

### POLICY ON STUDENT COMPLAINTS

1. It is the policy of the University at all times to provide the highest possible level of services to its students (including applicants and former students). Nevertheless, it is recognised that there will be occasions when students may feel that the level of service, or the treatment they have received from staff, has fallen short of that normally expected, and that they have suffered (or could suffer) a material disadvantage as a result. The *Guidance Notes on Student Complaints* set out the procedures to be followed in such cases, where another more specific route does not apply.
2. Students wishing to make a complaint should normally first try to resolve this informally with the member of staff concerned, the Head of the School or Service or the relevant line manager [Guidance Note 16]. If they are unable to resolve a complaint informally or, exceptionally, feel that they would be unable to do so, then students have the right to submit a formal complaint.
3. Formal complaints must be made in writing from a named individual or individuals, and will not be accepted from third parties other than, for example, where students have asked the Students' Association to represent them. They must be submitted within fourteen days of the failure to resolve a complaint informally or of the event complained of, whichever is later. If the complaint is in relation to an issue which a student believes may have adversely affected their performance in a degree assessment then a complaint may be submitted up to 14 days after the result of that assessment has been made available to you. Complaints should be sent to:
  - The Academic Registrar if the complaint relates, either directly or indirectly, to a student's or former student's programme of study or to an applicant's intended programme of study;
  - The Director of Student Support Services if the complaint does not relate to a student's programme of study.

[Complaints against the Academic Registrar or the Director of Student Support Services should be sent to the University Secretary or the ~~Director of Student Affairs~~Deputy Secretary, respectively].
4. Formal complaints must set out clearly the grounds of complaint and, where possible, indicate the remedy sought.
5. The person to whom a complaint is made will undertake an initial investigation, a copy of which will be sent to the student who has submitted the complaint (i.e. the "complainant"). If the complainant does not accept the outcome of the investigation, the complaint and the outcome will be submitted to a Vice-Principal (if the complaint is programme-related) or to the University Secretary (if it is not so related) for a decision. In such cases, the Vice-Principal or the University Secretary will convene a formal hearing into the complaint, at which both the complainant and/or their representative and the relevant member of staff (normally the Head of the relevant School or Service), together with any witnesses, shall be present. Where the complaint is specifically against a member of staff or members of staff, they also have the right to attend the hearing and/or be represented.
6. If a complaint is not upheld by a Vice-Principal or the University Secretary, then the complainant shall have the right of appeal to the University Court, but only on grounds that the decision reached was procedurally irregular, perverse or otherwise unsound.
7. Where a complaint is upheld by a Vice-Principal or the University Secretary and is specifically against a member of staff or members of staff, the member(s) of staff concerned may also appeal to the University Court but only on grounds that the decision reached was procedurally irregular, perverse or otherwise unsound.
8. Students whose appeals have not been accepted by the University Court have the right to seek Independent Review of the University's decision.

9. Where students are submitting both a complaint that relates to their programme of study and making an academic appeal, a Vice-Principal shall be responsible for determining which is dealt with first. Normally, the complaint will be considered before the academic appeal.
10. The detailed procedures for Student Complaints are contained in the *Guidance Notes on Student Complaints*, which may be obtained from [the Registry Services](#) or downloaded from the Registry web-site [[www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality/appendix5.18-2.shtml](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality/appendix5.18-2.shtml)].
11. Students cannot complain directly under these *Guidance Notes* about an academic decision or judgement, nor in relation to discontinuance of attendance on courses, or termination or suspension of studies or candidature for a degree or other award. However, students can appeal against an academic decision in accordance with the University's *Policy on Academic Appeals* and the accompanying *Guidance Notes*, copies of which can be accessed at [www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality/appendix5.17.shtml](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality/appendix5.17.shtml) or obtained from [the Registry Services](#), University Office. Additionally, students can submit representations against discontinuation of attendance on courses and against termination or suspension of candidature for an award in accordance with the *Policy on Non-Progression, Discontinuation of Attendance on Courses and on Termination of Studies or Candidature for an Award* and the accompanying *Guidance Notes*, available at [www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality/appendix5.16.shtml](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality/appendix5.16.shtml) or obtained from [the Registry Services](#), University Office.
12. If students have concerns that do not appear to be covered above, they should consult the *Code of Practice on Whistleblowing* ([www.abdn.ac.uk/personnel/whistle.hti](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/personnel/whistle.hti)) which "... is designed to allow employees and all other members of the University to raise concerns or to disclose information which, the complainant or informant believes, shows malpractice".

*Approved by the Senate on 28 January 2004 and by the University Court on 10 February 2004*