way implies any assumption of fault on the part of the employee.

### **Stage 3 - Review**

- 66 If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage they may be able to request a review. The review stage will **not** consider the case afresh or involve a further investigation and will **not** consider any new issues raised by the student.
- 67 Requests for review will **only** be accepted on the following grounds:

- the procedures during the formal stage were not followed properly
- the outcome was not reasonable given the circumstances presented
- New evidence which was unable, for valid reasons, to be provided earlier in the process and which would have had a significant ('material') effect on the decision

Note: Students should use the Request for review form which will help them to identify their grounds for a review and provide associated guidance on the process. Completed forms should be submitted to [resolution@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:resolution@bucks.ac.uk) **within 10 working days** of receiving notification of the outcome of the formal stage.

68 A Request for review will be allocated to an appropriate member of staff who has not been involved at any previous stage. Reviewers will be asked to consider whether:

- the procedure was followed during the formal stage
- the outcome was reasonable in all circumstances
- new 'material' evidence has been provided
- valid reasons have been supplied by the student for not submitting such evidence during the formal stage

Note: It is expected that Reviews will be completed **within 10 working days** of receipt.

69 Where a Review identifies issues with the outcome of the case at the formal stage, the Review will be **upheld** and the matter will be **referred back** to the formal stage for reconsideration. This decision will be communicated to the student in writing along with an explanation of the next steps in the process and the likely timeframe.

Note: Reconsideration of the case should be concluded as soon as possible. If a compelling case to overturn the decision is identified, appropriate action may be taken to ensure that the matter is resolved without further delay, i.e. without reconvening the original decision-making body.

70 The Where a Request for Review is **not accepted** (because it did not correspond to one or more of the grounds in paragraph 66 above) or is accepted and subsequently **not upheld**, this decision will be communicated to the student in writing by issuing a Completion of Procedures letter outlining the reasons for the decision.

Note: The Completion of Procedures letter will also advise the student about:

- their right to further action through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)
- the timescales for doing so
- where and how to access support.

## Complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator

71 If a complainant is still unhappy with the outcome after all the University's internal procedures have been completed they may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

72 Any complaint to the OIA must be submitted within 3 months of the Completion of Procedures letter being received by the student (see page 8). The OIA will not normally consider complaints which have not followed the University's procedures through all stages, including appeal.

- 73 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education may be contacted at:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator  
Second Floor  
Abbey Gate  
57-75 Kings Road  
Reading  
RG1 3AB

Tel: 0118 959 9813

Email: [enquiries@oiahe.org](mailto:enquiries@oiahe.org)

Website: [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)

## **Additional information**

### **Rights of complainant and respondent**

- 74 The student and respondent have the right to be accompanied at any meetings by a representative. Neither party can be accompanied by legal representation
- 75 At all stages of the procedure disabled students have a right to reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. Other students may be provided appropriate support depending on available resources.
- 76 A person who is the subject of a complaint has the right to be represented, to express their side of the matter to staff dealing with investigating the complaint, and see all evidence associated with the case.
- 77 If the respondent feels aggrieved at the result they may ask to meet the Student Resolution Manager who will give them a full explanation of the decision.
- 78 Like the student who made the complaint, the respondent has the same right to Request a Review.
- 79 The University makes training available to all relevant employees in appropriate handling of complaints under these procedures.

### **Mental health or disturbed behaviour**

- 80 If a mental health difficulty or the disturbed behaviour of any person has a bearing on the nature of the complaint, the case is not normally considered under these procedures but under the University's Fitness to Study procedures. The University Disability Service can advise further on how discretion can be exercised in this regard.

### **Other conduct issues**

- 81 The University has zero tolerance towards those whose behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and will take action to protect its staff.
- 82 The University's definition of unacceptable behaviour includes communicating with the University in a malicious, vexatious or aggressive manner for example:
- Making frivolous complaints, or multiple complaints regarding the same subject
  - Acting in a threatening manner either verbally, through an e-mail or by letter
  - Making claims that are knowingly false or unfounded.

- 83 If the behaviour of a complainant is unacceptable the University will normally tell the complainant why their behaviour is considered unacceptable and give them an opportunity to amend it. If the behaviour continues, the University will take action.
- 84 Action that may be taken may include but is not limited to:
- requesting contact in a particular form (for example letters only);
  - requiring contact to take place with a named person;
  - restricting telephone calls or emails to specified days and times;
  - asking the complainant to appoint a representative to correspond with us;
  - asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct.
- 85 Where a complainant continues to behave in a way considered to be unacceptable, the student may be referred under the University disciplinary procedure and/or the University will cease consideration of the case and issue a completion of procedures (CoP) letter.
- 86 Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, the University will consider reporting the matter to the Police or taking legal action.

## **Monitoring and reporting**

- 87 The application of the procedures will be monitored, including protected characteristics, by the Student Resolution Manager, in accordance with the University's duty under s.149 (public sector equality duty) of the Equality Act 2010, to ensure consistency of approach and compliance with relevant legislation.
- 88 On an annual basis a summary report of complaints received will be reported to the University's Senate and Council, although the report will not include any personal details about the complainants (such as name, student number etc.).
- 89 Heads of School and Directors of Service are responsible for monitoring actions taken in response to complaints in their Schools and Directorates and for applying lessons learned in their schools, faculties or directorates. The Student Resolution Manager will contact them at regular intervals throughout the year to ensure the recommendations made have been actioned. This information will be included in the Student Complaints Annual Report to Council.

## **Mediation**

- 90 The University offers a mediation service for students. Mediation may be offered at any stage of the complaints procedure. Please contact the Student Resolution Manager for more information.
- 91 These procedures are compliant with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Code, Section B9, and have been the subject of an equality analysis.

## **Further information and definitions**

- 92 If required this document can be made available in an alternative format such as Braille, tape, disc, email or a larger font size. Please let us know what you need by contacting the Student Centre.
- 93 All University formal documents relate to the policies, strategies, procedures and regulations of the University having been approved by the appropriate formally

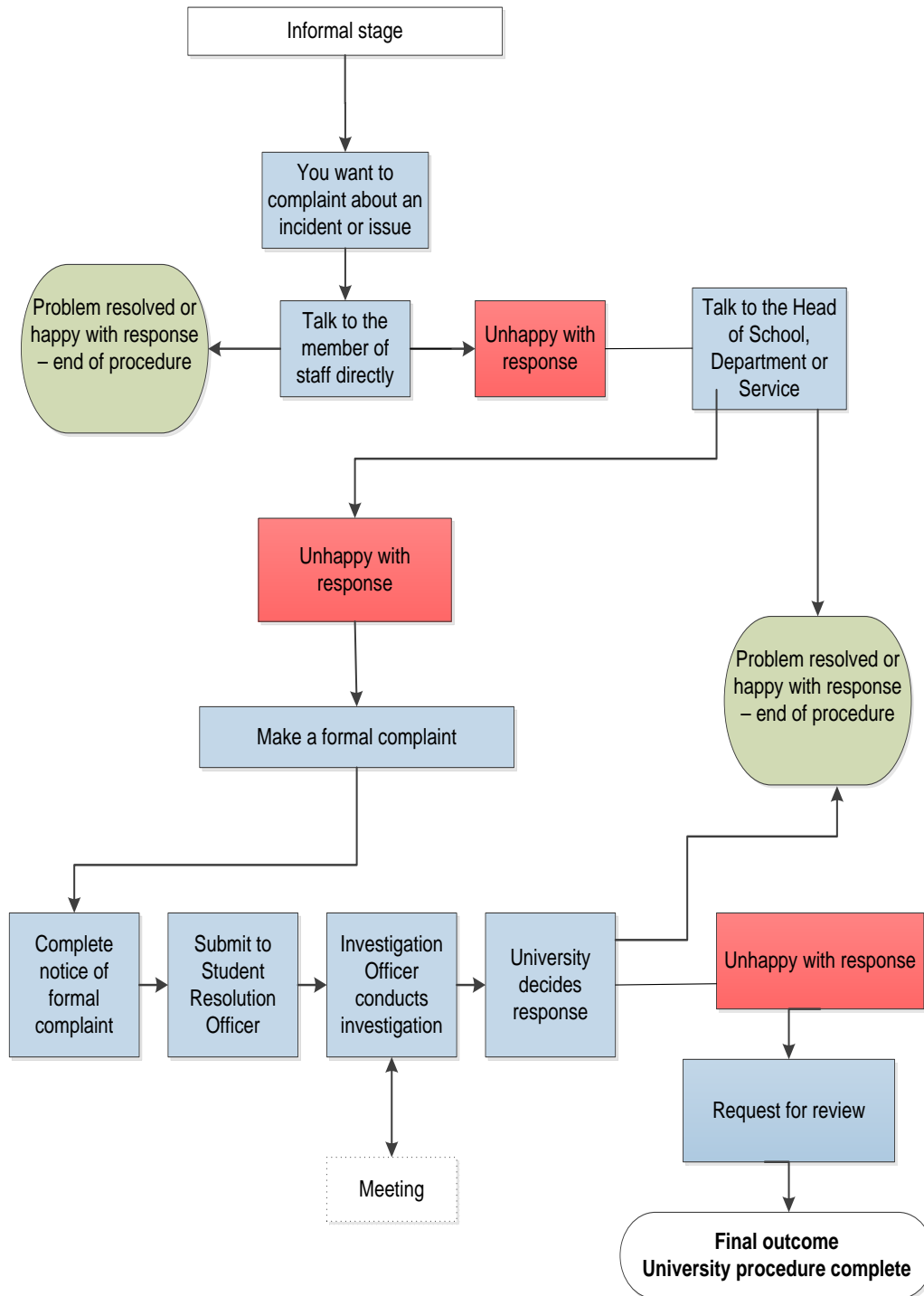
Student complaints procedure recognised and constituted body. All University employees and students are required to adhere to the formal processes, procedures and regulations of the University.

- 94 This document should not be read in isolation as other University processes/formal documents could be relevant. A full listing of all formal documents is available on the University's website. Any interpretation of this formal document will be at the discretion of the Academic Registrar.
- 95 All previous versions of this document shall be rescinded.
- 96 The names of committees and titles of posts may change from time to time. This shall not invalidate the powers of the equivalent successor committees or post holders.

## Definitions

- 97 **Learning Partnership Agreement:** This agreement has been jointly created by the University and the Bucks Students' Union to encourage the commitment of all students and employees to the principles of partnership and to make clear the basis on which that partnership rests.
- 98 **Complaint:** means either an oral statement or note made to a University employee at the informal stage, or a written notification on a Notification of formal complaint form at the formal stage.
- 99 **Days:** means working days which for the purposes of these procedures are Monday to Friday, other than bank holidays and days when the University is closed to students and employees.
- 100 **Respondent:** is any person who is the direct subject of a complaint and who has rights to be interviewed, see evidence, participate in meetings, be informed of the outcome and be appeal against it. It may also mean the person who is representing the University area that is being complained about and who is responding on the University's behalf.

## Appendix 1: Student complaints process diagram



## Appendix 2: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 1. Where can I obtain a copy of the Student Complaints Procedure?

You can download it from the University website ([www.bucks.ac.uk/](http://www.bucks.ac.uk/))

Request a copy by emailing: [resolution@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:resolution@bucks.ac.uk) or calling: 01494 522141 x 4294

### 2. What can I complain about?

- ✓ Failure by the University to meet obligations including those outlined in course/student handbooks or the Learning Partnership Agreement.
- ✓ Misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by the University
- ✓ Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration
- ✓ Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided by the University
- ✓ If you feel you have been bullied, harassed or discriminated against†

### 3. What can't I complain about using these procedures?

- ✗ The process or results of the assessment of academic work - instead use the Academic Appeals process.
- ✗ Concern or dissatisfaction about a decision made under another regulation, such as academic misconduct, disciplinary or fitness to practise
- ✗ Accusing another student of misconduct (not academic misconduct) – in that case the allegation will be dealt with under the Student Disciplinary procedures.
- ✗ If an employee of the University is accused of misconduct – in that case the allegation will be dealt with under the Employee Disciplinary procedures.

### 4. Who can I contact to get advice from if I am unsure about any aspect of the Complaints Procedure?

The University Student Resolution Manager, email: [resolution@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:resolution@bucks.ac.uk), or telephone 01494 522141 extn. 4294.

Alternatively the Bucks Students' Union Advice Centre can provide you with independent advice and support. Email [suadvice@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@bucks.ac.uk) with any query or to make an appointment.

### 5. What are the timescales for submitting a complaint?

It is always recommended that you submit your complaint as soon as possible, but you must do so within 20 working days of the issue happening.

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† For more information please refer to the Student policy – bullying and harassment

**6. Can someone else complain on my behalf?**

It is encouraged that you submit the complaint yourself. However, if you feel unable to do so for any reason, a complaint CAN be pursued by a third party (usually a parent or partner). In this case the student MUST supply written confirmation they have given their permission for that person to act on their behalf.

**7. Can a group of students submit a complaint?**

Yes, although one member of the group must be elected to speak on behalf of everyone and all correspondence will be directed through that person. All of the complainants must provide written authorisation before the complaint can be accepted.

**8. Will my complaint remain confidential?**

As far as it is practicable your complaint will always be treated in confidence and be treated with sensitivity by any employee of the University dealing with it. You should note that if you are complaining about a person (such as another student or employee of the University), they are entitled to see the details of your complaint. Other than that, only those employees who are involved in the various stages of the complaint will have access to the documents and evidence related to your complaint, and they will treat the information with respect and confidentiality at all times.

**9. Can I bring someone as support to any meetings?**

If a meeting is arranged to discuss your complaint, you may bring someone as support, this person can speak on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so. You may choose to bring a friend, colleague or Adviser from the SU Advice Centre. As a courtesy, please let the meeting organiser know in advance who will be coming with you. A legal adviser, such as a lawyer, may not represent either you or the University.

**10. What information should I include in my complaint?**

The most important things to include are:

- Be clear what your complaint or grievance is really about.
- Tell us outcome you hope to achieve.
- Include information about the relevant facts – what, where, when.
- Your name, student number and contact details.
- Any additional documents, such as written statements from third parties etc.

**11. Will I be treated differently by my tutors if I make a complaint about them?**

It is the University's Policy that no student bringing a complaint, whether successfully or otherwise, will be treated less favourably by any member of staff than if the complaint had not been brought. If evidence to the contrary is reported then the member of staff may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.



**12. What outcome can I expect to get if my complaint is upheld?**

As the University prefers to remain flexible in its approach to complaints and possible outcomes, it is difficult to predict what outcome any individual complaint may achieve. You can discuss the possible realistic outcomes with the SU Advice Centre.