



**University of  
Nottingham**

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

## **Student Complaints Policy**

This is the University's policy on student complaints and related procedures. Its content is applicable to staff and students across all of the UK, China and Malaysia campuses.

### **Definitions**

Includes: complaint; feedback

### **Complaint**

For the purposes of this policy a student complaint, as defined by the Office of Independent Adjudicators (OIA), is "an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a university's action or lack of action, or about the service provided by or on behalf of the university."

### **Feedback**

A student may provide feedback which will be taken into account by a school, department or service when reviewing its policies and operations, without invoking this policy. Students are encouraged to provide feedback to the appropriate school or department representative, Students' Union, Student Staff Forum (SSF) or service provider in a prompt and constructive manner.

### **Overview of student complaint procedure**

Includes: Level 1; Level 2; Level 3; opportunity for independent review

There are three Levels to the University complaints procedure:

- Level 1 – Local Level (informal resolution). To make a complaint, a student must start at Level 1.
- Level 2 – Head of School or Service (or equivalent at University of Nottingham Malaysia (UNM) or University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC)) for formal consideration
- Level 3 – Faculty Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC) or Registrar (at the UK campus) or Faculty Dean or Director of Academic Services (UNM) or UNNC equivalent for paper-based review.

After the internal University processes have been exhausted, complainants have the opportunity to have their complaint independently reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

## Who can use the student complaint procedure?

This complaints procedure may only be used by an individual who is, or has been, registered as a student of the University and who is not recorded as being a leaver (or, if they are a leaver, is complaining about events that occurred before they were a leaver, within the permitted timescales). This applies to students at all University of Nottingham campuses.

Applicants wishing to make a complaint should seek information regarding Admissions feedback, appeals and complaints. For more information, please consult the following:

[Admissions feedback, appeals and complaints](#)

In addition, please be aware that:

- A group of students may use this procedure to make a collective complaint provided that one student identifies themselves as the main contact for purposes of communication and has written consent from others that wish to be named as part of the complaint.
- Anyone wishing to make a complaint is encouraged to do so personally. The University policy on Communications with Third Parties is applicable to this policy.
- Anonymous complaints will not be considered unless there are exceptional and evidence-based reasons to do so. In many circumstances, raising a concern anonymously could impede the investigation and communication of the outcome.

For more information on communications with third parties, please consult the following:

[Policy on communications with Third Parties](#)

For more information about the student complaints procedure, please consult the following Student Services page:

[The Student Complaint Procedure](#)

Apprentices should refer to and use the following policy which outlines additional considerations:

[Apprentice Complaints Policy](#)

## What issues constitute grounds for complaint under this policy?

The subject of the complaint should relate specifically to one or more of the following, or comparable issues:

- Failure of the University to meet obligations including those outlined in course and student handbooks.
- Misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by the University.
- Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, supervision or administration – including (where applicable) that provided by a partner institution.

Please note that in the first instance, the student would normally be expected to follow the partner institution's complaints procedures.

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- Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by the University.
- Complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of the University.

Complaints relating to allegations of bullying, harassment or victimisation by members of staff are associated with the Policy of Dignity within the University and should be addressed to the Director of Human Resources. If the complaint is within the scope of the Policy of Dignity within the University and informal resolution is not appropriate then a formal investigation in accordance with the policy will be undertaken.

For more information about the Policy of Dignity within the University, please consult the following:

### [Policy of Dignity within the University](#)

Student Services will be informed that a complaint has been made and against whom (no further details will be divulged). Once the Dignity Investigation Procedure has been completed, if the student's allegations are proven, then the student may bring a Level 2 complaint relating to the impact of the behaviour on their course of study within one month of the date of the outcome letter.

If a student's complaint relates to allegations of bullying, harassment or victimisation by members of staff and to matters which are eligible for consideration under the terms of the policy on student complaints, the University reserves the right to appoint one investigating officer to consider the issues within the parameters of the published procedures for both the Policy of Dignity within the University and the Policy on student complaints.

Complaints about the behaviour of students towards other students are within the scope of the University Code of Discipline for Students. For more information about this code, please consult the following:

### [Code of Discipline for Students](#)

## **What issues do not constitute grounds for complaint under this policy?**

Includes: academic appeals; areas with separate complaints procedures

Please be aware of the following:

- Challenges to the academic judgement of a member of staff and/or school. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) will not interfere with the operation of a University's academic judgement. Dissatisfaction with a mark and/or the academic judgement of the University is not covered by the University's policies.
- Cases where complaints are upheld and there has been a clear impact on an academic outcome may, however, lead to an academic conclusion – for example, allow a student a further attempt at an assessment.
- Disagreement with a policy or regulation rather than its application. In this instance, the matter should be raised by the student with the relevant student representative to raise it at the Student Staff Forum (SSF), or another appropriate committee or group.
- Non-academic matters raised by students who are studying by collaborative arrangement and who are studying away from the University at partner institutions.

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- A matter of public interest which may be better suited to the Public Interest Disclosure Code (also known as whistle-blowing). For more information, please consult the following:

[Public Interest Disclosure Code](#)

### Academic appeals

This also applies to cases that would be better suited to consideration under the Policy on academic appeals, including:

- A concern about a decision made by an academic body regarding student progression, academic assessment and award
- A concern about a decision made under specific regulations, such as fitness to practise
- A concern about a school decision relating to an extenuating circumstances claim on the basis of a procedural irregularity

[Policy on academic appeals](#)

### Areas with separate complaints procedures

- Matter relating to the Student Loans Company (SLC), which has its own policy and procedure.
- Complaints about the Students' Union (SU), which has its own policy and procedure.
- Complaints relating to applications to the University, which are considered separately.

[Admissions feedback, appeals and complaints](#)

Where a student raises issues which do not fall neatly into the category of either complaint or academic appeal, the University will notify the student which specific issues will be considered under which specific procedure and direct the student to the alternative appropriate procedure for the remaining issues.

### Principles of this policy

Includes: Unacceptable Behaviour Policy; quality assurance

All complaints should be treated seriously and students must not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making a complaint in good faith. However, it is expected that students or people communicating on behalf of a student will conduct themselves responsibly and treat the process and those members of the University involved in the process with respect at all times.

Where behaviour falls outside of these expectations, the University's Unacceptable Behaviour Policy will apply. For more information, please consult the following:

[Unacceptable Behaviour Policy](#)

In all cases, it is desirable that complaints are resolved informally and quickly between the relevant parties, and that the formal process is started only if that fails. Evidence of an attempt at informal resolution will be required.

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In addition, please be aware of the following:

- Mediation can be a useful means of resolving matters of complaint where the parties involved are willing to engage voluntarily in the process in an attempt to work things out. The University may make an offer of mediation to students at any stage of the Complaint Procedure.
- Complaints must be substantiated with evidence, expressed in clear and succinct English and submitted within prescribed timescales.
- Complaints submitted outside of the timescales stipulated in the procedure will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances and where there is good reason, supported by evidence, for the late submission.
- Students are encouraged to seek advice from an Education Adviser in Students' Union Advice or equivalent office University of Nottingham Malaysia (UNM) and University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC) at any stage in the process. This includes seeking advice on how to present their case effectively.
- The University is committed to ensuring that complaints are handled in accordance with its published procedure. Occasionally, it may be sensible for the University to deviate from procedure if strict adherence to it could give rise to perceptions of prejudice or bias.

The University will not accept or investigate complaints which it considers to be in breach of the standards set out in the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.

### **Quality assurance**

Complaints form part of the University's process of quality review and improvement and are considered as providing valuable feedback rather than criticism. We will widely publicise information about procedures to students and staff, and all schools and central services are required to provide a link to them through their websites.

Students will be notified early in the process if the remedy sought within the complaint is beyond the power of the University to deliver.

It is important for students to note that:

- the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) cannot consider matters which are or which have been the subject of court proceedings.
- Similarly, the University reserves the right to decline, suspend or to discontinue a complaint under the Student Complaint Procedure, in the event that legal proceedings are commenced and the claim concerns the same subject matter as the complaint.

### **Recording and monitoring of complaints**

It is important that complaints are monitored in order to improve the student experience. The Complaints and Conduct Team will record and provide reports to indicate the nature of complaints and complainants, and resultant action. Such reports will:

- Feed into the monitoring and evaluation procedure at various levels: department, school, faculty and University;
- Feed directly into appropriate university-wide committees;
- Assist in identifying problems and trends across the University;

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- Form the basis of positive publicity, in demonstrating that identified issues have been resolved;
- Be made available to the Students' Union.