

Scope

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

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

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: 3 May 2017

Date for review To be reviewed every 5 years by Quality Development Committee

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

Document Owner: Quality Office

Student complaints resolution procedure

Overview

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.

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.

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

- What is a complaint?

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.

Examples of complaints are shown below.

- Our failure to meet our responsibilities under the terms and conditions.
- The quality and standard of our services, including the way we provide, teach or manage a course.
- Our failure to provide a service.
- The poor quality of facilities, learning resources and services provided by us.
- Inaccurate information about your course as provided in the prospectus, at open days or elsewhere.
- An action, behaviour or failure to act by a member of staff.
- Our failure to follow an appropriate administrative process.

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.

Examples of what we do not treat as complaints are:

- issues with an action, behaviour or failure to act by another student;
- academic appeals;
- appeals against admissions decisions;
- freedom-of-information requests;
- data-protection requests;
- issues being dealt with under the HR disciplinary procedure; and
- issues that are being considered by a court or tribunal.

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.

- Who the procedure covers

This procedure covers all students at Ravensbourne and includes students:

- studying for a further-education qualification;
- studying a work-based learning course; and
- studying here through Erasmus+, or another exchange programme.

Former students can use this procedure until **three months** after they graduate.

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.

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

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.

- Timescales

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

We use different timescales depending on what stage you're at.

- We will usually respond to concerns within **10 working days**.
- We usually respond to formal complaints within **10 working days**.
- Following the complaint outcome, you have **10 working days** to ask for a complaint review.
- We aim to reply to your request for a complaint review within **20 working days**.

When we're looking into a complaint, we may need to ask to extend the deadlines above so we can investigate the issues fully. If this happens, the decision will be made by the Head of Quality, or someone they choose, and we will keep you informed of the progress.

- Other procedures

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.

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.

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.

If your complaint relates to the behaviour of a member of staff, we will discuss this with Ravensbourne Human Resources Department who will decide if we should follow the Staff disciplinary procedure.

- Representation

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.

If a group want to make a complaint about the same issue, we will contact you to ask one of you to act as the group's spokesperson and for the others to let us know they agree with this decision. We will contact the spokesperson and expect them to keep other members of the group updated.

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.

- Suspending procedures

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.

Times when this may happen include if the complaint is being investigated by the police, or is being considered as a legal matter or if student or staff disciplinary procedures need to be used.

- Principles

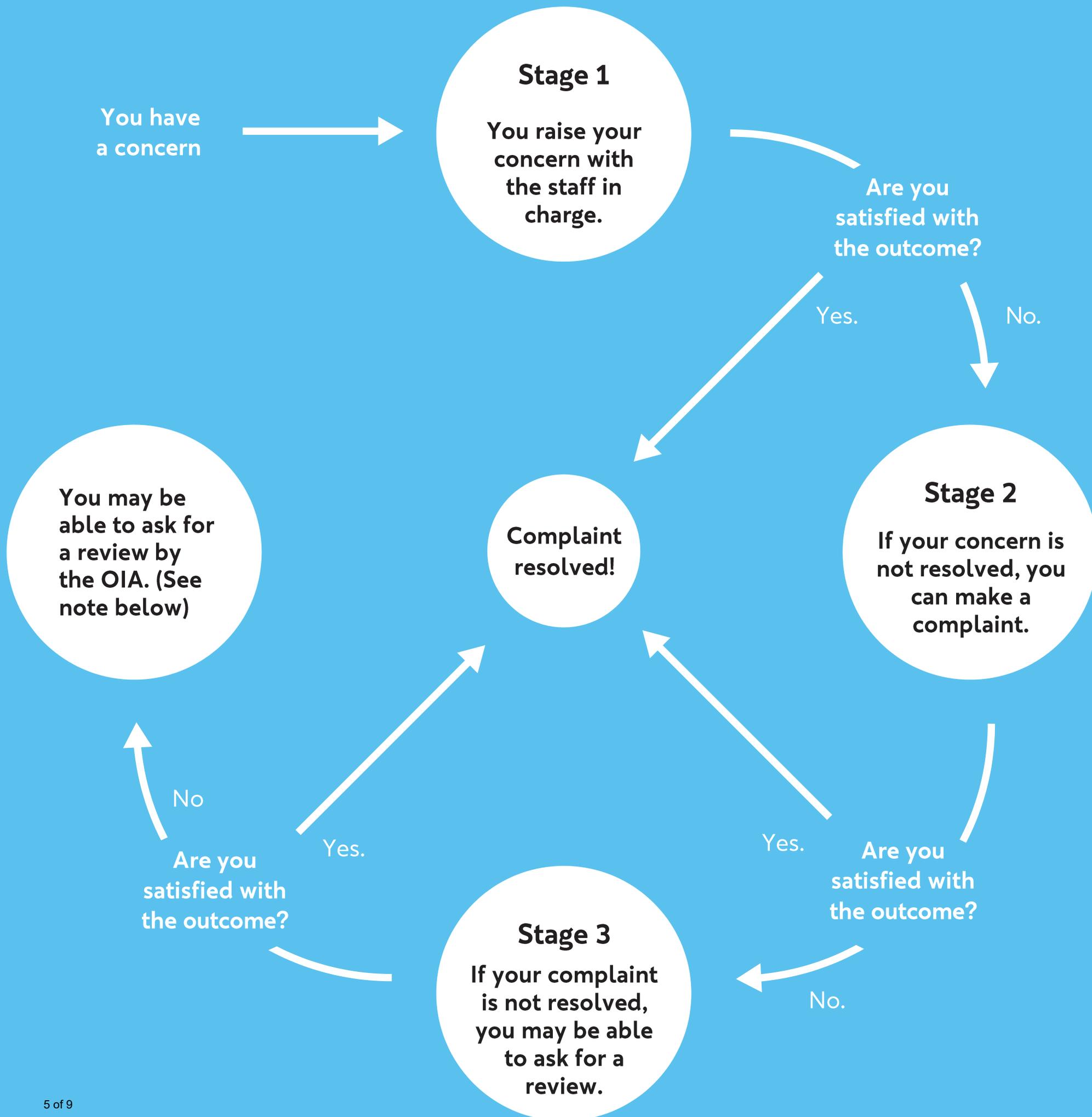
- We promise that any student making a complaint will not be treated any differently as the result of doing so. If you believe this has happened, let a member of the Quality Office know as soon as possible.
- We will treat all complaints confidentially. However, we don't usually accept anonymous complaints as this limits the investigation that can take place.
- We will keep you informed during the process and explain our reasons for our decisions.
- We ask you to behave reasonably throughout the complaints resolution procedure.

- Support available

You can get support from the following places if you want to make a complaint.

- The Quality Office can advise on the procedure, including what happens when you make a complaint.
- The Ravensbourne Students' Union (RSU) can offer representation, or accompany you to any meetings held about your complaint.

- Student Services can offer support and may be able to go with you to any meetings held about your complaint.
- All members of staff will be either be able to help or point you in the direction of someone who will.



Stages of the procedure

Our complaints procedure is made up of three stages.

- **Stage 1: Concern**
If you are unhappy about something, it's often easier to deal with it by talking informally to the staff member concerned. You should do this as soon as the concern arises. If the staff member cannot deal with it at the time, they will usually get back to you within **10 working days**.

- **Stage 2: Formal complaint**
If we can't deal with your complaint at the concern stage, or your complaint is serious, you can ask for a formal investigation. You should do this within **three months** of the issue arising, and we aim to get back to you within **10 working days**.

- **Stage 3: Complaint review**
After closing your complaint at stage 2, you can ask for a review if it meets the following criteria.
 - There is new evidence that you could not provide earlier in the procedure. We will ask you why the evidence was not available earlier in the process.
 - There is evidence that the correct process was not followed at stage 2 of the process.
 - The outcome at stage 2 is not reasonable given the evidence.If you want a review, you should ask for one within **10 working days** of the date of the stage-2 outcome letter, and we aim to get back to you within **20 working days**.

If you are studying a degree awarded by University of the Arts London (UAL) and your complaint relates to the quality of the course you're studying, you can ask for a review of your complaint at the end of our procedures and before asking for a review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

Following the end of our procedures, you may be able to ask for a review by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and we will write to you with more information at this stage. This letter is known as a 'completion of procedures'.

If you want to take legal action against us after a review by the OIA, you should let us know as soon as possible, and make a complaint to the OIA **within three months**. However, the deadline for raising your complaint with the OIA is 12 months from the date of the completion of procedures letter. (See <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/115065/zahid-judgment.pdf>)

The rest of this document explains what happens at each stage.

Stage 1: Concern

If you have a concern about anything during your time at Ravensbourne, you should raise it as soon as possible with the member of staff responsible. This could be your course leader, or the member of staff responsible for the service.

Our experience is that most concerns can be dealt with this way quickly and easily.

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).

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.

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

- If the concern is complicated, and will need a detailed investigation.
- If the concern is serious, and not easily settled.

The staff member will aim to get back to you within **10 working days**.

Stage 2: Formal complaint

Formal complaints should be made on the formal student complaint form along with any evidence to support your complaint.

When we receive your complaint, we will consider the following.

- If it is eligible, using the definition of a complaint we have set out above, and whether it should be considered under a different procedure, for example the Appeals procedure or Complaints procedure for members of the public. If it is not eligible, we will contact you to let you know why.
- If it has been considered at the concern stage, or referred to the formal complaint stage. If your complaint has been considered as a concern, we will ask who you discussed it with and why the response you received has not been able to sort the matter out. If your complaint has not already been considered at the concern stage, we may refer it back.

if your complaint refers to the actions of a member of staff, we will discuss this with Our HR department, who will decide if the matter should be considered under the HR disciplinary procedure.

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 get back to you within **10 working days**.

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

- what your complaint is;
- what you want to achieve by raising a complaint; and
- whether your expectations are reasonable and achievable.

If we do not believe your expectations are achievable under the procedure, we will let you know as soon as possible.

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

At the end of their investigation the investigating officer will write to you with the outcome of your complaint and to explain in detail their investigation into your complaint. You will be asked to comment on whether the investigation is factually correct before it is finalised.

Stage 3: Complaint review

When you have received the complaint outcome you can apply for a review of your complaint for the following reasons.

- There is new evidence that you could not provide earlier in the procedure. We will ask you to explain this.
- There is evidence that the correct process was not followed at stage 2 of the process.
- The outcome at stage 2 is not reasonable given the evidence.

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

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.

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.

- Your request for a review of your complaint is eligible. They will confirm when you can expect to hear back.
- Your request for a review of your complaint is not eligible. They will explain why.

If your complaint is eligible we will appoint a senior manager 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**.

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

This letter is the end of our internal complaints procedure, and if you are studying for a degree awarded by UAL and your complaint relates to the quality of your course, you can ask for them to review your complaint. You should do this within **28 days** of the date on the stage-3 outcome letter. Following this, 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).

If you are studying for a degree awarded by Ravensbourne, if you are still not happy with the outcome at stage 3 of our process, you may be able to ask for a review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

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

