



## **STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND COMMENDATIONS PROCEDURE**

**Effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015**

## Document Control

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January 2011	Previous revision	G. Donelan
November 2014	Amendments following Internal Audit and mapping against Quality Code	G. Donelan
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October 2017	Minor edits to update change of title of Dean of Students to PVC (Student Life and Learning)	D Dykins

## **Preamble**

There are separate procedures to follow in appeals against decisions relating to admissions or decisions of Degree or Progression Boards.

If you wish to appeal against a decision relating to admission to a course at Liverpool Hope University, you must use the [Applicant Appeals and Complaint Procedure](#).

If you wish to appeal against a decision of a Degree or Progression Board, you must use the Academic Appeals Procedure. If the matter appears to be both an appeal and a complaint, then the University Secretary and the Registrar will determine the most appropriate process to be followed and inform the student in writing.

If you feel you have been the victim of unfair discrimination or harassment, then you may use this procedure although the University may invoke the Code of Student Discipline to investigate your complaint.

## **Commendations**

The University would like to share good practice in order to enhance continually the student experience. If you would like to commend the work of the University or any of its staff, there are a number of ways of doing this:-

- Raise the matter through your Course Representative to be recorded at Staff Student Liaison Committee
- Write to your lecturer, Head of Department, Dean or other member of staff
- Write to the Students' Union
- Write to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Life & Learning)

## **Complaints**

The stages outlined below must be followed in sequence; students should not expect to bypass stages and appeal directly, for example, to the Vice-Chancellor & Rector.

1. The whole complaints procedure outlined below is predicated on the concept of 'reasonable behaviour'. Although this is difficult to define with precision, it is based on the notions that:

- a) complaints will not be made for frivolous or mischievous reasons and that they will not be made in an offensive or abusive manner;
- b) complaints should be made at the time. It is not reasonable, for example, to wait until an examination is failed or a lower mark than expected is received to bring a complaint relating to previous months;
- c) complaints will be dealt with fairly and as expeditiously as possible, in confidence and without fear of recrimination;
- d) that the desired result of a complaint which is upheld should be an improvement in service rather than the pillorying of any individual(s);
- e) appropriate remedies will be applied.

2. Students have the right to complain if the quality of any services is felt to be inadequate. An example of dissatisfaction could relate to lectures being repeatedly cancelled for no valid reason. Please note in this example that the concept of 'reasonable behaviour' needs to prevail. It is not reasonable to expect that a lecture will never be cancelled; this could be due, for example, to a lecturer's illness.
3. The best way to sort out difficulties is to talk to those concerned. This fact must be stressed. Please make sure that this **initial stage** is followed, by talking to the tutor/lecturer/service provider or Committee concerned.
4. If you feel unable to talk directly you should consider asking a Students' Union officer or trained nominee of the Students' Union, a member of academic staff or a student of the University to make an initial approach. Only in exceptional cases would this rule be varied and will require authorisation by the University Secretary (or his nominee) if you wish to do so.
5. Please speak to the Students' Union if you cannot resolve your complaint at this initial stage. The Students' Union has an Advice and Advocacy Coordinator who can be contacted on 0151 291 3708 or [suadvice@hope.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@hope.ac.uk)
6. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved you should put in writing the nature of your complaint and hand it to or send it to the relevant Dean, if it concerns learning and teaching, to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Life and Learning) if it concerns a student service, or to the University Secretary if it concerns any other matter. Please retain a copy. If the complaint concerns the Dean or a Pro Vice Chancellor, it should be addressed to the University Secretary in all cases. You can normally expect an acknowledgement and an indication of what is being done within 10 working days. This is called the **second stage**.
7. The person acknowledging your letter will normally endeavour to undertake the following procedure:
  - a) to ask you to speak to him/her;
  - b) to ask you to meet the person about whom your complaint is made in the Dean's (or other) presence and to try and resolve the matter. The person about whom your complaint is made will have the right to see your written submission beforehand. The Dean (or other) will then write to you, normally within 10 working days of the meeting, with a proposed remedy to your complaint.
8. If you are not satisfied, or indeed if the Dean etc. feels that there is no easy remedy, you should write to the Vice-Chancellor & Rector within 10 working days of receipt of the letter above, enclosing a copy of your original written complaint and a copy of correspondence relating to it, including any responses from the University. Explain why you are not satisfied with the way your complaint has been handled or why you believe the decision reached is unjust. Please retain a copy. This is called the **final stage**.
9. The Vice-Chancellor & Rector (or a senior officer of the University nominated by the Vice-Chancellor & Rector) will acknowledge your letter within five working days and begin an investigation before making a final decision as to whether:
  - a) your complaint has been handled properly and the decision reached

is reasonable; your complaint was not handled properly and a further remedy will be sought.

Normally, the Vice-Chancellor & Rector (or nominated senior officer) will endeavour to complete the investigation and write you with a final resolution within 20 working days of the receipt of your final stage letter.

10. If, at any stage of the complaints procedure, it is deemed that the matter about which the complaint has been made might amount to misconduct by a member of staff, then the Director of Personnel will be informed and a decision taken as to whether Disciplinary Action is necessary.

11. If you are still dissatisfied, you have recourse to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The OIA is an independent body set up to review student complaints and is free to students. Further details of this scheme will be given to students when internal procedures are exhausted. The OIA's website is at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

12. Written complaints and commendations will be monitored by the University Secretary's Office with a view to detecting trends and seeking improvement in services or spreading good practice. The names of individuals concerned in such complaints or commendations will be treated in confidence and will not be released under any circumstances. An anonymised annual report on all complaints and commendations received in the academic year will be made to Senate.

13. The University Secretary is responsible for the oversight of this procedure and will arrange training and "learning from complaints" sessions regularly.