

REGULATION 26 STUDENT COMPLAINTS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 City is committed to providing a high quality experience for each student and encourages students to inform it where there is any cause for concern or where there may be an opportunity to make improvements. City's Complaints Regulations, and associated policy, therefore exist to enable students to make complaints about such matters.

2. Definition and Scope

- 2.1. A complaint is defined as an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction about a student's learning experience or an aspect of a service or facility which is provided to registered students of the institution.
- 2.2. These Regulations cover all students registered on programmes leading to an award of City, University of London for study, including those on work placements, engaged in work-based learning or during periods of approved interruption of studies. Former students may raise issues of complaint within the timescales stated in 3. below.
- 2.3. Students studying on validated programmes should refer to **Appendix A**. The complaints regulations and policy to be followed for other types of partnership programme will depend on the nature of the partnership; information will be set out in the Memorandum of Agreement and in the student's programme handbook.
- 2.4. The Regulation on Student Complaints does not cover the following (separate procedures exist for these as noted in brackets):
 - (a) appeals relating to decisions made by an Assessment Board regarding assessment, progression or award. (Senate Regulations 20/20b/21/21b);
 - (b) complaints relating to a case of alleged misconduct by the complainant (Senate Regulation 13);
 - (c) matters relating to fitness to practise where there is an existing relevant fitness to practise procedure
- 2.5. City reserves the right to reclassify a complaint as an academic appeal or vice versa, if the submission has been made to the incorrect procedure, or the submission falls properly within the remit of one procedure rather than the other. The outcome of an appeal cannot be made the subject of a complaint except where there is possible material error in arriving at the decision.
- 2.6. The final decision regarding a matter raised under this Complaints Regulation or any of the associated procedures shall normally be considered to be the final decision of the institution: there is no right to further consideration of the same matter under a different associated policy.

- 2.7. Each complaint will be considered on its own merits, subject to all legal and professional requirements.
- 2.8. A student will not be treated less favourably by City or suffer any detriment or disadvantage if s/he makes a complaint in good faith, regardless of whether the complaint is successful. Anonymous or vexatious complaints will not normally be considered.
- 2.9. Any member of staff mentioned in a complaint will not be treated less favourably by the institution than if the complaint had not been brought. If, however, the complaint against a member of staff is upheld, that member may be subject to disciplinary proceedings under City policy.
- 2.10. These internal regulations of City and their associated policies and guidance will be operated in accordance with its Equal Opportunities Statement and Equality and Diversity Objective. Complaints will be handled with an appropriate level of confidentiality. There is an expectation that students and staff members will treat the complaints processes and each other with respect.

3. Timeframe for making a complaint

- 3.1. A student who is, or was recently a registered student, or a group of students wishing to complain should normally do so within 28 days of the event which has given rise to the complaint or, if a series of events has given rise to a complaint, within 28 days of the final event in the series.

4. Delegation of responsibility

- 4.1. The President delegates responsibility for dealing with student complaints as follows:
 - Stage 1 (Early Resolution) and Stage 2 (Local-Level Resolution) student complaints are dealt with by the appropriate Schools and/or Professional Services departments as applicable. Deans of Schools normally assign responsibility for managing student complaints to the School Head of Academic Services (which for the purposes of this regulation includes an equivalent role).
 - Stage 3 (Institutional Level Review) investigations are managed by Student and Academic Services on behalf of the Deputy President and Provost.

5. Complaints Procedure Stages

5.1 Stage 1: Early Resolution

- i. Initially, a student should seek to deal with his/her complaint at the level at which the event leading to the complaint occurred. This could be either at programme-level, School-level or within the relevant service department.
- ii. A student should, if at all possible, address his/her complaint to the member of staff most directly involved in the event leading to the complaint, in order to give that person the opportunity to address his/her concerns.
- iii. If for any reason the student does not feel that this is possible, s/he should seek advice from the School Head of Academic Services (or equivalent) or the Director/Head of the professional service department in order to identify an appropriate alternative mechanism of early resolution. The School Head of Academic Services (or equivalent) will nominate an Investigating Officer to deal with the student's complaint.
- iv. Every effort will be made by the Investigating Officer to resolve the complaint simply and quickly. The Investigating Officer may invite the student to a meeting to discuss the matter in an attempt to reach a resolution.
- v. At the end of Stage 1, a student will be provided with a written response to his/her complaint, which will either:
 - Detail the proposed resolution; OR
 - If no resolution has been proposed, explain why resolution has not been considered to be possible.
- vi. Stage 1 complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion. Those involved in investigating the complaint will establish appropriate timescales based on its nature and complexity. These timescales should be communicated to the student and the student kept informed of any changes. Where possible, the investigation should be completed within 28 days.

5.2 Stage 2: Local-level Resolution

- i. If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, s/he may choose to submit a Stage 2 complaint, by completing the Complaints Form. This should be done within 21 days of the release of the written response to Stage 1. A Stage 2 complaint will normally only be considered following the completion of the early resolution stage.
- ii. A student wishing to submit a Stage 2 complaint should do so to:
 - the School Head of Academic Services (or equivalent) or his/her nominee (for academic programme or School-related complaints), or
 - the Head of the relevant service department or his/her nominee (for service-related complaints).

- iii. If the Head of Academic Services or Head of the service department was involved in the case at Stage 1, s/he will nominate an appropriate alternative individual to consider the case. If no appropriate individual can be found within the School or service department, s/he shall refer it to Student and Academic Services, who will then assign the case to an appropriate individual.
- iv. The receipt of the complaint form will normally be acknowledged within 7 days.
- v. The School Head of Academic Services or his/her nominee or Head of the relevant service department or his/her nominee will consider the case appropriately. This will normally involve discussions with the student and/or the subject of the complaint.
- vi. Complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion. The School Head of Academic Services or Head of the relevant service department will establish appropriate timescales based on the nature and complexity of the complaint. These timescales should be communicated to the student and the student kept informed of any changes. Where possible, complaints should normally take no more than 21 days to investigate from the acknowledgement being sent.
- vii. The School Head of Academic Services or his/her nominee or the Head of the relevant service department or his/her nominee will inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint of the proposed outcome of the investigation and give him/her the opportunity to comment. The outcome, with reasons, will then be communicated in writing to the student.
- viii. A summary of the outcome will be reported to the Board of Studies. An annual summary report of student complaints will be received by Senate and a record retained¹.

5.3 Stage 3: Institutional level review

- i. If a student considers that:
 - a. there has been a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the Stage 2 investigation, or
 - b. new information has come to light, which the student was unable to disclose previously and which would have had a material impact upon the investigation previously undertaken,
- ii. s/he can request a review of the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation. A student wishing to request a review must do so within 21 days of the written response to Stage 2. The review request must be submitted to Student and Academic Services using the Complaints Institutional Level Review Form.
- iii. The receipt of a review request will normally be acknowledged within 7 days.
- iv. The review will be carried out by a designated City Officer. The review will consider whether the outcome of Stage 2 was reasonable rather than reconsider the original case and its evidence.

¹ Where a complaint has been dealt with by a service department, the outcome will be reported to Student and Academic Services so that it can be reported to Senate.

- v. Further discussions may be held with the student and/or subject of the complaint and with members of staff involved at Stage 1 and/or Stage 2.
- vi. Where possible, reviews should normally take no more than 21 days to investigate from the acknowledgement being sent. The City Officer undertaking the review will establish appropriate timescales based on the nature and complexity of the case. These timescales should be communicated to the student and the student kept informed of any changes.
- vii. The City Officer will inform the complainant and the subject of the complaint of the proposed outcome of his/her investigation and give him/her the opportunity to comment. The outcome, with reasons, will then be communicated in writing to the student.
- viii. An annual summary report of student complaints will be received by Senate and a record will be retained.

5.4 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator

When City's internal procedures have been concluded a student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter. Following this, a student who is dissatisfied with the final decision on his/her case may be able to apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education. Information and eligibility rules are available at: www.oiahe.org.uk

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Appendix A

Complaints from students studying on validated programmes

1. City validates programmes offered at other institutions as leading to awards of the institution. City has overarching responsibility for the quality and standards of the academic programmes offered by these institutions. Provision is therefore made for a student on a validated programme to complain to City on matters related to the quality of his/her academic programme. This complaint can only occur following completion of the Validated Institution's complaints procedures.
2. A student on a validated programme may make use of various City's services. Therefore there is also provision for a student to complain about any of these services.

A. Managing student complaints

A student on a programme validated by City who wishes to complain should follow one of the following courses of action depending on the nature of his/her complaint:

1. Complaints associated with non-academic matters, except those which relate to one of the City's services, must be pursued in accordance with the Validated Institution's own complaints policy and procedures.
2. Complaints associated with one of the City's services should be pursued in accordance with the Institutional Complaints Regulations and Policy [see Regulation 26 above]. If a student wishes to complain, but is unsure of the department responsible, s/he should seek advice from a senior member of City administrative staff.
3. Complaints on matters related to the academic programme should first be pursued in accordance with the Validated Institution's own complaints policy and procedures. If, following completion of those procedures, a student considers the outcome to be unsatisfactory, s/he can request a review of that outcome by City [see below].

B. Institutional -level review

1. If a student considers that
 - a. there has been a procedural irregularity in the final outcome of the investigation of a complaint regarding a matter related to his/her academic programme carried out by the Validated Institution, or
 - b. new information has come to light, which the student was unable to disclose previously and which would have had a material impact upon the investigation previously undertaken,

s/he can request a review of the outcome of the investigation carried out by the Validated Institution.

2. The student is expected to submit the request within 21 days of the student receiving written confirmation from the Validated Institution of the final outcome of the Validated Institution investigation. The review request must be submitted to Student and Academic Services using the Complaints Institutional Level Review Form.

3. The receipt of a review request will normally be acknowledged within 7 days.
4. The request will be reviewed by the City Officer. The review will consider whether the Validated Institution decision was reasonable rather than reconsider the original case and its evidence.

Discussions may be held with the student and/or subject of the complaint and with members of staff involved in the Validated Institution decision.

5. Where possible, reviews should normally take no more than 21 days to investigate from the acknowledgement being sent. The City Officer will establish appropriate timescales based on the nature and complexity of the case. These timescales should be communicated to the student and the student kept informed of any changes.
6. The City Officer will inform the subject of the complaint of the proposed outcome of his/her investigation and give him/her the opportunity to comment. The outcome, with reasons, will then be communicated in writing to the student.
7. An annual summary report of student complaints will be received by Senate and a record will be retained.

C. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator

When the review has been concluded the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter. Following this, any student who is dissatisfied with the final decision on his/her case may be able to apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education. Information and eligibility rules are available at: www.oiahe.org.uk/.