

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY: ACADEMIC RELATED MATTERS (CPAR)**

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1. Situations may arise where students, or a group of students, are dissatisfied with an aspect of their academic experience or service at the University. The University welcomes feedback from students – if there is a genuine problem, university officials need to be informed about it in order to respond.
2. The Complaints Policy: Academic Related (CPAR) applies when students have a complaint or concern about an academic matter or academic services not related to a specific grade or set of grades for a course or programme.
3. There are many informal routes by which students may voice a concern. Students should speak to their student government representative, their advisor, give comments in the course evaluations, or speak to a member of the University that they are comfortable approaching. If these routes still do not help, then a student may wish to initiate a complaint.
4. The information in this document outlines the procedure to follow if there is a complaint. This document does not override the wider legal obligations of the University or to employees under contract, or the obligations of students and employees to the University.
5. All complaints will be treated in strict confidence and the University confirms that bringing a complaint or raising an issue will not have a negative impact on academic treatment.
6. If a complaint involves more than one School/Department or academic support office, then one person will be designated to respond to the complaint with consultation from the relevant parties. If it is found that the complaint involves an appeal, students will be pointed to the relevant appeals policy.
7. Students using the complaint process to bring frivolous or vexatious matters to the University's attention will be subject to disciplinary action.
8. Students found to have provided fraudulent evidence or falsified a claim will be subject to disciplinary action.
9. Academic related complaints may include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Issues or complaints related to the design, content, or organisation of a specific class or programme;
  - b. Issues or complaints related to course or programme delivery, such as lack of professionalism, including lateness or absence; late return of work;

- inadequate or insufficient academic support; inappropriate behaviour; poor classroom conduct; lack of attendance at established office hours etc.;
- c. Issues or complaints related to academic resources, including: classrooms, academic facilities, library resources, IT learning resources;
  - d. Issues or complaints related to academic advising and/or personal tutoring;
  - e. Issues or complaints related to official University academic policies or procedures in general and not deriving from issues related to an individual case;
  - f. Issues or complaints related to the University academic support offices, including Admissions, Registry Services, Library Service, Quality Assurance and Collaborative Provision, Faculty Support, and the Provost's Office.

### **Stage I: Informal Resolution**

- 10. Students wishing to make an academic related complaint need to first raise it with the relevant instructor or support person, who will attempt an informal resolution.
- 11. If students are uncomfortable raising the complaint with the relevant instructor/support person they should arrange to meet with the relevant line manager.
- 12. Students are also encouraged to contact the Complaints Department at [complaints@richmond.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@richmond.ac.uk) who will advise on the University's complaints procedures.

### **Stage II: Formal Resolution**

- 13. If students are not satisfied with the result or proposed solution, they may make a formal complaint to the Head of School or Department office using the Formal Complaint Form.
- 14. In the case of a group complaint, one student, identified on the Group Formal Complaint Form will act as the lead student, with the other group members' names listed in the relevant section on the form. The University will only contact the lead student in connection with the group appeal. The University will expect the lead student to distribute the University's communications among the group and collate the group's response to the University's enquiries to give to the University. The University cannot be held responsible if the lead student does not accurately provide the views of any member of the Group or if they do not pass on information from the University.
- 15. A group complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by two or more students about the University's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by the University.

16. The University reserves the right to propose individual solutions to any group complaint.
17. The complaint must provide a detailed description of the issues and, where possible, provide evidence to support the complaint. It should also indicate what outcome the student is looking for by making a complaint.
18. The Head of School or Department will provide a response and solution within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, though there may be a delay if further investigation is required. The solutions will vary depending on the nature of the complaint and the outcome sought by the student.
19. If a meeting is deemed necessary by the Head of School or Department, it should be held within 15 working days upon receiving the complaint. At this meeting, students and relevant members of staff may offer explanations of the situation. Students may be accompanied to the meeting by a supporter. The supporter may prompt or provide advice to the students.
20. The Head of School or Department will prepare a written report of the decision after the meeting and circulate this report to the relevant parties.
21. If the complaint concerns the Head of School or Department, it will be referred to the Office of the Provost.

### **Stage III: Further Review of the Complaint**

22. If students are not satisfied with the result or proposed solution by the line manager, they may request a review of the decision of their complaint to the Office of the Provost using the Further Review of Complaint form.
23. In the case of a group complaint students should use the Group Further Review of Complaint Form. One student will act as the lead student, with the other group members' names listed on the form.
24. The University reserves the right to propose individual solutions to any group complaint.
25. The grounds for Further Review are:
  - a. New evidence exists that could not have been reasonably presented in the previous stage;
  - b. A procedural irregularity occurred in the conduct of the complaints process;
  - c. A decision was manifestly unreasonable or influenced by prejudice or bias, or perception thereof, on the part of the decision-maker(s).

26. The Office of the Provost will review the complaint and, where necessary, make recommendations for further action within 10 working days of receiving the request.
27. Should a significant or cross-institutional issue be identified, it may need to be referred to the relevant committee.
28. At this point the University's institutional procedures for complaints have been completed. The Completion of Procedures letter will outline for students the role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
29. If, upon the conclusion the University's institutional procedures students are dissatisfied with the decision, they may take their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>). Students must first have exhausted all appropriate internal procedures at the University before approaching the OIA.

### **Advice and Support**

30. Students may ask for informal advice and support at any time, on a range of issues, academic and non-academic. If you would like more information, contact the Department of Student Affairs, your academic advisor, the Student Government, or Registry Services.

