

# **STUDENT COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**Applicable to all cohorts of students  
from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015**

**Approved by Senate 24<sup>th</sup> June 2015  
and by Council 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015**

**(with minor amendments approved by  
Senate and Council May 2016)**

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### 1. Introduction

- a) The University was founded with the aim of 'the advancement of learning and the ennoblement of life'. An environment conducive to learning is one that preserves the freedom to learn, where academic, personal and professional standards are strictly upheld and where the rights, wellbeing, dignity and merits of every individual are respected.
- b) The University of Liverpool is committed to ensuring that we provide for our students a high quality educational experience, supported by appropriate academic, administrative and student support services and campus facilities. We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when students will feel that they have cause for complaint. In this context, a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction either about the programmes, courses, facilities or services provided by the University or about actions, lack of actions or omissions by the University or its staff.
- c) The Student Charter sets out the general entitlements and responsibilities of students. If students believe that they have a legitimate issue of concern, they should refer in the first instance to the Student Charter to clarify what it is reasonable for them to expect from the University in the relevant area and whether they have discharged their corresponding obligations and responsibilities, if applicable. If, having consulted the Student Charter, students wish to proceed to raise their concern, they may invoke the procedures set out in this document.
- d) The purpose of the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure is to set out how students may seek to have complaints addressed. It should be recognised that the vast majority of issues which may cause concern to students can be handled fairly and amicably and resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned on a relatively informal basis at a local level. There are two stages contained in the Complaints Procedure to allow escalation should a student consider that such an issue or concern has not or cannot be resolved informally.
- e) Other University policies and procedures which are connected to the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure are set out below:
  - Student Charter – available in the [Your University Handbooks](#)
  - [Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedure](#)
- f) There may be other documents, defined as part of an institutional collaborative partnership agreement, which describe separate complaints procedures under a specific partnership and these shall be drawn to the attention of students as appropriate.
- g) Advice about the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure may be obtained from School Student Support Offices (or their equivalent), the Director of the Student Administration and Support Division or Academic Compliance Team (Student Administration and Support; email [appeals@liv.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@liv.ac.uk)) or from the Advice Service of the Liverpool Guild of Students (email [quildadv@liv.ac.uk](mailto:quildadv@liv.ac.uk)).

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### **2. Purpose of the Policy**

The purpose of the Policy is to:

- a) Describe the procedures whereby students may raise issues of concern about programmes, courses, facilities or services provided by the University or about actions, lack of actions or omissions by the University or its staff.
- b) Provide students with a structured procedure to escalate such issues where it has not proved possible to resolve them to their satisfaction through informal local discussions.
- c) Provide a procedure whereby more serious concerns can be considered directly as complaints where it is apparent that complex and/or multiple issues or issues of a particularly serious nature are involved.

### **3. Key principles in dealing with student complaints**

The key principles underpinning this Policy and Procedure, which are based on principles of natural justice, are that:

- a) The University will act fairly and reasonably in all circumstances;
- b) The University will follow its own procedures in all circumstances;
- c) Decisions will be taken on the balance of probabilities;
- d) Complainants will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as the result of making a complaint in good faith.

### **4. Authority for action under this Policy and Procedure**

- a) The Senate will regulate and superintend the right of students to raise legitimate issues of complaint. Any changes to this Policy and Procedure shall be approved by the Senate and the Council following discussion with the Liverpool Guild of Students.
- b) At each stage of the Procedure, the person to whom a complaint has been referred shall, if it is upheld, apply such appropriate remedies as are within their powers. If they consider that the remedy is outside their powers, they shall refer the matter to the appropriate authority.

### **5. Scope of this Policy**

- a) The following may raise issues of concern or dissatisfaction either about the programmes, courses, facilities or services provided by the University or about actions, lack of actions or omissions by the University or its staff under this Policy:
  - (i) All students studying on any campus of the University, including students who have arrived on campus to embark on their programme but who have not yet completed formal registration processes;
  - (ii) Persons who have previously been registered as students of the University of Liverpool and:
    - who have completed their studies, either because they have come to the end of their period of studies and have been made an award or have been deemed not eligible for an award; or

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- whose studies have been terminated; or
- who have chosen to withdraw from studies, or
- have been deemed to have withdrawn from studies

provided that the issue or concern or complaint is raised with the University **normally no later than three months** after the date on which the student left the University or **normally not more than three months** after the date on which the student received an award of the University (whichever is the later).

- (iii) Students studying for a University of Liverpool award who spend any time off campus (such as on a placement or year abroad/in industry or undertaking off-site research), where the issue of concern or complaint relates to matters within the control of the University of Liverpool.

For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure, all of the above shall be deemed to be covered by the use of the term 'student' even where they are no longer a registered student of the University of Liverpool. Where a complaint is made by a third party on behalf of a student, the use of the term 'student' in this Policy and Procedure shall also be deemed to apply to the person making the complaint.

- b) The arrangement for consideration of complaints raised by students who are, or have been studying for a single University of Liverpool award or a joint or dual award of the University with one or more institutional partners, under a specific collaborative agreement, will be made explicit in that agreement and students will be informed of these arrangements when they register. This includes those students who are, or have been studying for a University of Liverpool award or module wholly online, including those studying with Laureate Online Education. For students who are studying under such collaborative agreements, the scope of this Policy and Procedure shall normally be limited to issues over which the University of Liverpool has jurisdiction and in those circumstances only where the student has exhausted any relevant complaints procedure operated by the University's institutional partner; in these circumstances, the complaint to the University shall normally be considered under Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure only.
- c) The following matters are not covered by the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure:
- (i) Appeals against credit-bearing academic assessments relating to taught programmes of study see [Assessment Appeals Procedure](#) .
  - (ii) Appeals against assessments relating to postgraduate research awards see [Research Degree Appeals Procedure](#)
  - (iii) Appeals against decisions taken by a Board of Examiners that a student's studies should be terminated because of unsatisfactory progress see [Progress of Students - A Guide for Officers, Staff and Students](#). Complaints relating to decisions taken under any academic or administrative procedure of the University where it is explicitly stated that no appeal is permitted, except where the complaint relates to a procedural irregularity in the making of the decision.
  - (iv) Appeals against findings of a [Fitness to Practise Panel](#).
  - (v) Appeals against findings of a [Fitness to Study](#).

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- (vi) [Disciplinary issues](#).
- (vii) Complaints relating to the [Guild of Students](#) .
- (viii) Complaints relating to provision of services wholly within the remit of a collaborative partner or to the actions or lack of action of staff employed by a collaborative partner except where these relate to academic matters which fall within the remit of the University of Liverpool.
- (ix) Complaints made by students against students see Dignity at Work and Study Policy [where these relate to allegations of bullying or harassment. For other matters the University regards such complaints as private matters in which it cannot intervene unless they relate to a breach of University Regulations, in which case they should be reported to the relevant Head of School or Professional Service for appropriate action as disciplinary issues).
- (x) Complaints made by staff against students (see [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#)) where these relate to allegations of bullying or harassment. Matters which relate to a breach of University Regulations should be reported to the relevant Head of School or Professional Service for appropriate action as disciplinary issues).

### 6. Rights, entitlements and responsibilities under this Policy

- a) Under this Policy and in line with the Student Charter and other University policies, the University acknowledges the rights of students and sets out expectations of how students will interact with the Complaints Procedure as follows:
  - (i) Students will be treated fairly and consistently within the Procedure under this Policy;
  - (ii) Students will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as the result of making a complaint in good faith;
  - (iii) Students are expected not to make any complaint frivolously, vexatiously or with malice. Where a complaint is adjudged to be made frivolously, vexatiously or with malice, disciplinary action may be taken against the complainant;
  - (iv) The University understands that students who are dissatisfied may be experiencing frustration or stress but considers that students may be expected to engage with the Procedure in a polite, courteous and prompt manner and may expect this to be reciprocated by those handling their complaint. The University may request that a student revises and resubmits a communication under the Procedure where the tone or language used is deemed inappropriate;
  - (v) Students are expected to submit complaints under the Procedure within the timescales indicated. However, they may expect the University to exercise its discretion to extend the timescale where there is good reason, supported by evidence, when a student has not been able to submit a complaint within the timescale or where there is a need for the University to make reasonable adjustments to the timescales to meet its obligations under the Equality Act.
  - (vi) Students are expected to be reasonable and realistic in any request for remedy or redress;
  - (vii) Students may expect to receive responses to complaints within the timescales indicated within the Procedure or else to be informed of any reasons why this

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- is not possible, with an indication of the proposed amended timescale for a response;
- (viii) Students are expected to provide, at the time of submission of their complaint, all relevant documentation or other evidence and details of all issues which they wish to be taken into consideration. However, complaints will not be rejected solely on the grounds of minor procedural deficiencies on the part of the student;
  - (ix) Students may expect complaints to be dealt with confidentially and that their privacy will be respected. However, it may be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint and in these circumstances the parties concerned will be informed of such disclosure;
  - (x) Where a student is invited to attend a face-to-face meeting, they shall be entitled to be accompanied in accordance with provision set out within this Procedure;
  - (xi) Where a complaint is found to be justified, students may expect the University to take such action or provide such remedy as may be appropriate and to do so promptly;
  - (xii) Where a complaint is found not to be justified, students may expect to be informed in writing of the reasons for that decision and to be informed of any further rights to request a review of the decision.
- b) Under this Policy, the University acknowledges the rights of staff and sets out expectations of how staff will interact with the Complaints Procedure as follows:
- (i) Staff are expected to engage with the Procedure in a polite, courteous and prompt manner and may expect this to be reciprocated by the students making the complaint and by colleagues investigating the complaint;
  - (ii) Staff may expect complaints made about them by students to be dealt with confidentially and that their privacy will be respected. However, it may be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint and/or to take appropriate actions in relation to the outcome of the complaint and in these circumstances the parties concerned will be informed of such disclosure;
  - (iii) Where staff are invited to attend a face-to-face meeting as part of a complaint investigation, they shall be entitled to be accompanied in accordance with provision set out within this Procedure;
  - (iv) Staff acting as investigators for complaints can expect co-operation in a polite, courteous and prompt manner from colleagues from whom information relating to the complaint is requested.

### **7. Reporting and recording of complaints**

- a) Where a complaint is upheld and action is required, a record of the action taken shall be kept with the complaint documentation. Where recommendations for changes to policies or procedures are made as the result of a complaint, a record of consideration of those recommendations and any action taken shall be kept with the complaint documentation. Heads of Schools, Institutes and Professional Services will monitor complaints which have been referred to them and will be responsible for implementing, or recommending to the appropriate authority, changes to systems or procedures suggested by the nature and pattern of the complaints received. The outcome of such monitoring may also be used to inform other processes or activities.

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- b) All complaints considered under Stages 1 and 2 of the Procedure should be recorded and reported annually to the Academic Compliance Team in Student Administration and Support.
- c) An annual summary report on complaints considered under Stages 1 and 2 of the Procedure shall be made to the Senate and the Council and any other appropriate committee and to the Liverpool Guild of Students. The Senate and Council shall from time to time consider, in the light of such reports, whether changes to the University's systems and to the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure itself would be appropriate.
- d) All records of complaints considered under Stages 1 and 2 of the Procedure should be retained for a period of six years beyond the date the student leaves the University.

### 8. Informal resolution of concerns

- a) The University makes provision for a number of other channels through which students may wish to raise issues of a general nature. These include:
  - Those set out in the [University's Code of Practice on Student Representation](#), including Staff-Student Liaison Committees.
  - [Voice](#), the University's Student Feedback site
  - [Liverpool Guild of Students](#) representatives on University committees
  - The [Annual Progress Report](#) for postgraduate research students.
- b) The majority of more specific issues can be resolved satisfactorily within the area in which a student has a concern. If the issue relates to an individual, the student should, if possible, first raise their concern either orally or in writing with that individual or their line manager, stating the remedy they are seeking. If the issue relates to programmes, courses, facilities or services provided by the University, the student should raise the complaint with the person who has responsibility for the area concerned, again stating the remedy being sought. For postgraduate research students, issues relating to their supervision may be raised with their Departmental or School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Research if the issue cannot be raised with their supervisory team. The raising of any issue must normally be done **within one month** of the actions (or lack of actions) which prompted the complaint. Issues shall not normally be considered if they relate to actions (or lack of actions) **more than three months** before the date that the issue is first raised.
- c) The person with whom the issue has been raised shall respond to the student, normally **within 14 calendar days** of the issue being raised. It is anticipated, however, that there may be occasions when it is not feasible for a full and thorough investigation to be carried out within that timescale and when a longer period of time is therefore required. These may include, but are not restricted to:
  - Periods when the University is closed (e.g. Bank Holidays and the Christmas/New Year period);
  - Periods when key staff are absent from the University due to work commitments, scheduled or unscheduled leave, sickness or other good reason;
  - Particularly complex issues;

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- Issues which are related to other on-going procedures which may need to be completed before the issues can be fully addressed (e.g. disciplinary matters, legal proceedings).
- d) If it proves impossible to respond fully within 14 calendar days, the student shall be informed of the timescale for the receipt of a full response. If a student does not receive a response within 14 calendar days or, where they have been informed that this is not possible by the amended timescale indicated to them, the student shall be entitled to raise a complaint under Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure (see section 9 below).
- e) If raising or responding to the issue involves face to face contact between the student and a person about whom the concern has been raised, both shall be entitled to be accompanied by a friend or colleague or other member of the University, although neither party may be accompanied by a legal representative.
- f) If the person with whom an issue has been raised does not consider that any action is required, they must state their reasons for doing so.

### 9. Complaints Procedure: General Principles

- a) Anonymous complaints will not be dealt with under this Procedure. If a member of staff receives an anonymous complaint, they will be expected to seek advice from their line manager as to how the complaint should be dealt with.
- b) The University expects that a complaint will normally be made by the student concerned. Where the student wishes a third party (e.g. family member) to make the complaint on their behalf, they must provide the University with written permission to correspond with that third party to ensure that the University is not in breach of its duties and responsibilities under the Data Protection Act. The exception to this shall be where a student wishes a Member of Parliament to make the complaint on their behalf, in which case the *Data Protection (Processing of Sensitive Personal Data) (Elected Representatives) Order 2002* applies; this Order allows the University to disclose sensitive personal information to Members of Parliament, acting on behalf of a constituent, without having to obtain the explicit consent of the individual concerned. In providing permission for the University to correspond with a third party (or by appointing a Member of Parliament to make the complaint on their behalf), the student shall accept that this may include disclosure to the third party of relevant information about their academic standing, conduct and behaviour, issues of health or disability or other personal circumstances, level of engagement with University statutes, ordinances, regulations, policies, procedures and services and any other personal information about them which the University deems pertinent to the issues of their complaint. Any response to a complaint made on behalf of a student by a third party shall be provided to both the third party and the student. Where a complaint is made by a third party on behalf of the student, the complaint must still be made in accordance with the Procedure set out below.
- c) Where a complaint is made by a group of students, one student should be clearly nominated as the main point of contact for those handling the complaint. Findings and decisions should, however, be provided to each member of the group of students.

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- d) Complaints should be submitted using the appropriate [pro-forma](#). Where a complaint is submitted without the pro-forma being completed or not completed in full, the University reserves the right not to consider the complaint until the pro-forma has been properly completed and submitted.
- e) Students are expected to provide at the time of submission of their complaint, all relevant documentation or other evidence and details of all issues which they wish to be taken into consideration. Where this is not possible for good reason, students are expected to indicate what documentation or evidence is to follow. The person receiving the complaint ('the investigator') shall be entitled to impose a reasonable deadline by which this further information should be provided by the student. This deadline shall not normally be more than **one month** after the submission of the complaint and may be less. The timeline for consideration of the complaint will be halted whilst the provision of further information is anticipated. Unless there proves to be good reason why the student cannot then meet that deadline, the investigator may then proceed to consider the complaint once that deadline has passed, even if the further information has not been provided.
- f) Where the investigator believes that there is additional information which the student has not provided which is pertinent to the consideration of the complaint and which cannot readily be gathered from other sources, they may request that the student submits it and set a reasonable deadline (normally no more than **14 calendar days**) for its submission. The timeline for consideration of the complaint will be halted whilst the provision of that further information is anticipated. Unless there proves to be good reason why the student cannot then meet that deadline, the investigator may then proceed to consider the complaint once that deadline has passed, even if the further information has not been provided.
- g) Where, unsolicited, a student provides additional documentation or evidence after consideration of a complaint has commenced, the investigator shall determine whether there is sufficient time within the timescale set for their response to the complaint in which to consider this additional information and, if not, shall inform the student of any necessary and reasonable adjustment to the deadline for their response.
- h) Timescales for the University's responses to complaints, as set out in the stages below, are those to which the University expects normally to be able to adhere. It is anticipated, however, that there may be occasions when it is not feasible for a full and thorough investigation to be carried out within those normal timescales and when a longer period of time is therefore required. These may include, but are not restricted to:
- Periods when the University is closed (e.g. Bank Holidays and the Christmas/New Year period);
  - Periods when key staff are absent from the University due to work commitments, scheduled or unscheduled leave, sickness or other good reason;
  - Particularly complex issues of complaint;
  - Issues of complaint which are related to other on-going procedures which may need to be completed before the complaint can be fully addressed (e.g. disciplinary matters, legal proceedings).

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Where it is apparent that the stated deadlines cannot be met, the student will be informed at the earliest opportunity at which an indication of the revised deadline for response and the reasons for the delay can be given.

### 10. Complaints Procedure: Stage 1

a) If a student is dissatisfied with the response they receive from a person with whom an issue of concern has been raised informally, or if they feel unable to approach directly a person against whom they have a complaint, they should submit a written complaint as follows:

- For students on taught programmes of study, complaints relating to an academic matter should be submitted to the relevant Head of School/Institute<sup>1</sup> or their equivalent, via the relevant School/Institute Manager (School Support Offices can advise to whom such a complaint should be submitted)).
- For students on research programmes of study, complaints relating to an academic matter should be submitted to the relevant Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research.
- Complaints about a Head of School/Institute should be made to the Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the appropriate Faculty, via the relevant Faculty Student Experience Manager.
- Complaints related to a service should be submitted to the relevant Head of the service.

Details of post holders are provided in the [Annual Annexe to the Student Charter](#). If the student is unsure whom to approach at this stage, they may seek advice from the Academic Compliance Team (Student Administration and Support) or from the Advice Service of the Liverpool Guild of Students.

The complaint should be submitted in writing and should include:

- the completed [pro-forma](#)
- the nature of the complaint
- the informal steps already taken (if any)
- details of the response received
- a statement as to why the student remains dissatisfied;
- and, without prejudice to any formal remedy which might be determined, the remedy they are seeking.

The student should provide with the complaint all relevant documentation or other evidence which they wish to be taken into consideration.

b) The complaint should normally be submitted by the student within **one month** from the notification of the result of previous consideration of an issue of concern considered for informal resolution, except where a fair and reasonable extended deadline has been agreed by both parties. The University reserves the right to refuse an extended

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<sup>1</sup> For students on taught programmes in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, the appropriate person is the Head of the Institute of Learning and Teaching, although that individual may appoint the Head of a School to investigate where the Head of School has not already been involved.

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deadline and complaints shall not normally be considered if they relate to actions (or lack of actions) more than three months before the date that the issue is first raised.

- c) In some circumstances (e.g. as part of an appeal under the Assessment Appeals Procedure), issues of complaint raised by a student may be referred directly to Stage 1 without having gone through the informal resolution stage. Where this is the case, the student shall be informed that issues are being handled under the Student Complaints Procedure and, where necessary, other procedures may be put on hold pending the outcome of consideration of the complaint. The student will normally be asked to complete the pro-forma and provide other relevant documentation in accordance with section 10a) above.
- d) An acknowledgment of receipt of a Stage 1 complaint will normally be made to the student **within three working days** and shall include the deadline by which the student can expect to receive the written response to their complaint.
- e) The Head of the School/Institute or line manager for the service shall investigate the complaint or appoint a member of their staff to investigate the complaint on their behalf ('the investigator') and shall submit a written response to the student normally within **five weeks (35 calendar days)** of the receipt of the complaint within the School/Institute/service. If it should prove impossible to respond fully within five weeks, the student shall be informed in writing of the revised timescale for the receipt of a full response. The investigator shall have no material interest in the complaint and shall have had no substantive involvement with any previous consideration of the complaint.
- f) The investigator shall normally either offer the student the opportunity to attend a face-to-face meeting or hold a conversation with the student by telephone or through other means of telecommunication. If the student is offered an opportunity to attend a face-to-face meeting, they have the right to decline or to request instead a discussion by telephone or through other means of telecommunication. The investigator may also involve the person against whom a complaint has been made in that meeting or conversation (although that person may decline to participate), or hold a separate meeting or conversation with the person against whom a complaint has been made (in which case the person is expected to make themselves available). If such face-to-face meetings are held, the student and the person against whom a complaint has been made shall both be entitled to be accompanied by a friend or colleague or other member of the University.
- g) If the complaint is not upheld, the reasons for this decision must be stated in writing to the student and to any person against whom a complaint has been made.
- h) If the complaint is upheld, the reasons for this decision, any action taken or to be taken and any recommendations to be considered must be stated in writing to the student and to any person against whom a complaint has been made.
- i) The University will consider that the student accepts the outcome of the complaint under Stage 1 unless the student escalates the complaint to Stage 2 of this Procedure **within 14 calendar days of the date on which the written response is sent to the student or within 14 calendar days of the date on which the response to the complaint was due if the student does not receive such a response.**

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### 11. Complaints Procedure: Stage 2

- a) If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 1 complaint or if they do not receive a response within the stipulated timescale without adequate explanation, they shall be entitled to make a further complaint under Stage 2 of this Procedure, provided that it is made within the deadlines set out in section 10i) above. The University will not normally accept a complaint against a decision taken under Stage 1 except where it is made within those stated deadlines unless there is good reason why the student could not have made the complaint under Stage 2 within those deadlines. Any case for consideration of a complaint under Stage 2 after those deadlines have passed must be made in writing to the Chief Operating Officer<sup>2</sup> of the University and shall include the reason for the delay in submission together with any documentary evidence in support of that reason.
- b) In some circumstances (e.g. where particularly serious or complex issues are involved or where proscribed within other procedures of the University or its partners), issues of complaint raised by a student may be referred directly to Stage 2 without having gone through the Stage 1. Where this is the case, the student shall be informed that issues are being handled under the Student Complaints Procedure and, where necessary, other procedures may be put on hold pending the outcome of consideration of the complaint. The student will normally be asked to complete the pro-forma and provide other relevant documentation in accordance with section 11c) below.
- c) A complaint under Stage 2 of the Procedure should be submitted in writing to the Chief Operating Officer and should include:
- the completed [pro-forma](#)
  - the nature of the complaint
  - all correspondence received by or provided by the student under Stage 1 of this Procedure, including the University's written response to the complaint or, where a complaint has been referred directly to Stage 2 (section 11b) above refers), details of the informal steps already taken (if any) and details of the response received
  - a statement as to why the student remains dissatisfied
  - and, without prejudice to any formal remedy which might be determined, the remedy they are seeking.

The student should provide with the complaint all relevant documentation or other evidence which they wish to be taken into consideration. A student whose complaint has previously been considered under Stage 1 is not expected to raise in a Stage 2 complaint any additional issues not previously raised under Stage 1 except where the issues relate to the procedural conduct of the Stage 1 complaint consideration. Where the Chief Operating Officer considers that the new issues have been raised, they shall consider whether they can be investigated appropriately within the timescale for consideration of the Stage 2 complaint or whether the student should be asked to raise them as a separate complaint under Stage 1.

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<sup>2</sup> All references throughout this Policy and Procedure to the Chief Operating Officer shall be taken to refer to the most senior Head of Professional Services within the University.

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- d) An acknowledgment of receipt of a Stage 2 complaint will normally be made to the student **within five working days** and shall include the deadline by which the student can expect to receive the written response to their complaint.
- e) The Chief Operating Officer shall appoint a person or persons within the University ('the investigator') who has no material interest in the complaint and who has had no substantive involvement with any previous consideration of the complaint. The investigator shall normally seek to resolve the issue on the basis of consideration of the documentation provided by the student and such additional evidence as the investigator may consider it necessary to gather. Where the investigator gathers verbal responses from any person within or outside of the University, a written record of those responses shall be made. The investigator will not normally correspond with or meet with the student during the course of the investigation. The exceptions to this are:
- where it is necessary to correspond under section 9e) above to set deadlines for receipt of additional information; or
  - in cases where a complaint has been referred directly to Stage 2 without having been through Stage 1, in which case the investigator shall normally offer the student the opportunity either to attend a face-to-face meeting or hold a conversation with the student by telephone or through other means of telecommunication. The investigator may also involve the person against whom a complaint has been made in that meeting or conversation (although that person may decline to participate), or hold a separate meeting or conversation with the person against whom a complaint has been made (in which case the person is expected to make themselves available). If such face-to-face meetings are held, the student and the person against whom a complaint has been made shall both be entitled to be accompanied by a friend or colleague or other member of the University.
- f) Upon completion of the investigation, the investigator shall make a written report to the Chief Operating Officer of the University stating their findings in relation to whether or not the complaint is justified in whole or in part and making recommendations if appropriate. The Chief Operating Officer shall determine what action, if any, shall be taken and shall communicate this in writing to the student and all other relevant parties normally **within six weeks (42 calendar days)** of the date of acknowledging receipt of the Stage 2 complaint. This communication shall include a Completion of Procedures statement.
- g) Following consideration of a complaint under both Stage 1 and Stage 2, there shall be no further right of appeal or complaint within the University as to the merits of the case or the findings of any investigation.
- h) Following consideration of a complaint which has been referred directly to Stage 2 (except where such referral forms the final stage of consideration under another procedure e.g. Dignity at Work and Study Policy, a Complaints Procedure operated by a partner institution (e.g. Laureate Online Education)), if a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they shall be entitled to request a review of the findings and decisions. Any such request must be made **within 14 calendar days** of receipt of the response from the Chief Operating Officer of the University and must be made in writing to the Vice-Chancellor. The request must include:

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- the nature of the complaint
- all correspondence received by or provided by the student under Stage 2 of this Procedure, including the University's written response to the complaint
- a statement as to why the student remains dissatisfied
- and, without prejudice to any formal remedy which might be determined, the remedy the student is seeking.

The Vice-Chancellor shall appoint a person or persons within the University ('the senior investigator') who has no material interest in the complaint and who has had no substantive involvement with any previous consideration of the complaint. The senior investigator shall normally seek to resolve the issue on the basis of consideration of the documentation provided by the student and such additional evidence as the senior investigator may consider it necessary to gather. Where the senior investigator gathers verbal responses from any person within or outside of the University, a written record of those responses shall be made. The senior investigator will not normally correspond with or meet with the student during the course of the investigation, except where it is necessary to correspond to set deadlines for receipt of additional information. Upon completion of the investigation, the senior investigator shall make a written report to the Vice-Chancellor stating their findings in relation to whether or not the complaint is justified in whole or in part and making recommendations if appropriate. The Vice-Chancellor shall determine what action, if any, shall be taken and shall communicate this in writing to the student and all other relevant parties normally **within six weeks (42 calendar days)** of the date of acknowledging receipt of the request for the review of the complaint. Following the review, there shall be no further right of appeal or complaint within the University as to the merits of the case or the findings of any investigation and the Vice-Chancellor's communication shall include a Completion of Procedures statement.

### 12. Further External Review

- a) This Procedure represents the University's internal procedure for the handling of student complaints. A student who completes Stage 2 of the Procedure (or a review of Stage 2 where this is held under 11 h) above) will be automatically issued with a Completion of Procedures letter setting out their right to request a review of their case by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA; <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>) should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of this internal Procedure.
- b) A student who completes Stage 2 of the Procedure (or a review of Stage 2 where this is held under 11 h) above) following a complaint about debt advice or debt counselling provided by the University will be informed of their right to request a review of their case by the Financial Ombudsman Service (<http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk/>) should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of this internal Procedure.