

Student Complaints Procedure

Approved by:	Effective date:	Next review:
Education Committee	1 August 2026	1 June 2028

Procedure Statement

This document outlines the steps for managing student complaints at the University, detailing each stage of the internal complaints process and the escalation process following its completion.

Who needs to know about the Procedure?

All Academic and Professional Services staff, all registered students, recent graduates and the Student's Union.

Purpose of the Procedure

The Student Complaints Procedure outlines the University's approach to addressing Complaints raised by registered University students or recent graduates of the University. The Procedure informs students, staff, and the Student's Union of the Stages within the Procedures and how to submit a Complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator of Higher Education (OIA) following the completion of the internal Procedure, also known as a Completion of Procedures (CoP).

Contacts

The Student Governance Team is responsible for the operation and management of this Procedure, including providing procedural advice and assistance, and producing relevant guidance and templates. The team can be contacted by emailing: casehandling@canterbury.ac.uk

The Students' Union can provide support, advice, and advocacy for students at the University's home campuses that wish to make a Complaint. The Students' Union Advice Centre can be contacted by emailing: advice@ccsu.co.uk

Student Complaints Procedure

Contents

Student Complaints Procedure	3
Part One – How to Raise a Complaint.....	3
1. Introduction and Definition	3
2. Applicability	3
3. Group Complaints Applicability	5
4. Anonymous Complaints	5
5. Reasonable Adjustments	5
6. Procedure	5
7. Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education	10
Part Two – General Provisions	10
8. Complaints by Students at a Collaborative Partner	10
9. Students on Placements	10
10. Apprentices	10
11. Records, Monitoring and Confidentiality	11

Student Complaints Procedure

Student Complaints Procedure

Part One – How to Raise a Complaint

1. Introduction and Definition

- 1.1. This Procedure sets out how the University will handle concerns and complaints that a student may wish to pursue.
- 1.2. There may be instances where students engaged in activities related to their University experience are dissatisfied with some aspects of the activities they engage with. Should this occur, it is important that concerns are raised as quickly as possible.
- 1.3. The University is committed to providing all students with a high-quality education and student experience. It is recognised that there may be instances when it is considered by the student that the University has not provided the quality of education or level of service that is expected from the University.
- 1.4. Students can raise concerns or express dissatisfaction without risk of disadvantage or recrimination. The Students' Union can advise students at the University's home campuses and offer support at each stage of the Student Complaints Procedure.
- 1.5. The University defines a Complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the action or omission of the University's teaching-related or service-related provision.
- 1.6. This Procedure allows for students to submit a Complaint relating to decisions made under the Code of Practice on the Freedom of Speech and External Speakers.
- 1.7. The University will process all information in accordance with its Privacy Notice and the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Complaints will be handled with an appropriate level of confidentiality, with information released only to those who need it for the purposes of considering the matters raised or responding to the Complaint. No third party should be told any more about the complaint than is necessary to obtain the information required from them.

2. Applicability

- 2.1. This Procedure applies to any student registered on a course at the University, including higher or degree apprentices and students who are on approved periods of interruption, temporarily withdrawn, or temporarily suspended can submit a complaint under this Procedure.
- 2.2. Students studying at a Collaborative Partner institution should refer to Section 8 of this Procedure and the Complaints from CCCU Registered Students at Partner Institutions Procedure.
- 2.3. Where a complaint relates to a practice placement element of their course, students should refer to Section 9.

Student Complaints Procedure

- 2.4. Student Apprentices should refer to Section 10.
- 2.5. Students are encouraged and expected to raise concerns as soon as the action or omission occurs and within **no later than three months** of the problem or issue occurring.
- 2.6. Delays in submitting a Stage 1 Complaint will need to be fully explained. Stage 1 Complaints submitted after three months from the action or omission arising will not normally be considered and will be deemed invalid unless there is good reason accompanied by supporting evidence for the delay in submitting the Stage 1 Formal Complaint. The Complaint Reviewer will determine if the evidence provided demonstrates the reason for the delay in submitting a Stage 1 Formal Complaint. Consideration will also be given to the circumstances of the complaint and the student. Students will be provided with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter if the complaint is rejected because it has been submitted late.
- 2.7. Complaints from former students or recent graduates can be submitted within **three months** of the date of leaving the University, or the conferred award in the case of recent graduates. Complaints received after this time will not usually be considered unless there is accompanying evidence to demonstrate the reasons for the delay in submitting a Stage 1 Formal Complaint form.
- 2.8. Where a Stage 1 Formal Complaint from a former student or recent graduate is submitted outside of the three-month timeframe stipulated in paragraph 2.7, and the evidence does not demonstrate the reasons for the delay, the decision may be to reject the complaint. A Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter will be provided if the complaint is rejected if it has been submitted outside of the three-month timeframe.
- 2.9. Where aspects of a Stage 1 Complaint relates to an allegation regarding the conduct or behaviour of a staff member employed by the University, the Student Governance Team may need to seek advice from the Human Resources (HR) team to determine if the nature of the concern falls partly or wholly under the Disciplinary Procedure for staff, and liaise with the line manager of the staff member the allegation relates to.
- 2.10. The Student Governance Team will liaise with the Human Resources (HR) team to determine whether some or all the aspects of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint should be investigated under the University's Disciplinary Procedure for staff.
- 2.11. The Student Governance Team will investigate aspects of the complaint that do not relate to staff conduct. Where concerns about staff conduct are being investigated under the Disciplinary Procedure for staff, the Student Governance Team may conduct meetings with students who have raised these concerns. Staff members may be contacted by Human Resources (HR) and in line with the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 2.12. It may not be appropriate to share full details of proceedings under the University's staff Disciplinary Procedure with students. However, in so far as it is reasonable to do so, following investigation of the matter, the Student Governance Team will provide the student with an outcome that addresses

Student Complaints Procedure

the substance of the key issues, relevant fact finding following the investigation and any remedies or resolutions that relate to the student.

3. Group Complaints Applicability

- 3.1. Students may submit a Complaint under this Procedure, individually or as part of a group. Complaints will be responded to individually and contact details for each student should be included on the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form. In these circumstances, the group should appoint a group representative (no more than two representatives) to facilitate communications for the purposes of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint investigation. All students named in a group Complaint should have actively agreed to be a part of it, and the University may take reasonable measures to verify this.
- 3.2. Students are permitted to provide individual statements should they share the concerns of the group and in addition, want to raise individual concerns in relation to the Complaint being raised.

4. Anonymous Complaints

- 4.1. Students can report concerns that they have either personally experienced or have witnessed regarding the action or omission of the University's teaching-related or service-related provision, defined as a Complaint, for the purposes of this Procedure. Anonymous complaints may be used to provide statistical information to inform proactive and preventative work, or to allow the University to monitor concerns across the University's teaching and service provisions. Choosing to complain anonymously means the scope of the complaint is limited and therefore, it may not be able to be investigated or responded to by the University.

5. Reasonable Adjustments

- 5.1. The University may make appropriate reasonable adjustments when operating this Procedure to take account of the requirements of individual students with disabilities. The student should inform the University about any reasonable adjustments that may be needed as part of the Student Complaints Procedure. Where appropriate, the Student Governance Team will consult with Student Wellbeing and Support.

6. Procedure

Early Resolution

- 6.1. Early Resolution provides the opportunity for students to raise concerns before escalating to a Stage 1 Formal Complaint under this Procedure. Early Resolution is aimed at addressing concerns without the requirement of completing and submitting a Stage 1 Formal Complaint Form.
- 6.2. Any student can seek to resolve their concerns through Early Resolution. This can be raised with an appropriate member of University staff, such as a Personal Academic Tutor, Course Director, Module Lead, or another member of staff from the area or the service that the concern relates to.

Student Complaints Procedure

Students may contact the Student Governance Team to seek procedural advice about how to raise their concerns through Early Resolution or, if preferred, formally.

- 6.3. If a student has raised a concern through Early Resolution, they will receive a response from the area and any measures that have been taken to address the matters raised.
- 6.4. Students can submit a Stage 1 Formal Complaint should they be dissatisfied with Early Resolution.
- 6.5. Students who wish to pursue a Stage 1 Formal Complaint after Early Resolution will be expected to complete a Stage 1 Formal Complaint Form to proceed to Stage 1 of the Student Complaints Procedure.

Stage 1 Formal Complaint

- 6.6. The University encourages students to resolve concerns via Early Resolution. The University also recognises that students may wish to submit a Stage 1 Formal Complaint to address their concerns. The Stage 1 Formal Complaint form is available to any student.
- 6.7. Students should complete a Stage 1 Formal Complaint form to initiate Stage 1 of the Student Complaints Procedure. Where a student chooses to submit a Stage 1 Formal Complaint, they must do so within three months of the act or omission arising. They should clearly state within the form:
 - 6.7.1. The nature of the complaint.
 - 6.7.2. The actions that have been taken to resolve the concerns, and details of Early Resolution that has taken place, where relevant.
 - 6.7.3. The resolution and/or remedy they are seeking from the Stage 1 Formal Complaint.
- 6.8. Students should include all the evidence they wish to be considered as part of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint and to confirm all relevant evidence has been submitted. Evidence submitted after submission of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form, or after any extension granted, may not be considered, and/or may result in a delay in the student receiving the Stage 1 Formal Complaint outcome.
- 6.9. On receipt of a completed Stage 1 Formal Complaint form, the Student Governance Team will confirm receipt of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint, and the student will be notified when they can expect to receive an outcome to the Stage 1 Formal Complaint. The Stage 1 Formal Complaint form must be completed in full by the student. The Student Governance Team reserves the right to reject forms that are incomplete or lack sufficient detail to identify the substance of the concerns and may not proceed with an investigation until a fully completed form is submitted by the student. In such circumstances, the Student Governance Team will liaise with the student.
- 6.10. It is expected that Stage 1 of this Procedure shall be completed within **30 working days** of receipt of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint Form. In complex cases, Stage 1 may take longer, and, in such

Student Complaints Procedure

cases, the student will be notified of any delays and the timeframe in which they are likely to receive the Stage 1 Formal Complaint outcome.

- 6.11. The Stage 1 Formal Complaint will be considered by a member of the Student Governance Team who has not previously been involved in the matter to avoid bias or the perception of bias.
- 6.12. On receipt of the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form, the Student Governance Team shall determine whether:
 - 6.12.1. The complaint has been submitted within the relevant timeframes stipulated in paragraphs 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8.
 - 6.12.2. The Student Complaints Procedure is appropriate or whether the issue should be considered through another University Procedure. For example, Exceptional Circumstances, Academic Appeals, Student Conduct, Fitness to Study, and/or Fitness to Practise. In such circumstances, the student will be informed of this in writing and details of the next steps required.
 - 6.12.3. The complaint is vexatious or without substance or merit. In such instances, the Head of Case Handling and Investigations will be consulted, and the Stage 1 Formal Complaint will either be dismissed or considered. Where the decision is that the complaint is considered frivolous or vexatious, the Student Complaints Procedure may be terminated, and the student shall receive a written outcome and Completion of Procedures (CoP).
- 6.13. Frivolous or vexatious complaints may include:
 - 6.13.1. Obsessive, harassing or repetitive complaints.
 - 6.13.2. Insistence on pursuing unreasonable complaints and/or unrealistic, unreasonable outcomes.
 - 6.13.3. Insistence on pursuing reasonable complaints in an unreasonable manner or by the adoption of unreasonable behaviour.
 - 6.13.4. Complaints designed to cause disruption or annoyance or demands for resolution lacking any serious purpose or value.
- 6.14. The Student Governance Team shall appoint a Complaint Reviewer to investigate the Stage 1 Formal Complaint, consider the evidence and documentation that has been submitted with the Stage 1 Formal Complaint form and determine the next steps based on the information and evidence provided.
- 6.15. Complaint investigations and considerations are evidence based. Students should submit all the evidence and information they expect to be considered in the Stage 1 Formal Complaint investigation, as stated in paragraph 6.8. There may be instances in which the Student Governance Team may request a meeting as part of the investigation to discuss the Stage 1 Formal Complaint,

Student Complaints Procedure

the evidence provided and any potential resolution. The student shall be given **5 working days'** notice of any such meeting.

- 6.16. The student can be accompanied at the meeting by a "Friend" by way of support, who shall normally be a member of staff, student at the University or Student's Union advisor. The "Friend's" role at the meeting is one of silent observer, but they may be permitted to speak on behalf of the student if it would assist the Complaint investigation. The student will be responsible for arranging the "Friend's" attendance at the meeting. It is not usually permitted to be accompanied by a legal representative or advisor, but the University may allow this only in exceptional circumstances. The "Friend" must not have had any involvement in the concerns on which the Stage 1 Formal Complaint is based.
- 6.17. The student can request that the meeting be rescheduled on one occasion, provided this takes place within **5 working days** of the originally scheduled meeting date. However, requesting a meeting be rescheduled may result in a delay in the student receiving the Stage 1 Formal Complaint outcome.
- 6.18. The Complaint Reviewer can continue with the investigation and come to a determination where a meeting has been scheduled and/or rescheduled within a reasonable period and the student has chosen not to attend the meeting.
- 6.19. When determining any findings, the Complaint Reviewer shall make a decision on the balance of probabilities.
- 6.20. A Stage 1 Formal Complaint outcome shall provide the findings of the complaint, the decision in relation to the issues raised and any resolution, remedies and/or actions that will be taken. The outcome will also inform the student of their options should they be dissatisfied with the outcome, including how to request a Stage 2 Complaint Review, where relevant.
- 6.21. Where a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 1 Formal Complaint, they may wish to proceed to Stage 2 of this Procedure and submit a Stage 2 Complaint Review form.

Stage 2 Complaint Review

- 6.22. A complaint must have been considered at the Stage 1 Formal Complaint stage before it can be escalated to the Stage 2 Complaint Review.
- 6.23. The purpose of the Complaint Review stage is not to reinvestigate the complaint itself, but to address concerns about the decision, on one or more of the ground(s) set out in paragraphs 6.26.1 to 6.26.3.
- 6.24. The Stage 2 Complaint Review shall be made by submitting a Stage 2 Complaint Review form within **10 working days** of having received an outcome under Stage 1 of this Procedure. Stage 2 Complaint Reviews submitted after this time may not be considered and will be deemed invalid unless there is good reason accompanied by supporting evidence for the delay in submitting the Stage 2 Complaint Review form. A decision will be made as to whether to accept or reject a late Stage 2 Complaint Review by assessing whether the reason given for the delay is acceptable and

Student Complaints Procedure

that the evidence submitted satisfactorily evidences this. Consideration will also be given to the circumstances of the complaint and the student.

- 6.25. When submitting a Stage 2 Complaint Review, the student shall clearly identify the ground(s) upon which they are requesting a Review.
- 6.26. The Stage 2 Complaint Review will be considered by the Head of Case Handling and Investigations (or nominee) on one or more of the following grounds:
 - 6.26.1. There has been a procedural error or other irregularity in applying the Procedure when the Complaint was considered under Stage 1.
 - 6.26.2. There is new evidence that could not be made available when the Stage 1 Complaint was submitted that could have affected the outcome of the complaint.
 - 6.26.3. The outcome decision was upheld or partially upheld but the decision or the proposed remedy was unreasonable or disproportionate.
- 6.27. The Stage 2 Complaint Review will be considered by the Head of Case Handling and Investigations (or nominee) within **20 working days**. The Head of Case Handling and Investigations (or nominee) shall either:
 - 6.27.1. Reject or not uphold the Stage 2 Complaint Review, thereby upholding the original Stage 1 Formal Complaint decision. Students will be issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter.
 - 6.27.2. Uphold or partially uphold the Complaint Review submitted and propose a resolution or a revised resolution.
 - 6.27.3. Uphold the Stage 2 Complaint Review and overturn the Stage 1 Formal complaint outcome decision.
- 6.28. The Stage 2 Complaint Review Outcome will be communicated to the student in writing within **20 working days** of receipt of the Stage 2 Complaint Review form submission. Where the Stage 2 Complaint Review cannot be completed by the expected date, the Head of Case Handling and Investigations (or nominee) will inform the student of the reason and give an indication of when the outcome is likely to be received.
- 6.29. The Stage 2 Complaint Review outcome is considered as a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter. Details on next steps and submitting a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education will be provided. At this point, students have completed the University's internal procedure.

Student Complaints Procedure

7. Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

- 7.1. On receipt of a Completion of Procedures (CoP), students who remain dissatisfied with the outcome may submit a complaint to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#). A complaint must be submitted to the OIA within 12 months of the University's final decision. Further details of how to submit a complaint to the OIA will be provided in the Completion of Procedures (CoP) or Stage 2 Complaint Review outcome. The OIA will normally only consider complaints after the University's internal Procedures have been completed.

Part Two – General Provisions

8. Complaints by Students at a Partner Institution

- 8.1. Students at a Partner Institution should read the [Complaints from CCCU Registered Students at Partner Institutions Procedure](#).
- 8.2. Students at a Partner Institution will be required to submit a complaint in line with the [Complaints from CCCU Registered Students at Partner Institutions Procedure](#).
- 8.3. Where the nature of the concern or the Formal Complaint relates to a service under the primary responsibility of the University, the student should raise it directly with CCCU..
- 8.4. Where the nature of the concern or Formal Complaint relates to a service delivered by the Partnership Institution, the student should raise it directly with the relevant Partner Institution.

9. Students on Placements

- 9.1. Concerns relating to placement provision or a student on placement may either fall under the jurisdiction of the University or the Placement Provider.
- 9.2. In the first instance, students are directed to raise their concerns with the appropriate member of staff or the Placement Supervisor. Students are expected to raise their concerns through the mechanism that exists within their School, such as the Alert form process, to inform the University of their concerns to enable the matters raised to be resolved with the Placement Provider.
- 9.3. Where the student is dissatisfied and wishes to make a Stage 1 Formal Complaint, the matter can be raised by submitting a Stage 1 Formal Complaint Form.

10. Apprentices

- 10.1. Concerns relating to Apprenticeship Training Providers or an apprentice's experience may fall under the remit of the University or the Placement provider.
- 10.2. This Procedure applies when the concerns raised relate to the administration or management of the Apprenticeship by the University.

Student Complaints Procedure

- 10.3. Working practices arising from the Apprenticeship Training Provider fall outside the scope of this Procedure. These concerns are expected to be raised directly with the Apprenticeship Provider. Apprentices can also inform a relevant member of staff at the University of their intention to raise concerns with their Apprenticeship Training Provider.

11. Records, Monitoring and Confidentiality

- 11.1. The University is committed to continuous improvement and welcomes feedback on teaching and service provision.
- 11.2. The Student Governance Team monitors complaints (on an anonymised basis) to identify trends, areas of good practice and improvements to our practices.
- 11.3. The University will process all information in accordance with the Data Protection Act and UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. Further information on how the University collects, processes and stores personal data in the University Privacy Policy. The Student Governance Team will retain information related to any complaint matter in accordance with the Retention Schedule.
- 11.4. The Senior Management Team and relevant committees such as Academic Board are provided with anonymised data and reports concerning complaint considered with under this Procedure.

Student Complaints Procedure

Document information	Description of document information
Document title	Student Complaints Procedure
Department owner	Academic Registry
Document category	Administrative practice - Documents of an administrative or operational nature Ethics and compliance - Documents concerning appropriate conduct or compliance with legal or regulatory requirements Students - documents directly affecting student life at the University
Document owner	Deputy Vice Chancellor
Document manager	Director of Student Governance
Related University policies	
Related University procedures	Student Conduct Procedure Student Academic Appeals Procedure Academic Misconduct Procedure Fitness to Practise Procedure Complaints from CCCU Registered Students at Partner Institutions Procedure Accommodation Complaints Procedure Procedures at University Examinations
Approved by	Education Committee
Date approved	30 July 2026
Date of commencement	1 August 2026
Review date	1 June 2028
Version	6.0
History of revisions of the document	Version 1, approved December 2016 Version 2, approved May 2019 Version 3, approved December 2022 Version 4, approved June 2023 Version 5, approved June 2025 Version 6, approved July 2026
Web address	https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/asset-library/policy-zone/Student-Complaints-Procedure.pdf