



Student Complaints Procedure

November 2023

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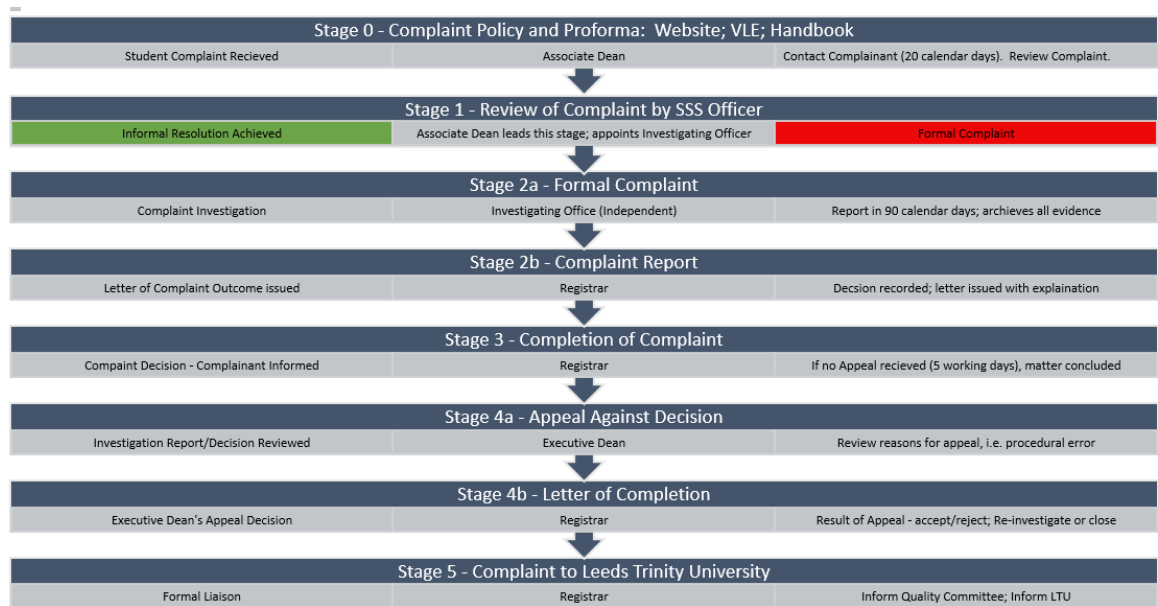
1. Introduction

- 1.1. Scholars School System is committed to providing high quality education and services to all our students. The College recognises, however, that there may be instances where registered students have legitimate complaints regarding their course and teaching, the services or facilities provided by the College. The College takes all such complaints seriously and deals with them in confidence and without fear of recrimination or disadvantage.
- 1.2. This procedure is designed to ensure that all legitimate student complaints are heard and responded to in a manner that is fair, transparent, timely and based on the consideration of relevant evidence.
- 1.3. **This procedure is available to Scholars School System registered students.** Recently withdrawn or recently graduated students of the College may also use these procedures provided the complaint is initiated within three months of withdrawal or graduation.
- 1.4. This procedure has been developed in accordance with Chapter B9 of the QAA UK, Quality Code for Higher Education, 'Appeals and Complaints', and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's 'Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals'.
- 1.5. This procedure is distinct from the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure but recognises that in exceptional circumstances there may be some overlap with an academic appeal. Where appropriate the College may defer the investigation of a complaint until the academic appeal has been resolved.
- 1.6. Applicants to the College should follow the Applicant Feedback and Complaints Procedure.
- 1.7. Registered students who have a complaint concerning a fellow student should follow the Student Conduct and Discipline Code. Where a complaint concerns a College employee and where appropriate, the Director of Student & Academic Services or the Director of Student Support & Engagement will notify the Director of People & Culture. Following due consideration, the complaint may be dealt with under the College's employment policies and procedures which may include the Protection of Dignity at Work and Study Policy.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. Define key terminology of procedure
 - 2.1.1. **The College** - Scholars School System
 - 2.1.2. **Students** - Scholars School System registered students including apprentices, student police officers and students studying at our partner institutions.
 - 2.1.3. **Complaint** - the College applies the Office for the Independent Adjudicator definition of a complaint: "An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a College's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College."
 - 2.1.4. **Complainant** - the person raising the complaint
 - 2.1.5. **FOS** - Financial Ombudsman
 - 2.1.6. **OIA** - Office of the Independent Adjudicator

3. Procedure flowchart



4. Overview of the Procedure

- 4.1. This procedure is designed to resolve complaints connected to:
 - 4.1.1. the standard of academic provision including library and learning resources or training provided by external institutions contracted by the College;
 - 4.1.2. a Leeds Trinity service;
 - 4.1.3. the College's buildings and facilities including matters covered by the residential accommodation agreement;
 - 4.1.4. the behaviour of or treatment by a member of staff;
 - 4.1.5. the failure of the College to follow an appropriate administrative or academic process.
- 4.2. The Student Complaints Procedure has three levels:
 - 4.2.1. Stage 1: Early/Local Resolution
 - 4.2.2. Stage 2: Formal Complaint
 - 4.2.3. Stage 3: Review of a Formal Complaint Outcome - Final Resolution
- 4.3. It is expected that most complaints will be resolved during Stage 1 and students should seek early/local resolution of the complaint before progressing to Stage 2 unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 4.4. 4.1.3 Should any complaint not be resolved through this internal three stage process, students can request that their complaint be independently reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) (www.oiahe.org.uk). Apprentices may choose to request that their complaint be independently reviewed by the OIA or the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) (complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk) but not both.
- 4.5. Students can be accompanied to meetings at all stages of the complaint process by a fellow LTU student or a member of the LTSU.
- 4.6. The College aims to complete the formal complaints stage (Stages 2 and 3) within 90 calendar days of receipt of a Stage 2: Formal Complaint by the Student Support Caseworker. The College may make a reasonable extension to this timescale during student vacation periods and to ensure availability of staff as required.

4.7. Stage 1: Early/Local Resolution

- 4.7.1. The College will aim to complete this stage within 20 working days of receipt.
- 4.7.2. It is generally more effective to try and achieve an informal resolution at the time when the problem arises and with those involved. This may include a tutor, or a manager of a College service, or externally contracted staff, such as school-based training mentors. A request for a conversation away from other people should be followed by a discreet, courteous but frank discussion of the complaint and possible consequences, and a proposed outcome to resolve the matter.
- 4.7.3. Students who wish to make a complaint should raise this at Stage 1: Early/Informal Resolution within 20 working days of the incident that has given rise to the complaint. Only in exceptional circumstances, and with supporting evidence, will complaints be considered outside these timescales.
- 4.7.4. The Student Support Caseworker can offer support in resolving concerns and complaints and will encourage early/local resolution in the first instance. They can also offer facilitated discussion and mediation should that be required.
- 4.7.5. If, after trying to achieve an early/local resolution, the complainant still feels they have not received a satisfactory outcome then they should follow the Stage 2: Formal Complaint procedure below. In these instances, a Stage 2: Formal Complaint should be raised no later than 20 working days from the conclusion of the informal resolution discussions relating to the Stage 1 complaint.

4.8. Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- 4.8.1. The College will aim to complete this stage within 20 working days of receipt.
- 4.8.2. The formal complaint procedure should normally only be used after the early/local resolution procedure has resulted in an outcome the student considers to be unsatisfactory.
- 4.8.3. The Stage 2: Formal Complaint form is an online form that should be completed within 20 working days of the conclusion of all discussions relating to Stage 1.
- 4.8.4. You need to complete the online form, Stage 2: Formal Complaint.
- 4.8.5. To help with the investigation and resolution, all parts of the Formal Complaint Form should be completed and include:
- 4.8.6. The issue and subject of the complaint.
- 4.8.7. Relevant dates and identification of those involved.
- 4.8.8. References to dated emails, correspondence, oral statements, published information etc.
- 4.8.9. A summary of the outcome of the Early/Local Resolution.
- 4.8.10. A clear indication of the outcome sought, such as apology, restitution of fault or omission, change of situation or decision, refund etc.
- 4.8.11. Complaints about external training provision are often more difficult to investigate, particularly where school holidays may result in staff being unavailable. All formal complaints about such provision will be handled within reasonable timescales as determined and monitored by the Executive Dean or nominee and may be outside the deadlines for internal complaints as detailed below.
- 4.8.12. Formal complaints will be normally completed (i.e. investigated and outcome communicated to the complainant) within 25 working days of receipt of the written complaint.
- 4.8.13. Formal complaints will be acknowledged by email upon receipt and within five working days.

- 4.8.14. The Associate Dean or nominee will appoint a member of staff (Investigating Officer) who has had no previous involvement in the matter to investigate the complaint. The Investigating Officer will interview those involved and gather any further evidence as necessary. They will ensure that interview notes taken are confirmed in writing as being a true record and reflect the substance of any conversation(s).
- 4.8.15. The Investigating Officer will report to the Associate Dean or nominee and discuss whether the complaint is to be upheld. The complainant will receive an outcome of their complaint, normally within 20 working days of receipt of the written complaint, which will include any action to be taken, a date on which progress will be reviewed and detail the right for the outcome to be reviewed (see Stage 3: Review of a Formal Complaint Outcome - Final Resolution).

4.9. Stage 3: Review of a Formal Complaint Outcome - Final Resolution

- 4.9.1. The College will aim to complete this stage within 20 working days of receipt.
- 4.9.2. If a complainant is dissatisfied with either the outcome of their complaint or the way in which the complaint was handled, they may ask for a review of a formal complaint outcome. This can be done by completing an online form, Stage 3: Review of a Formal Complaint Outcome – Final.
- 4.9.3. This must be done within 10 working days of the conclusion of discussions relating to Stage 2.
- 4.9.4. A review of a formal complaint outcome will be undertaken under the following conditions:
 - 4.9.4.1. the correct procedures were not followed in the consideration of the case during the earlier stages of the complaints procedure;
 - 4.9.4.2. the outcome of the formal stage was not reasonable.
 - 4.9.4.3. there is new material evidence that, for good reason, was not available at an earlier point in the complaints procedure.
- 4.9.5. The Executive Dean will nominate a member of the Leadership Team, who has not been involvement in the matter, to review the formal complaint outcome.
- 4.9.6. Following thorough review, the Executive Dean will communicate the outcome to the complainant(s), within 25 working days. This outcome letter is known as a “Completion of Procedures” letter which closes the complaint at the College.

4.10. Independent External Review

- 4.10.1. Once Stage 3 has been completed and an outcome issued to the complainant, or it is determined there are insufficient grounds for the complaint to be considered within Stage 3, the College’s Student Complaints Procedure is concluded and the student is entitled to ask Leeds Trinity University to look at their complaint.

5. Key contacts and responsibilities

- 5.1. Key contacts and responsibilities:
 - 5.1.1. **Student Support Caseworker** - can support students in reaching complaint resolution and provide guidance on the process. They may seek advice from the Student Support & Engagement Coordinator and/or the Director of Student Support & Engagement.
 - 5.1.2. **Investigating Officer** – is a member of College staff appointed to investigate a formal complaint. The member of staff appointed will have no previous connection to the complaint.

5.1.3. **Formal Complaint Reviewer** – is a member of the College Leadership Team appointed by the CEO (or nominee from the Senior Management) to review the outcome of a formal complaint. The member of staff appointed will have no previous connection to the complaint.

Control Panel

Document Control Box	
Policy/Procedure Title:	Student Complaints Procedure
Date Approved:	November 2023
Approving Body:	Academic Board
Version:	1
Supersedes:	n/a
Previous Review Dates:	n/a
Next Review Date:	tbc
Related Policies:	n/a
Related Guidance and/or Codes of Practice:	Chapter B9 of the QAA UK, Quality Code for Higher Education, 'Appeals and Complaints' Office of the Independent Adjudicator's 'Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals'.
Policy Owner:	Registrar
Lead Contact:	Dr Simon Jones