



Graduate School Complaints Procedure

Grounds for complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a service provided or the lack of a service for which the AA School is responsible and which impacts directly and substantively on the student's programme of study. It must relate to services that students were led to believe would be provided.

PROCEDURE

Informal procedure

A student who believes that there are grounds for a complaint is encouraged, in the first instance, to discuss the matter within 10 days of what originated the complaint with their Course Director to see whether the matter can be resolved informally. If a resolution of the matter cannot be reached at this level, the student may submit a formal complaint. In the case of Research Students any complaint should be made directly to the OU.

Formal Procedure

Stage 1 - Submission of complaint

- a. Students must submit a written complaint, attaching all relevant documentary evidence, to the Registrar within one week of exhausting the informal procedure.
- b. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all relevant documentary evidence is presented to the Registrar at this stage.

Stage 2 - Initial review

- a. An initial review will be carried out by the Chair of the Graduate Management Committee (GMC) and the Registrar of the circumstances of the complaint and of any relevant evidence. They shall consider whether there are grounds for the complaint within two weeks of the formal submission.
- b. If it is considered that there are justifiable grounds for a complaint, the case will be referred to the Graduate School Complaints Panel.
- c. As soon as a decision is taken, the student will be informed if the complaint is going to stage 3 or being rejected.

Stage 3 - GS Complaints Panel

- a. The GS Complaints Panel shall be made up of the following: the Chair of the GMC; the Registrar; two members of the Graduate School academic staff to be nominated by the School Director; and one member external to the School.
- b. The members of the GS Complaints Panel should, wherever practicable, be independent of the circumstances that gave cause to the complaint.
- c. The GS Complaints Panel shall meet within two weeks of the case being forwarded to them by the Chair of the GMC and the Registrar. The procedure adopted by the GS Complaints Panel to deal with any particular submission shall be at the discretion of the Panel but may include inviting the student to present his/her case verbally to the Panel with any relevant witnesses.



Stage 4 - Decision

- a. Once the Panel has reached a decision it will usually be communicated verbally to the student within 24 hours with written confirmation to follow as soon as reasonably practicable. A record of the decision will be kept in the student's file.
- b. If the student has exhausted all appropriate AA procedures and is dissatisfied with a decision by the GS Complaints Panel or by the case being dismissed by the Chair of the GMC and the Registrar, he/she has the right to submit the complaint directly to the OU (OU Handbook for Validated Awards, appendix 3, section 6). – if the complaint is related to academic standards of a validated programme – or to the OIA – if the complaint is about matters not directly related to academic standards of the programme. In the latter case, the AA would issue the Completion of Procedures Letter.
- c. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision of the OU, he/she can submit the complaint to the OIA.