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University of
South Wales
Prifysgol
De Cymru

STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2026/2027

Title: Student Complaints Procedure					
Version	Issue Date	Revision Description	Author	Approved By & Date	Next Review Date
1.0	September 2019	First Issue	Siobhan Coakley	QAC/Academic Board 4 August 2019	June 2020
2.0	September 2020	Second issue	Siobhan Coakley	QAC/Academic Board 3 June 2020	June 2021
3.0	September 2021	Third issue	Gwenllian Jones	QAC/ Academic Board 19 May 2021 & July 2021	June 2022
4.0	September 2022	Fourth Issue	Siobhan Coakley	QAC/Academic Board	June 2023
5.0	September 2023	Fifth Issue	Siobhan Coakley	QAC/Academic Board	June 2024
6.0	September 2024	Sixth Issue	Siobhan Coakley	QAC/Academic Board	June 2025
7.0	September 2025	Seventh Issue	Louise Neate/ Niamh Križan	QAC/Academic Board 25 June 2025	June 2026
8.0	September 2026	Eighth Issue	Louise Neate/ Niamh Križan	QAC/Academic Board 24 June 2026	June 2027

CONTENTS

SECTION ONE: ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS	2
SECTION TWO: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 1 - EARLY RESOLUTION	3
SECTION THREE: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 2 - FORMAL INVESTIGATION.....	3
SECTION FOUR: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 3 - REQUEST FOR REVIEW	4
General principles	4
Grounds for review	4
Consideration of eligibility for review	5
Consideration of request for review.....	5
SECTION FIVE: SUBMITTING A COMPLAINT TO AN EXTERNAL ORGANISATION	5
Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).....	5
Financial Ombudsman Service	5
Medr (Commission for Tertiary Education and Research).....	6
Disabled Students Allowances (DSA)	6

SECTION ONE: ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- 1.1 The University is committed to safeguarding the emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of all parties involved during the operation of its Student Complaints Regulations and Procedure. Confidential advice and support are available from:

The Student's Union - <https://www.uswsu.com/>
The University's Wellbeing Service - <https://wellbeing.southwales.ac.uk/>
The Chaplaincy - <https://www.southwales.ac.uk/services/chaplaincy/>
- 1.2 The Student Casework Unit provides authoritative, formal guidance on the application and operation of the Student Complaints Regulations and Procedure.
- 1.3 Students are allowed to have a support person with them at any discussions or meetings; for example, a representative from the Students' Union, or a friend. If the student would like a support person to attend a meeting with them, the student must advise the University of the person's name, status and contact details at least 48 hours beforehand.
- 1.4 The Head of Student Casework (or nominee) reserves the right to refuse the attendance of a support person, if it is determined that there is a conflict of interest relating to the nominated person; in which case, the student will be given the opportunity to nominate a different support person.
- 1.5 The role of a support person is to be there for the student during the meeting as a supportive presence. Their role is not to represent the student, advocate on their behalf or speak for them, unless a request is made in writing to the Student Casework Unit and this is agreed by the Head of Student Casework (or nominee) as a reasonable adjustment. Students cannot usually send another person to the meeting on their behalf unless this is agreed exceptionally by the Head of Student Casework (or nominee).
- 1.6 The University of South Wales' procedures are not legal in nature, although students are able to seek preliminary advice, without prejudice. Consequently, students should not need to have legal support or representation in relation to the Student Complaints Procedure. However, if the student wishes to be supported/represented, they must apply for permission in writing to the Student Casework Unit (studentcasework@southwales.ac.uk). For guidance on requesting legal representation, please refer to the [Procedure for Requests for Legal Representation](#).
- 1.7 If the University receives formal legal action, including a pre-action correspondence from a solicitor on behalf of a student, it may stop action under this procedure, advise insurers and appoint legal representatives (as appropriate) to respond to the legal action.
- 1.8 Where it is identified that swift consideration of a complaint is required, for example when progress or delays will affect the student's health, the University will ensure this is highlighted to the Investigating Officer.
- 1.9 The Student Casework Unit will facilitate a case conference with the University's Disability Service where the need for reasonable adjustments to the Procedure is identified. Students will be given the opportunity to attend this meeting to make any specific requests for adjustments.

SECTION TWO: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 1 - EARLY RESOLUTION

- 2.1 If a student has a concern about an aspect of their experience at the University, they must normally try to resolve it at an early stage.
- 2.2 Students should raise concerns directly with the person responsible where possible. They may subsequently be referred to another, more appropriate, member of staff depending on the nature of the concern raised.
- 2.3 If the concern has not been resolved to the student's satisfaction, they are able to request that their complaint is formally investigated.
- 2.4 If, on receipt of a student complaint, the Student Casework Unit assesses that there may still be opportunity for an informal resolution, the complaint may be handled accordingly before progressing to the formal stage.
- 2.5 There may be certain complaints where it is not appropriate to attempt an informal resolution. The Student Casework Unit should be contacted for advice on such cases. The Head of Student Casework (or nominee) will make the final decision on any requests for direct access to the formal investigation stage.
- 2.6 If the student has been provided with their preferred outcome at the early resolution stage, and/or a formal investigation would lack purpose, the University reserves the right to deem any subsequent formal complaint on the same issues as inadmissible.

SECTION THREE: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 2 - FORMAL INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 To make a formal complaint, students should complete the Complaint Form (found on the University website at <https://registry.southwales.ac.uk/student-regulations/student-complaints/>) and submit it to the Student Casework Unit, with appropriate supporting evidence.
- 3.2 The University reserves the right to conduct a streamlined process for complaints, where an issue is identified by a large number of students. In such cases, the full procedure may not be followed, but complainants will receive a Completion of Procedures letter containing the University's final response, which will enable them to go to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if they remain dissatisfied (please see Section 5.1-5.2).
- 3.3 The complaint will be reviewed to ensure it is timely and includes appropriate evidence. It will then be passed on to one of the University's Investigating Officers. They will have had no prior involvement with the case and will normally be independent of the subject area. However, it is recognised that, occasionally, a degree of subject expertise may be necessary in conducting investigations. Where this is the case, the Head of Student Casework (or nominee) will make the final decision on the appointment of the Investigating Officer.
- 3.4 The Investigating Officer will seek to investigate the complaint within 40 working days. The final report will be provided to the student within an additional 10 working days. Where the complexities of the case and the need to contact a range of individuals in the course of the investigation make this difficult, the student will be kept informed of progress and the reason for any delays.
- 3.5 The Investigating Officer will obtain relevant evidence and information by whichever method is most proportionate to the case. The Investigating Officer will meet with the student to discuss their complaint. Students have the right to be supported by a support person at any meeting (see Advice and Support for Students).

- 3.6 The student will be asked to agree a Checklist of Issues, which will form the basis of the investigation, by a set deadline. Any proposed amendments or additions to the Checklist after the set deadline will be considered at the discretion of the Investigating Officer.
- 3.7 In the interest of fairness, where an individual is the subject of a complaint, or responsible for the service complained about, they will be invited to comment on the complaint. The Investigating Officer will also meet/correspond with any relevant members of staff/witnesses to discuss the complaint from their perspective. Any member of staff who is invited to a meeting under the Student Complaints Procedure has the right to be supported by a colleague or a trade union representative.
- 3.8 The Investigating Officer will, during the investigation, consider whether the complaint can be resolved without the need to complete the formal stage, with the student's agreement.
- 3.9 Following completion of the investigation, the Investigating Officer will prepare a report and present it to the Dean of Faculty/Head of Department (or nominee) (and employer representative in the case of individuals registered as an apprentice). The Dean of Faculty/Head of Department (and employer representative in the case of individuals registered as an apprentice) will provide a response before the final report is submitted to the Student Casework Unit.
- 3.10 Where the outcome includes an offer of financial compensation, the Investigating Officer will ensure that the faculty/department is aware of this. The Student Casework Unit will obtain approval from Executive where required. This is done prior to notifying the student of the outcome of the complaint.
- 3.11 The student will be asked to confirm within one month whether they accept the outcome.

SECTION FOUR: PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 3 - REQUEST FOR REVIEW

General principles

- 4.1 A student may be eligible to request a review if they believe that they have reasonable grounds to consider that their complaint has not been adequately addressed upon receiving the outcome.
- 4.2 Students must submit a request for review in full, on the appropriate form, within one month of the outcome of the complaint. Late requests for review will be rejected unless good reason for the lateness is provided (with evidence, if requested by the Student Casework Unit).
- 4.3 Request for reviews must be supported by appropriate evidence.

Grounds for review

- 4.4 The only grounds under which a complaint may be considered at the review stage are:
 - a) *The formal procedure was not followed and this materially affected the outcome.*
 - b) *There were specific issues of the complaint which were raised at the formal stage and were not considered. NB. New issues introduced at this stage will not be an eligible basis for review.*
 - c) *You have new material evidence that you were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.*
 - d) *You can demonstrate that the decision was unreasonable or disproportionate to the circumstances of the case.*

Consideration of eligibility for review

- 4.5 The student will be notified within five working days whether their case is eligible for consideration; that is:
- a) *You have demonstrated an arguable case under one or more of the grounds set out under 4.4.*
 - b) *The request for review has been submitted within one month of the complaint outcome, or with good reason for lateness (with evidence if requested).*
 - c) *The request for review is supported by appropriate evidence.*
- 4.6 If it is deemed that the request for review does not meet the criteria outlined in 4.5, the student will also be issued a Completion of Procedures Letter.

Consideration of the request for review

- 4.7 If it is deemed that the student's request for review meets the criteria outlined in 4.5, a Senior Officer/academic assigned by the Head of Student Casework (or nominee) will review the case and decide whether to:
- a) propose a change in outcome.
 - b) refer the complaint for re-investigation (in this case, the standard procedures and timescales will apply).
 - c) uphold the original findings.
- 4.8 The Student Casework Unit will provide the student with the outcome of the review within fifteen working days of notifying them that the case is eligible for consideration.
- 4.9 If a complaint is not upheld at the review stage, the Student Casework Unit will automatically issue the student with a Completion of Procedures Letter.
- 4.10 If a complaint is upheld (in full or in part) at the review stage, the student can still request a Completion of Procedures Letter. The request for a Completion of Procedures letter must be made within one month of notification of the outcome of the review.

SECTION FIVE: SUBMITTING A COMPLAINT TO AN EXTERNAL ORGANISATION**Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**

- 5.1 If the student is unhappy with the outcome of their request for review under the University's Procedures, they may, following issue of a University Completion of Procedures Letter, lodge a complaint with the OIA.
- 5.2 Details of the OIA and the relevant information in relation to the Scheme can be accessed at www.oiahe.org.uk. Further information and advice can be obtained from the Student Casework Unit.

Financial Ombudsman Service

- 5.3 Following a complaint about debt advice or debt counselling provided by the University, the student is able 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 the internal procedures.

Medr (Commission for Tertiary Education and Research)

- 5.4 Medr is the regulatory body for higher education provision in Wales. In certain circumstances, students are able to make a complaint to Medr. Further information can be found at the following webpage: <https://www.medr.cymru/en/complaints/>

Disabled Students Allowances (DSA)

- 5.5 Complaints about Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs) should be directed to the relevant funding authority or to the relevant DSA supplier (eg Needs Assessment Centre, Assistive Technology supplier or Non-medical Help provider. Further information on the Student Loans Company Complaints Procedure can be found here: [Complaints procedure - Student Loans Company - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complaints-procedure-student-loans-company)