

UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The University endeavours to provide quality in all of its activities. However there may be times when students feel that they have not received the high quality of education or level of service which might reasonably be expected. In those circumstances, you are entitled to complain, and to make known your concerns, without fear of reprisal or victimisation. You can expect the University to deal with a complaint seriously, fairly, within a reasonable timescale and, where appropriate, in confidence.

This guide is designed to advise you of the appropriate procedure, and to inform you about the process.

Advice can be sought from the designated academic adviser in Roehampton Students' Union, and thereafter from the University Secretary or their staff in the University Secretariat.

The designated academic adviser can advise you whether you may have appropriate cause for complaint, and also advise you about putting your case and information together to submit. The University Secretary can advise you on the processes that the University follows to consider complaints from students.

Many complaints can be resolved relatively easily and informally at an early stage. You should normally talk in the first instance with the person(s) most directly concerned with your complaint. Programme Conveners, Course tutors, Academic Department Business Managers and other staff are always prepared to discuss any problems or concerns that you have, before they become major complaints.

If you are not able to resolve the problem informally, you will need to follow the formal Students' Complaints Procedure detailed below. The Procedure consists of a series of steps which will be followed by you and the University in order to find a way forward to a mutually agreed solution. After the appropriate steps, have been taken (which will not necessarily be all of those detailed below), the University will advise you of the outcome.

Your rights - and responsibilities - as a student making a complaint to the University are detailed at the end of this procedure. If a group of students wishes to make the same complaint, the University will require one student to be nominated as a point of contact for all.

Please note that you must ensure that you follow the correct procedure, and fulfil requirements yourself if you wish the complaint to be considered by the University.

If, however, after completing the University's procedures, you have not been able to agree a solution with the University, you can take the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education. The Adjudicator considers such disputed decisions for universities across the country, acting in an ombudsman role. The service provided by the Adjudicator is free of charge to students and details are available on the OIA Website:

<http://www.oiahe.org.uk>

SPECIAL NOTE: ACADEMIC APPEAL PROCEDURES

*The following Complaints Procedure **does not apply** if you wish to appeal against a mark, termination or other academic decision of the University. If you are uncertain whether you wish to proceed with an appeal or a complaint, please seek advice from the University Secretary before you begin.*

If you believe that you have grounds for appeal against the result of an examination, assessment or of a degree classification, against a requirement to retake an examination or a decision to terminate your programme of study, or any other academic decision, please refer to the University's Academic Regulations which can be found on the website at: <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/acprognw/acregsnew.asp>.

The section of the Academic Regulations relating to appeals is at: http://studentzone.roehampton.ac.uk/programmedetails/acregspartsix.asp#annex_4

PROCEDURE FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE UNIVERSITY

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL DISCUSSION

If you are considering making a complaint, you should first contact the designated academic adviser in the Roehampton Students Union. Please do this *before* you write a letter of complaint to any member of the University. You will normally be asked to summarise your concerns briefly in an e-mail or letter.

The designated academic adviser may be able to help you to address your concerns informally, either by advising you of the appropriate member of staff to contact and how to proceed, or by contacting that person on your behalf, and advising the outcome.

Please also note that complaints related to accommodation at the University are considered by, and under processes administered by, Estates and Campus Services. If appropriate you will be advised to follow those procedures.

STAGE 2 - LODGING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

If the substance of your complaint cannot be solved informally, you should contact the University Secretary who will ask you to submit a Complaints Summary Form, together with supporting evidence.

The Form must be signed by you, and be addressed to the University Secretary, who will act as your contact in relation to the complaint. Please do not write directly to the Department, School or College or any other member of staff of the University yourself once you are following the formal complaints procedure.

Please note that complaints cannot usually be accepted from third parties, such as relatives or solicitors acting on your behalf.

The submission of a Complaints Summary Form and its date of receipt will represent the commencement of consideration under the Formal Complaints Procedure.

Your submission will be referred by the University Secretary to an appropriate senior member of staff in a School, Department or College of the University. This member of staff will be asked to investigate your complaint and to advise the University Secretary in writing of their findings, recommendations and any action proposed. The University Secretary will advise you of this outcome by letter, and of any action you should take in relation to it.

You will have the right to reply to this 'Outcome Letter' containing the University's initial decision about your complaint. If in the light of the response you still feel that the complaint remains unresolved from your point of view, you should notify the University Secretary, by letter in reply, stating clearly your reasons for wishing to pursue the matter further.

STAGE 3 - PURSUING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

If you consider that your complaint has not been fully concluded to your satisfaction at the end of Stage 2, your response to the Outcome Letter will be considered by a Pro Vice-Chancellor (or their nominee), who will also consult with other senior staff if/as appropriate.

The University will normally consider taking complaint consideration further only if you can demonstrate one or more of the following:

- (i) that you have relevant new evidence which was not made available to the investigator previously;
- (ii) that there has been a clear failure of due process in consideration of the complaint, which you can define and provide evidence for.

If the Pro Vice-Chancellor (or their nominee) finds that your grounds for pursuing your complaint *are not* justified, you will be advised why by the University Secretary, and a 'Letter of Completion' will be issued to you. This letter will advise that the University has completed its investigation of your complaint, has provided its final decision on it and does not intend to take the matter any further. Details of how to take your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), should you wish to do so, will be included in this letter. Please note that you will need to have a 'Letter of Completion' in order to apply to the Independent Adjudicator. The OIA service is free to students, but you must follow their procedures.

If your reasons for pursuing a formal complaint *are* considered by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (or their nominee) to be justified, the University Secretary will advise you and arrange a hearing of the complaint by a panel of three senior staff members of the University. An independent member of the University's governing body, the Council, *may* be invited to be a member or Chair of the Panel. Council Members have an independent role and are not University staff members.

The University Secretary will ensure that all Panel members chosen will have had no previous connection with the investigation of your complaint. The Panel will interview both you as the complainant, and any or all of the persons complained against, and will determine the University's final decision on the complaint.

The University Secretary will confirm to you the decision of the Panel, and any recommendations. A 'Letter of Completion' will be issued to you, indicating that the University has completed its investigation of your complaint, has provided its final decision on it and does not intend to take the matter any further. Details of how to take your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), should you wish to do so, will be included in this letter.

Please note that you will need to have a 'Letter of Completion of Procedures' in order to apply to the Independent Adjudicator. The OIA service is free to students, but you must follow their procedures.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST ASSOCIATED INSTITUTIONS OR OTHER COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS OF ROEHAMPTON UNIVERSITY

If your complaint is against an Associated Institution of the University, Roehampton will normally have an agreement with the institution concerned about how complaints are to be dealt with. The nature of the complaint will normally determine whether the matter is considered locally by the institution, or at Roehampton in line with the procedures detailed above. Please contact the Administration of the Associated Institution, and/or the University Secretary at Roehampton for advice on how to proceed before you commence pursuing a complaint.

TIMESCALE FOR THE PROCEDURE

The University will make every endeavour to deal with your complaint quickly. If there is a delay because of the nature of your complaint, or owing to unavailability of appropriate staff you will be kept informed of progress.

- You should receive an *acknowledgement* of any written submission within five working days of its receipt, provided that you have followed the guidelines
- You will normally receive an *initial* written response to your written complaint within 28 days of its receipt, provided that you have followed the guidelines
- You will normally receive a *final* response to your complaint within three calendar months from receipt of a formal submission, provided that you have followed the guidelines; but if your complaint is complex, or involves several departments, this timescale may be extended

If there are any exceptional time constraints relating to responding to your complaint, you will be advised at the earliest opportunity. Please note that these may emerge during consideration of your complaint, and it may not be possible to advise you of them at the beginning of the process.

NOTE TO ALL STUDENTS: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

WHEN MAKING A COMPLAINT YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Seek help from the Roehampton Students' Union;
- Be notified of the reasons for a complaint being upheld or not upheld, or any delay in a decision;
- Be interviewed by a Complaints Panel, at an appropriate point in their proceedings (ONLY if you get beyond STAGE 2);
- Be accompanied by a friend at meetings related to the Complaints Procedure (but not the Students' Union President or any other member of University Council);

WHEN MAKING A COMPLAINT YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE:

- To state clearly the substance of your complaint;
- To indicate as clearly as you can the remedy that you seek;
- To follow the correct procedures as advised;
- To provide written statements on request;
- To attend a Complaints Panel, or any other meeting about your complaint, when requested.

When writing to the University Secretary, please address correspondence to:

*The University Secretary, Grove House,
Froebel College, University of Roehampton, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PJ*

Please note that any complaints about the University Secretary should be referred in the first instance to the Vice-Chancellor's Office.

*Andrew Skinner
University Secretary*

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