



## 1) Scope

**1.1** These regulations are intended to provide a framework for the resolution of student concerns and complaints.

**1.2** Once students have exhausted the internal procedure they may be able to ask for a review by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

**1.3** Students studying on a course validated by University of the Arts London (UAL) can ask for a review of their complaint by the awarding body, before the OIA.

### **Regulation:**

**Aligned to:** UK Quality Code Chapter B9  
OIA Good Practice Framework

**Date approved/re-approved:** 22 July 2020

**Date for review** To be reviewed every 5 years by Academic Board

**Approved by:** Quality Development Committee

### **To be read in conjunction with:**

[Appeals Policy](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)

Student Disciplinary Policy

[Complaints Procedure for Members of the Public](#)

[Student Code of Conduct](#)

**Document Owner:** Quality Office

## **Student Concerns and Complaints Procedure**

### **2 Overview**

**2.1** We hope that you will have a positive experience during your time at Ravensbourne. However, we know that things can go wrong so this procedure sets out what to do if they do and how we aim to deal with the situation.

**2.2** We are committed to dealing with your concerns and complaints through open and transparent communication, by providing clear information and ensuring that all processes are fair.

**2.3** This procedure is in line with Chapter B9 of the UK Quality Code on Academic Appeals and Student Complaints and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education's (OIA) Good Practice Framework.

**2.4** This procedure is the responsibility of the Quality Office. If you have any questions about this procedure, please contact them.

### **3 What is a complaint?**

**3.1** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service we provide or which is provided on our behalf.

**3.2** Examples of complaints include but are not limited to:

**3.2.1** our failure to meet our responsibilities under the Student Contract;

**3.2.2** the quality and standard of our services, including the way we provide, teach or manage a course;

**3.2.3** our failure to provide a service to the extent that it might impact academic experience;

**3.2.4** the poor quality of facilities, learning resources and services provided by us;

**3.2.5** inaccurate information about your course as provided in the prospectus, at open days or elsewhere;

**3.2.6** an action, behaviour or failure to act by a member of staff;

**3.2.7** our failure to follow an appropriate administrative process.

**3.3** If the complaint relates to a service that is provided for us by a contractor (for example, Scape Accommodation) the complaint will follow their procedure, which we will oversee.

**3.4** Examples of what we do not treat as complaints include but are not limited to:

**3.4.1** issues with an action, behaviour or failure to act by another student (please see Bullying and Harassment [Policy](#) or The [Student Code of Conduct](#);

**3.4.2** academic appeals ([Appeals Policy](#));

**3.4.3** appeals against admissions decisions ([Admissions Policy](#));

**3.4.4** freedom-of-information requests (please contact [foi@rave.ac.uk](mailto:foi@rave.ac.uk));

**3.4.5** data-protection requests (please contact [dpo@rave.ac.uk](mailto:dpo@rave.ac.uk) );

**3.4.6** issues being dealt with under the HR disciplinary procedure; and/or

**3.4.7** issues that are being considered by a court or tribunal.

**3.5** All of our courses have ways for students to offer feedback on the good and bad parts of their courses. Please use these to raise course issues in the first place.

#### **4 Who the procedure covers**

**4.1** This procedure covers all students at Ravensbourne and includes students:

**4.1.1** studying for a further-education qualification;

**4.1.2** studying a work-based learning course;

**4.1.3** studying here through an exchange programme.

**4.2** Former students can use this procedure until **three months** after they graduate. For the avoidance of doubt, this is 3 months from receipt of your outcome from the Final Assessment Board. Where a student has withdrawn from their studies, this is 3 months from the last date of attendance.

**4.3** New students can use this procedure once they have accepted a place to study here and if a prospective student wants to complain, they can use the Complaints procedure for members of the public.

**4.4** This procedure does not cover members of staff unless they are enrolled on a Ravensbourne course and the issue relates to their course.

**4.5** If you want to make a complaint, and are not a student at Ravensbourne, you should use the Complaints [procedure](#) for members of the public.

#### **5. Timescales (As quickly as possible)**

**5.1** You should raise your complaint/concern within **three months** of the issue taking place.

**5.2** We use different timescales depending on which stage you are at.

### Concern Stage

**5.3** We will aim to acknowledge and resolve concerns as soon as possible but no longer than **10 working days** after receipt. If for any good reason it may take longer, we will inform you of the new timescales.

### Formal Complaint Stage

**5.4** If you make a Formal Complaint to the University Quality Department then we will aim to acknowledge and invite you to a meeting with an Investigating Officer within **10 working days** and further aim to resolve the Complaint within **15 working days** of this meeting. If it becomes apparent that it will take longer to investigate or resolve your complaint, then we will advise you about the new timescales and the reasons for this.

### Complaint Review Stage

**5.5** Following the Formal complaint outcome, you have **10 working days** to ask for a complaint review.

**5.6** We will aim to reply to your request for a complaint review within **20 working days**. If it becomes apparent that the Senior Manager will need more time to complete the complaint review, you will be informed about the new timescales and the reasons for this.

## **6 Other Procedures**

**6.1** There may be times where your complaint overlaps with another procedure we use, such as the Appeals procedure or Extenuating circumstances procedure. If this happens, we will contact you to clarify what issues will be looked at under each procedure.

**6.2** If you make an appeal against your marks for a unit, and this could be considered a complaint, we will contact you to ask if you would like the matter considered under this procedure after the appeals process has ended. If you do, we will keep you informed during the process. The time intervals above will begin upon confirmation from you.

**6.3** If you provide an extenuating circumstances form, and the information on the form could be a complaint, we will ask you if you want this considered under the complaints procedure.

**6.4** If your complaint relates to the behaviour of a member of staff, it may be referred to the Line Manager of the member of staff. If the behaviour appears, prima facie,

gross misconduct, this will be referred to the Ravensbourne Human Resources Department who will decide if we should follow the Staff disciplinary procedure.

**6.5** Where the circumstances in clause 6.4 apply, as a result of the University's Data Protection Obligation you will only be told that the matter has been referred to the Ravensbourne Human Resources Department and no further information will be released.

## **7. Representation**

**7.1** You can appoint a representative who we will communicate with throughout the procedure. If you want to do this, please write to us to let us know.

**7.2** You are welcome to be accompanied to, or represented at, any meetings held about your complaint. Whoever is accompanying you may make representations on your behalf, if you want them to. They will not be able to answer questions on your behalf.

## **8. Group Complaints**

**8.1** If a group wants to make a complaint about the same issue, we can consider it a group complaint.

**8.2** The group will be asked to nominate a spokesperson who the investigating officer will communicate with directly. It will be the responsibility of the spokesperson to communicate with the remainder of the group.

**8.3** Where this procedure is invoked by a group as a group complaint, the Complaint must proceed through each stage as a Group complaint.

**8.4** The final outcome of the investigation will be communicated directly to you.

**8.5** Where a group opts to make a Group Complaint, they may not subsequently make individual complaints once the procedure has been exhausted where they are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint.

## **9. Suspending Procedures**

**9.1** There may be times when we have to pause our investigation into your complaint. If this happens, we will contact you to let you know this is happening, why it is happening and when we will be able to continue the investigation.

**9.2** The circumstances when the investigation may be paused include but is not limited to:

**9.2.1** when the investigation is being investigated by the police; or

**9.2.2** where the investigation is considered as a legal matter; or

**9.2.3** where student or staff disciplinary procedures need to be used.

## **10. Principles**

**10.1** We promise that any student making a complaint will not be treated any differently as the result of doing so. If you believe this has happened, let a member of the Quality Office know as soon as possible.

**10.2** We will maintain the confidentiality of comments, and complaints as appropriate to the different stages of the complaints procedure, save for what is required by the investigative process and the consideration of the investigating officer.

**10.3** The University will not usually accept anonymous formal complaints. However should a student wish to have their identity withheld from the focus of the complaint this will be considered by the University Officer supporting the complaint procedure and referred to the Director of Compliance with a recommendation. In these cases no action will be taken which reveals the identity of the student without informing them in advance.

**10.4** We will keep you informed during the process and explain our reasons for our decisions.

**10.5** We ask you to behave reasonably throughout the complaints resolution procedure.

## **11. Support available**

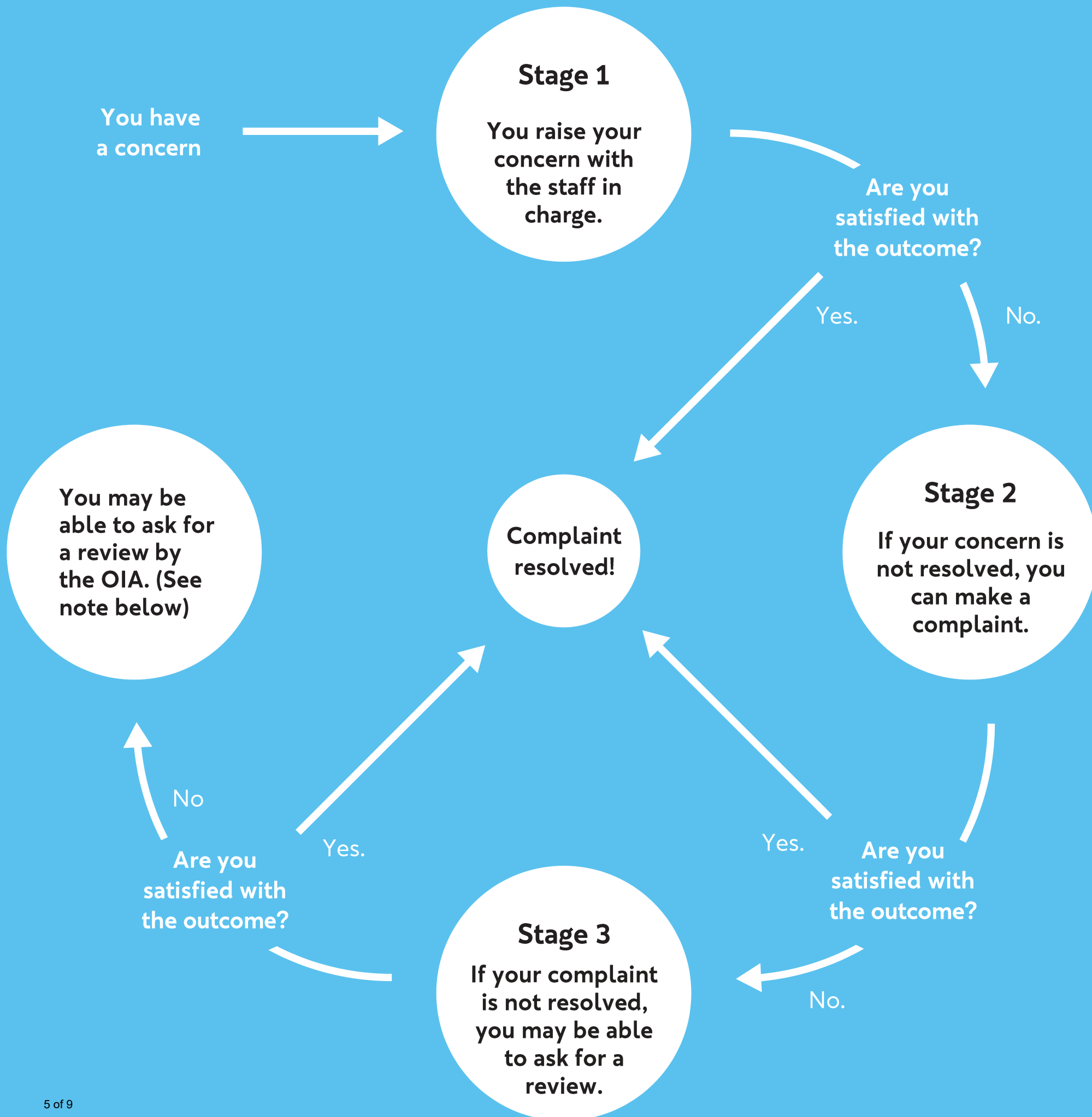
**11.1** You can get support from the following places if you want to make a complaint:

**11.1.1** The Quality Office can advise on the procedure, including what happens when you make a complaint.

**11.1.2** The Ravensbourne Students' Union (RSU) can offer representation, or accompany you to any meetings held about your complaint.

**11.1.3** Student Services can offer support and may be able to go with you to any meetings held about your complaint.

**11.1.4** All members of staff will be either be able to help or point you in the direction of someone who will.



## **12. Stages of the procedure**

**12.1** Our complaints procedure is made up of three stages:

**12.1.1.** Stage 1 – Concern;

**12.1.2** Stage 2 - Formal Complaint; and

**12.1.3** Stage 3 - Complaint Review

## **13. Stage 1: Concern**

**13.1** It is hoped that most problems will be dealt with informally, in the spirit of conciliation without the need for recourse to the formal stage. As a first step, a student with a comment or concern should try to resolve the matter with their course leader or the member of staff responsible for the service.

**13.2** Our experience is that most concerns can be dealt with effectively and quickly if they are raised as an informal concern directly with the staff members involved.

**13.3** For concerns about your course, we recommend raising these through the opportunities for feedback on your course, for example the termly Student Liaison Committee (SLC).

**13.4** In some cases, the matter may be best dealt with by undergoing **Mediation**. You may therefore be referred to Mediation by the Quality Department as a way of addressing the concerns raised. Please see **Appendix 1** for how the University Mediation Process will be conducted.

**13.5** If you are not sure who to raise the complaint with, the Quality Team will be able to help point you in the right direction or arrange a meeting with the appropriate member of staff.

**13.6** When you meet with the member of staff, you should make it clear that you're raising a concern and outline in detail what your concern is. The staff member will be able to assess if they're the best person to respond to your concern, or if it should be raised as a formal complaint.

**13.7** The member of staff will consider the following when considering if the concern should be raised as a formal complaint:

**13.7.1** whether the concern is complicated and will need a detailed investigation; and

**13.7.2** whether the concern is serious and not easily settled.



**13.8** The staff member will aim to get back to you within **10 working days**. In the response the staff member will outline the decision made and will provide clear reasons behind the decision.

**13.9** If the response received from the staff member is unsatisfactory you may proceed to stage 2 of the Complaints procedure. You may also begin their complaint at Stage 2 of the procedure if they consider that the matter is too serious to be dealt with informally.

#### **14. Stage 2: Formal complaint**

**14.1** Formal complaints should be made on the formal student complaint form along with any evidence to support your complaint. You may request assistance from Student Services or a course representative in completing the Student Complaint Form.

**14.2** When we receive your complaint, we will consider whether the issue meets the definition of a complaint as set out above and whether it should be considered under a different procedure i.e Appeals procedure or Student Discipline. We will direct you to the correct place if the issue falls out of the scope of this procedure.

**14.3** If your complaint has been considered as a concern, or if it was referred to the formal stage, we will ask who you discussed it with and why you believe the matter was not dealt with adequately or remains unresolved.

**14.4** If your complaint has not already been considered at the concern stage, we may refer it back for Mediation in the first instance.

**14.5** Once we have decided that your complaint is eligible, we will choose an investigating officer, who will be a manager who is independent of the issues raised in your complaint. The investigating officer will aim to contact you within **10 working days** normally. The Investigating Officer will introduce themselves and outline how the matter will be processed and likely timescales.

**14.6** We will usually invite you to a meeting to discuss your complaint with the investigating officer. At this meeting we will discuss:

**14.6.1** what the complaint is and the evidence provided;

**14.6.2** what you want to achieve by raising the complaint; and

**14.6.3** whether your expectations are reasonable and achievable

**14.7** If we do not believe your expectations are achievable under the procedure, we will let you know as soon as possible with full reasons as to why.

**14.8** The investigating officer will carry out the investigation by gathering further evidence by talking to relevant staff and students for example copies of emails or letters and statements from witnesses.

**14.9** At the end of their investigation, and within **15 working days** of the meeting mentioned above, the investigating officer will write to you explaining in detail the investigation conducted and the outcome of your complaint, providing you also with full and clear reasons behind the outcome. The Investigating Officer may decide that it is appropriate to communicate the outcome initially by way of a meeting followed up in writing.

**14.10** You will be asked to comment on whether the investigation is factually correct before it is finalised.

**14.11** If you are satisfied with the outcome, and do not wish to take the matter further, the information gained will be used to improve the service provided by the University.

### **15. Stage 3: Complaint review**

**15.1** When you have received the complaint outcome and you are dissatisfied, you may apply for a review of your complaint.

**15.2** You may submit an application for review of your complaint under **one** of the following grounds:

**15.2.1** there is new evidence that you could not provide earlier in the procedure; or

**15.2.2** there is evidence that the correct process was not followed at stage 2 of the process; or

**15.2.3** the outcome at stage 2 is not reasonable given the evidence.

**15.3** At this stage of the procedure we will not usually consider the issues again, or reinvestigate the complaint.

**15.4** You should send us your request for a complaint review on the relevant form within **10 working days** of the date on the stage-2 outcome letter.

**15.5** Once we have received your request for a complaint review, we will contact you to confirm that we have it. The Head of Quality, or someone they choose, will confirm one of the following:

**15.6.1** Your request for a review of your complaint is eligible. They will then advise on the next steps; or

**15.6.2** Your request for a review of your complaint is not eligible. Full clear reasons will be provided.

**15.7** If your complaint is eligible we will appoint a senior manager with no prior involvement to act as a review officer and consider your request for a complaint review. They will aim to get back to you in **20 working days**.

**15.8** The Senior manager reviewing your request for review may overturn the decision made at the request stage, or uphold or partially uphold the complaint.

**15.9** Following this, we will send you a complaint review outcome letter to explain our decision and the reasons for it.

**15.10** This letter is the end of our internal complaints procedure. If you are still not happy with the outcome at this stage, you may be able to ask for a review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

**15.11** You can find more information on the OIA's procedures on their website.

## **Appendix 1: Mediation**

**1.1** Following the receipt of the complaint by the Quality Department and at their discretion the parties may be referred to Mediation. In such circumstances, progression to Stage 2 of the procedure will be put on hold whilst the Mediation takes place.

**1.2** The aim of Mediation is to support the parties involved in finding their own resolution to the problems raised. The Mediation Process is conducted without prejudice. This means that the details of discussions which take place in mediation can not be used as evidence by either party, if the complaint progresses to the formal stages of the Complaints procedure, however records will be stored centrally by the Quality Department.

**1.3** Mediation is future-focused and is concerned with how things will be from now on, rather than finding blame for how things have been in the past. The outcome of a successful mediation is a formal agreement between the parties to resolve the concern or dispute. Neither party can complain about the matters resolved in the agreement unless there is a later breach or default (in which case it will be considered at the Formal Stage of the Procedure).

**1.4** The Mediation process shall take place by way of a meeting between the Complainant and the “Respondent” and an independent Mediator. A copy of the complaint will be shared with each party and the Mediator. The Mediator may opt to meet with each party prior, separately where the matter to be discussed appears complex.

**1.5** The Mediator will be an independent unbiased University employee (not involved in the complaint or any issues around it previously). The Mediator facilitates discussion between the parties in dispute with a view to reaching a mutually satisfactory resolution.

**1.6** A meeting will be organised between the two parties with the Mediator present. Each party will have the opportunity to express how they believe the dispute has arisen, how it has affected them. Once each party has spoken, they will each then have a chance to respond to what they have heard and with the mediators assistance, they will agree on the issues that need to be covered.

**1.7** The issues will then be discussed in turn by the parties, with the mediators managing the conversation where need be. It may be that areas of common ground arise about which the parties are able to form an agreement.

**1.8** If the issue(s) raised through the complaint is resolved through Mediation, the Mediator will assist the parties to draft a written agreement that will be signed by both parties and implemented where appropriate. This will then be fed back to the Quality Department, who will make a record of the Agreement.

**1.9** In the event that no mutually acceptable solution/agreement is reached through the Mediation process, the complaint will proceed to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, after

receiving confirmation from the complainant that they would like to proceed. No details from the process will be used at the Formal Stages.