



REGULATION B7: COMPLAINTS

(formerly Regulation 26: Complaints Procedures)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The University aims to investigate complaints in a way that:

- (a)** Encourages informal resolution of problems and facilitates their early resolution (see section 6) if possible;
- (b)** Is fair;
- (c)** Treats complaints with appropriate seriousness and confidentiality.

1.2 You can find information about the University's complaints processes for students on the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct webpages.

2. DEFINITION

2.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the University's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University.

3. SCOPE

3.1 This Regulation applies to all currently or recently registered students of the University, including students studying at partner institutions.

3.2 This Regulation covers complaints relating to:

- (a)** Any University policy, procedure or regulation;
- (b)** Academic and non-academic services (excluding academic judgement);
- (c)** Academic and non-academic facilities;
- (d)** The conduct or actions of a member or members of staff;
- (e)** Misinformation regarding academic programmes, University services and facilities;

(f) Keele Postgraduate Association.

3.3 This Regulation does NOT cover complaints relating to:

- (a)** Academic judgement, examination board decisions and appeals committee decisions;
- (b)** Disciplinary and academic misconduct decisions;
- (c)** Any external commercial business operating on University premises but not acting on behalf of the University;
- (d)** Other students of the University;
- (e)** Keele University Students' Union (complaints must be directed to the Students' Union).

3.4 As a student, you should submit your complaint as close as possible to the event(s) concerned to ensure an investigation can take place, if necessary, and so that an appropriate resolution can be sought if the complaint is upheld. If you make a complaint more than 8 weeks after the event(s) concerned, the University reserves the right to reject it. The only exception to this is where you can give a valid explanation for not being able to make a complaint sooner and the University can still gather information relating to your complaint despite the distance in time.

3.5 A group of students can make a collective complaint, provided that the complaint is individually signed by each student concerned.

3.6 The University will not normally accept anonymous complaints. In exceptional cases, the University may accept an anonymous complaint as long as you disclose your identity to an Elected Officer of either Keele University Students' Union or Keele Postgraduate Association, or to Advice and Support at Keele (ASK). They must submit the complaint on your behalf in order for it to be accepted. The University will not normally accept anonymous complaints submitted by any other third party.

3.7 If you ask a third party to submit your complaint, the University will not normally accept it unless you have written directly to the University and clearly authorised that third party to submit your complaint on your behalf. The only exception to this is where an anonymous complaint is submitted on your behalf by the Students' Union, Keele Postgraduate Association or ASK (see paragraph 3.6). The authorised third party must still submit your complaint using the normal form. The University will still deal with the matter as your complaint under this Regulation.

3.8 Complaints should not be vexatious or frivolous in nature, for example designed specifically to cause disruption or annoyance. Where the University decides that a complaint

is either vexatious or frivolous, it will reject the complaint. Where there is reason to believe that a complaint is vexatious or motivated by malice, disciplinary action may be taken under Regulation B1: Student Discipline.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

4.1 The University will handle complaints with an appropriate level of confidentiality. Information will only be released to those who need it to investigate a complaint, respond to a complaint, or implement findings and recommendations that are the result of a complaint.

4.2 No complaint will affect the way you are treated or assessed in your studies.

5. SUPPORT AND REPRESENTATION

5.1 If you make a complaint you have the right to be accompanied at any meetings concerning your complaint. The person accompanying you to any meetings should normally be a member of the ASK (Advice and Support at Keele) Team, a current student, an elected officer of the Keele University Students' Union or the Keele Postgraduate Association or a member of staff. The University has the discretion to accept other supporters where this is deemed necessary. If you wish to be accompanied by an alternative supporter you should request this via the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct team in the first instance.

5.2 Staff required to attend any meetings in relation to your complaint have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union representative.

6. EARLY RESOLUTION

6.1 You should make every effort to sort out your concerns informally at local level first by contacting the staff concerned. If you are not satisfied that your concern has been addressed, you should next attempt early resolution.

6.2 For this, you should submit your concern(s) in writing or by email to the Early Resolution Officer, for the relevant School Faculty, Service or Directorate. Each part of the University will have at least one Early Resolution Officer and Deputy. The Early Resolution Officer will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and investigate the issue. The Early Resolution Officer will write to you to inform you of the outcome of this investigation. If your complaint is received more than 8 weeks after the events concerned, the Early Resolution Officer will normally reject it without considering it further.

6.3 If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of your early resolution complaint, you may lodge a formal complaint under the process outlined in section 7. This includes cases where the Early Resolution Officer has turned down your complaint because it has been submitted more than 8 weeks after the events in question. If you wish to submit a formal complaint you should do so within 10 calendar days of being informed of the early resolution outcome.

7. FORMAL COMPLAINT TO THE UNIVERSITY

7.1 The University expects you to attempt early resolution before submitting a formal complaint. If there are valid reasons supported by relevant evidence you may be allowed to submit a complaint directly to the formal stage. If you submit a formal complaint after either the 8-week deadline specified in paragraph 3.4 or the 10 calendar day deadline specified in paragraph 6.3, it will only be accepted at the discretion of the Academic Registrar.

7.2 The University will decide if your complaint is eligible for consideration under this Regulation. If the complaint is rejected, the University will inform you in writing and give the reasons for this decision.

7.3 The University will inform you of the progress of your case at key points throughout the process.

7.4 Where the University has conducted a full investigation into your complaint, you will be given a reasonable opportunity to check the factual accuracy of a draft report on the investigation before the Academic Registrar makes a final decision.

7.5 The University will inform you of the final outcome of your complaint in writing.

7.6 In the event of a conflict of interest, the Academic Registrar will nominate an appropriate member of staff to deal with your complaint on their behalf. If this is the case, you will be notified of the name of the nominated person in writing.

8. GRIEVANCE

8.1 If you have submitted a complaint under this Regulation that has been dealt with by the Academic Registrar but are not satisfied with how the complaint was dealt with, you may be eligible to submit a grievance to the University Council under the provisions of Ordinance D3 only if your grievance meets one or more of the following criteria:

- (a) procedural irregularity in the conduct of the appeal;
- (b) there are relevant exceptional circumstances (with verifiable evidence) that you did not include in your original appeal and/or there is new, verifiable evidence (of procedural irregularity or exceptional circumstances) that you could not present in your original appeal. There must be a valid reason for not making the circumstances and/or evidence known at the time.
- (c) That the outcome was unreasonable in the circumstances.

8.2 Grievances will be considered in accordance with Ordinance D3. You must submit a grievance, in writing, within 14 calendar days of the date of your complaint outcome letter.

9. OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR

9.1 Grievances considered in accordance with Statute Section 17(22) represent the completion of the University's internal procedures. When the process is exhausted and you have been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter, you may wish to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (the OIA) for Higher Education if you remain dissatisfied. The OIA provides an independent review of student complaints.