

## **STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **Purpose**

1. This Procedure is designed to ensure that students have a full opportunity to raise, individually or collectively, matters of concern to them without fear of disadvantage and in the knowledge that privacy and confidentiality will be respected. Complaints will be dealt with promptly and fairly. Where a complaint is justified, an appropriate remedy will be offered, within the bounds of what is reasonable and practicable to provide.

2. The University of Suffolk welcomes feedback as this can bring to our attention concerns that could be resolved before they become a cause for complaint. Students can give their views on all aspects of their experience directly to the relevant area, via their Personal Tutor or Course Leader and also via student representatives on a range of committees.

3. The Complaints Procedure operates in accordance with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance for Concerns, Complaints and Appeals published in November 2018, and the good practice framework for handling complaints and academic appeals issued by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) in December 2016.

### **Definitions**

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outside these procedures are dealt with under this Complaints Procedure. Advice is available from the Office for Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct (OSACC), Infozone, Student Services and the Students' Union Advice Service about the most appropriate procedure to be used.

8. The complainant will not have the right to have the same case heard again through a different complaints route.

9. Complaints will normally be considered individually. Where complaints raised by a number of complainants involve the same issue, the complaints may be considered collectively, subject to any confidentiality requirements. In such circumstances, the individual complainants involved will normally be invited to nominate one of their number as a spokesperson to facilitate the process.

insistence on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;

20. At any time during or after an informal, formal or review stage complaint, the University may offer to facilitate a voluntary meeting between the relevant parties to help resolve the issue. The use of mediation or conciliation can help both parties to understand the concern and reach a mutually satisfactory conclusion, and may be particularly helpful in resolving disputes between individuals. Where both parties to the complaint agree to mediation or conciliation, an impartial

24. Most complaints will not need to progress beyond this initial stage. However, where it is clear that informal resolution is not appropriate or possible, if the complainant did not feel able to seek informal resolution, or if the informal approach did not resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction, the complainant may make a formal complaint under the Formal Stage of the procedure.

## **FORMAL STAGE**

### **Submitting a Formal Stage Complaint**

25. To make a formal complaint, the complainant must submit the completed Complaint (Formal Stage) form (available on MySuffolk and the University of Suffolk website) to OSACC within three months of the matter occurring. The complainant will need to clearly define the resolution they are seeking and provide any supporting evidence. Appropriate evidence may include published materials, correspondence, or other written evidence to demonstrate the matter being complained about. Covert recordings will not normally be accepted.

26. Complaints about matters that occurred more than three months ago will not normally be considered without good reason for the delay. The Academic Registrar or nominee will determine whether a late complaint can be accepted. This decision will be final. If the late complaint is not accepted, the complainant will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter.

### **Consideration of Formal Stage Complaints**

27. All formal stage complaints submitted will be screened by OSACC to confirm that the complaint has been submitted under the correct procedure (see paragraph 7) and that the form is fully completed with necessary supporting documentation, including evidence of any attempt at early resolution where applicable. The Academic Registrar or nominee may ask the complainant for further clarification and/or additional evidence.

28. Where additional evidence and/or clarification is requested from the complainant, this should be submitted to OSACC by the given deadline. Should it not be received by this date, the complaint will be considered on the evidence provided with the original submission.

29. Where a complaint has met the requirements as detailed in paragraph 27 above, OSACC will acknowledge the complaint and inform the complainant who will be dealing with the complaint (the Investigating Officer), normally within five working days of receipt. The Investigating Officer will have been trained for the role and will normally be the appropriate manager, for example the Dean of School or Head of Service or their nominee, providing they are sufficiently removed from any earlier process. Where there is the potential for a conflict of interest or perception of bias, the

Academic Registrar will appoint a senior academic or an appropriate manager from another school or service who has had no previous involvement in the matter to act as the Investigating Officer.

30. The Investigating Officer will consider the complaint and may talk to key staff and other students, as well as considering relevant documents and other written evidence. A meeting may also be arranged with the complainant (see paragraph 19) to discuss the purpose and scope of the complaint and consider options for a mutually acceptable resolution.

31. If the complaint is against another student



outcome letter, the Complaints (Review Stage) form and any other written response(s) by the relevant manager,



### **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**

43. If having exhausted the above Complaints Procedure the complainant considers that their complaint has not been satisfactorily dealt with, they may be able to take their complaint to the OIA. If the complainant is, or was, a registered student, details of the OIA scheme will be sent with the Completion of Procedures letter. Details are also available from the OIA website ([www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)). The OIA will normally only consider complaints where a Completion of Procedures letter has been issued.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

44. The University of Suffolk will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure and reflect upon the outcomes for enhancement purposes. A report will be submitted annually to the Equality and Diversity Committee, Quality Committee and Senate. The report will include equality monitoring data.