



# ACADEMIC ADVICE

## COMPLAINTS

The University welcomes feedback from students at any time, but realise that there may also be occasions where you want to make a complaint about your experience. In most situations it's expected that you raise a complaint informally before submitting a formal complaint, however the informal step can be skipped in cases of harassment and discrimination. This guide explains how to give feedback, and how to raise a complaint at all stages.

### **How do I give feedback to the University?**

The University encourage students to be as involved as possible in improving their University experience, so if you want to give feedback on anything at all, you can do so in one or more of the following ways:

- Direct communication (face to face, by email, or by telephone)
- Via your Personal Tutor
- Student Staff Committees (SSCs)
- Module evaluations
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Student representatives (via the Students' Union)
- Via the MyUoL App

### **How do I make an informal complaint?**

If you're unhappy with any aspect of the University, you should bring this to the University's attention as soon as possible.

The University expects you to try and resolve matters informally first, as soon as possible at a local level, before you submit a formal complaint. The first stage is to discuss the issue with people who may be able to help. This may include your Head of Department, Personal Tutor, Student Staff Committee members, one of us in the Advice Service, your Course Representative, or one of the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers.

Hopefully through this communication your problem will be solved quickly and effectively, however if you're not satisfied with the outcome of your informal complaint, you can proceed to the formal Stage One Complaint process.

## How do I make a Stage One Complaint?

A formal Stage One Complaint must be made within three months of the situation occurring. If you submit a complaint after this time it will usually be deemed out of time, unless you can demonstrate, with evidence, why you weren't able to submit the complaint on time.

To submit a Stage One complaint you need to complete a [Stage One Complaint Form](#). On the form you need to include your personal details, and detailed information about your complaint. This includes an explanation of what you're complaining about, what steps you would like the university to take to resolve your complaint, who you've already discussed your complaint with (at the informal stage), the outcome of these discussions, and why you're still unhappy. If you have any evidence to support your complaint, you should also include this.

Once complete, your form needs to be submitted to the Quality Office at [qualoffice@le.ac.uk](mailto:qualoffice@le.ac.uk).

If you're submitting the complaint as part of a group, we recommend that you submit a form each, however it's fine for the content of the form to be the same. In this situation you should make clear on the form that your complaint is a group complaint, and one person should be nominated as lead contact.

It's also a good idea to have a look through the University's [Regulations governing Student Complaints](#), to gain a better understanding of the process and what to expect from it.

## What happens next?

Once your complaint has been submitted, the Quality Office will acknowledge your complaint, and explain how it will be handled. It will be considered by a Stage One Senior Officer, who will either start an investigation, or appoint an Investigating Officer to do so on their behalf.

You may be asked to provide further information at this stage, or you may be invited to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint.

The Senior Officer will then consider all the information and provide a full response within 28 days. This will cover how your complaint was investigated, whether your complaint has been upheld or dismissed, with reasons for this decision, and if your complaint was upheld, whether you are being offered any practical or financial remedy. If for whatever reason the Senior Officer is unable to meet the 28 day deadline, they will write to you to outline the reasons for the delay and give details of a new deadline.

Once you receive the response you'll need to decide whether or not you accept this remedy. If you do accept, the case will be closed, but if you do not accept you can request for the complaint to be taken to Stage Two.

## How do I make a Stage Two complaint?

If you're not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint at Stage One, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed at Stage Two.

Reviews of Stage One can be considered on one or more of the following grounds:

- There is evidence of procedural irregularity in the Stage One consideration of the matter.
- There is new evidence which, for an acceptable reason, was not submitted at Stage One.
- There is evidence previously available at Stage One which requires further consideration.

If at this stage you wish to have a new matter considered, it's important that you give a reason for not submitting this material at Stage One.

Normally the review stage doesn't involve further investigation of the issues you raised at Stage One, so if you're simply unhappy with the complaint outcome, this won't be in itself an acceptable reason for requesting a review of the decision.

To submit a Stage Two complaint, you'll need to complete the [Stage Two Complaint Form](#) and send it to the Academic Registrar. This can be done via email at [acadregistrar@le.ac.uk](mailto:acadregistrar@le.ac.uk) or handed in at the Fielding Johnson Building. The deadline for doing this is 28 days of the conclusion of Stage One.

## What happens at Stage Two?

Once the Academic Registrar has received your request, they will acknowledge receipt and will allocate your complaint to a Stage Two Senior Officer. This will usually be a Pro-Vice-Chancellor if your complaint is about an academic issue, or for non-academic complaints a Stage One Senior Office who has had no prior involvement in your case.

The Stage Two Senior Officer will consider the following questions:

- Where the relevant procedures followed at Stage One?
- Was the outcome reasonable in all the circumstances?
- Have clear reasons been given explaining why the complaint was rejected at the formal stage?
- If new material evidence has been provided, have valid reasons been given for not supplying this earlier?

The Stage Two Senior Officer may conclude:

- That your review request doesn't demonstrate eligible grounds and dismiss your complaint.
- That eligible grounds of review have been demonstrated and that your complaint may be resolved through the offering of a remedy.
- That eligible grounds of review have been demonstrated and your complaint may be referred for further consideration by a Complaint Panel.
- If you are offered a remedy but do not wish to accept it, your complaint will be referred to a Complaint Panel.

You should normally be notified of the Stage Two Senior Officer's decision within 28 days of receipt of the Stage Two Complaint. If this is likely to take longer the Stage Two Senior Officer will write to you explaining why.

## What happens at a Complaint Panel?

If your complaint is referred to a Stage Two Complaint Panel, the Panel will consist of:

- The Stage Two Senior Officer who initially reviewed your complaint (who acts as Chair).
- A Pro-Vice Chancellor or Head of College (for a complaint about an academic matter), or a Stage One Senior Officer (for a non-academic complaint), without prior involvement in your complaint.
- Another senior member of staff of the University without prior involvement in your complaint.

A member of professional services staff will act as Secretary to the Panel.

The University will arrange a meeting of the Panel and you'll be invited to attend this in person or via Skype. You'll be given 21 calendar days' notice of the meeting, and you can choose to take a friend or representative with you if you wish. [Senate Regulation 12](#) explains who this can be.

Before the meeting you, and everyone else attending, will be sent a copy of the paperwork, such as the procedure to be followed, and the details of anyone who will be there, including witnesses if relevant.

If you have good reason not to attend the hearing, you can request a 'paper-based consideration' at this stage. This means there will be no hearing, but written submissions will be collected from witnesses, which you'll have 14 days to submit a response to. The Panel will then meet to make its decision in your absence.

Hearings have several stages, these normally being:

- You or your representative can make an opening statement, and may be questioned by the Panel.
- If called as witness, the Stage One Senior Officer can make a statement, and may be questioned by the Panel.
- If there are any other witnesses they will be called, can make a statement, and may be questioned.
- You or your representative can make your final statement.
- The Panel will retire to make its decision.

The panel, you or your representative will all have the chance to ask questions to the witnesses.

You'll normally receive a response to Stage Two within 7 calendar days of the hearing, or of the deadline of your statement for a paper-based consideration. If the panel can't provide a decision within this time, you'll be informed in writing of the expected decision date, with reasons for the delay. The letter stating the final decision will include a completion of procedures letter. This will signify the end of the university complaints procedure, however if you're still unhappy with the outcome you can submit a complaint to the OIA (Office of the Independent Adjudicator).

## **How do I submit a complaint to the OIA (Office of the Independent Adjudicator)?**

Once you receive a completion of procedures letter, if you believe the University's complaint process wasn't followed properly, or you feel that the outcome is unreasonable, you can submit a complaint to the OIA.

The OIA are an external, independent body set up to review student complaints. You'll have 12 months from the date on your outcome letter to submit an OIA complaint, and can do so by completing the form found on their [website](#).

## **What can the Advice Service do to help?**

[Advice Service](#) (formerly known as Education Unit) – Here in the Advice Service we provide advice on academic, housing and signposting issues.

If you want to give feedback to the University, we can help you work out who the best person to approach about this would be.

At the informal stage of your complaint, our student advisors can give you suggestions of who best to discuss your issue with, and how to approach the subject. We can also help you to set up a meeting with the relevant people, and can attend this with you as support if you wish. If you decide to write an informal complaint, we can advise on what to include in it, and can check through it for you before sending.

At Stage One our advisors can advise you on how best to put your case forward, and can read through your complaint form before you submit it, and provide you with some feedback.

At Stage Two, our advisors can check through your complaint review request and provide feedback. If you need to attend a Panel meeting, we can help prepare you for the meeting, and advise you on how to put your case forward. An advisor can also attend the hearing with you as moral support, but unfortunately we're unable to provide representation.

If you're still unhappy at the end of the process, we can also assist with submitting a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

Feel free to get in touch with us via our [contact form](#), and we will then get back to you within 2 working days to offer you an appointment, or provide further advice.

Opening hours are 10am-4pm, Monday to Friday.

If your query is urgent you can contact us on [advice@le.ac.uk](mailto:advice@le.ac.uk) or +44 (0)116 223 1132/1184/1109.

*Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Advice Service is now closed and will not be offering any face to face meetings or drop-ins. We will still be advising via email and can arrange video calls and phone calls if required. Information about our service changes is available [here](#).*

## Who else can I talk to about my complaint?

The following people and services may be able to help you with various aspects of your complaint:

To raise your complaint informally, you should contact:

- [Head of Department/ Service](#)
- Personal Tutor
- Student Staff Committee
- [Course Representative](#)
- [Students' Union Sabbatical Officers](#)

You can also contact the following services for further information and advice:

- [Quality Office](#) – You can contact the Quality Office for more information about the complaints process. Their email address is [qualoffice@le.ac.uk](mailto:qualoffice@le.ac.uk), and their phone number is +44 (0)116 252 2605.
- [Student Counselling & Wellbeing Service](#) – If you feel that you need mental health support, the University offers a counselling service for students. You can book an appointment by filling in their [online form](#). You can also contact them on +44 (0)116 223 1780 or [wellbeing@le.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@le.ac.uk).

## Useful links

- [University's information about Student Feedback and Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Senate Regulation 12](#): Regulations Governing Student Complaints.
- [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#) webpage.



[leicesterunion.com/advice](https://leicesterunion.com/advice)

**Advice Service**

[advice@le.ac.uk](mailto:advice@le.ac.uk)

0116 223 1132/1184/1109



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