

# University Student Complaints Procedure

This Procedure is made under [Regulation 6 of 2003](#) which is made under section 22 of [Statute IX](#).



## A. Introduction

This procedure covers **Complaints** about University matters not covered by the separate procedures listed below. This includes academic services (such as teaching or supervision) and non-academic matters (such as support services, accommodation, clubs and societies). This does not cover academic appeals which have a separate procedure ([available here](#)).

Complaints may be brought by students, groups of students or former students.

Complaints relating to the following have separate procedures (see links for details):

- Admissions (see [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate](#) Admissions complaints webpages)
- College issues (see your college website for details)
- Behaviour of members of staff (see the [Harassment Policy](#))
- Behaviour of other students (see [Student Discipline](#) and the [Harassment Policy](#))
- [Academic Integrity](#) (including disputes over ownership of work)
- [Bribery and Fraud](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure](#) or [Freedom of Information](#) requests

For informal advice about the Complaints process, please contact the Proctors' Office at [casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk](mailto:casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk). Advice and support are also available from OxfordSU at [advice@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk](mailto:advice@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk) or from your student common room.

## B. General Principles

1. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially by all parties involved, except where it is necessary to disclose information to carry out a fair investigation (e.g. your identity will usually be disclosed to a person who is the subject of the Complaint).
2. All parties involved in a Complaint are required to act reasonably and fairly towards each other and to respect the University's procedures.
3. If a Complaint falls across more than one University procedure, the University will deal with the matter as flexibly, fairly and proportionately as possible.
4. Anyone involved in a Complaint may act through a representative who should usually be a member of the University, a member or employee of OxfordSU (for students), or a trade union officer (for members of staff).
5. All Complaints will be dealt with promptly. Any time-critical factors set out in the Complaint Form will be taken into account.
6. Time limits should usually be met by all parties. Time limits may only be extended by the relevant decision-maker where it is necessary to do so in order to ensure a fair outcome.
7. Anonymous Complaints will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where there are compelling reasons to do so.
8. Malicious or vexatious allegations may result in disciplinary action.

9. The University may decline to consider a Complaint where the matters in dispute are currently being considered or have been decided by an external body (such as the OIA or a court or tribunal).
10. There is no right of complaint over matters of academic judgement.
11. No one investigating a Complaint should have any conflict of interest in the matter. If all of the Proctors are conflicted, the Vice-Chancellor will appoint a substitute.
12. A reference to a "Proctor" means a Proctor, a Pro-Proctor or an appointed substitute.

### **C. First Stage: Local Resolution**

1. Before raising a Complaint with the Proctors you should seek to resolve the matter locally with departmental staff. If you are not sure to whom to address your concerns, your college or subject tutor, Senior Tutor, course director, director of studies, supervisor, or a college or departmental administrator will be able to advise you.

### **D. Second Stage: Formal Consideration by a Proctor**

1. If your Complaint is not successfully resolved locally, you can submit your Complaint for investigation by a Proctor.
2. You should complete and submit a Complaint Form ([available here](#)) to the Proctors' Office ([casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk](mailto:casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk)). A group of students making a joint Complaint must nominate one student as their spokesperson in the Complaint Form. Exceptionally, the Proctor may consider a Complaint that is made in another format where it is fair to do so.
3. You should submit your Complaint Form as soon as possible and at the latest within 3 months of when the matters you are complaining about occurred.
4. The Proctors' Office will ask for evidence that you have tried to resolve the matter locally under the First Stage and the Proctor may decline to consider your Complaint if you have not done so.
5. The Proctors' Office will confirm receipt of your Complaint Form within 5 working days.
6. The Proctor may decline to consider your Complaint if it is trivial or repeats a Complaint that has already been made.
7. For all other Complaints, the Proctor may take any steps the Proctor considers necessary to investigate, including calling on any person to provide specialist assistance.
8. The Proctors' Office will usually send details of a Complaint to anyone who is the subject of it and give them up to 5 working days to respond.
9. The Proctor or a member of the Proctors' Office may request a meeting with you or any other relevant party. Any party may also ask the Proctors' Office for a meeting. Anyone present at such a meeting can inspect any minutes of that meeting on request.
10. When meeting with a Proctor or a member of the Proctors' Office, a student may be accompanied by a member of University, College or OxfordSU staff or another student, and a member of staff can be accompanied by another member of University or college staff or a trade union representative.

11. The Proctors' Office will keep you and anyone who is a subject of the Complaint informed of the progress of the investigation.
12. If you withdraw your Complaint at any time the Proctor may decide to continue the investigation if it is appropriate and fair to do so.
13. The Proctor will usually complete the investigation, make a decision and send you a decision letter within 30 working days of receipt of the Complaint Form. If the time limit is extended, the Proctors' Office will keep you updated about the progress of the investigation.
14. In the decision letter, the Proctor will explain what steps have been taken and set out the decision, including the reasons for the decision and any directions and/or recommendations. The Proctor will usually enclose a copy of any evidence material to the decision, unless doing so would breach any duties owed to a third party (such as a duty of confidentiality).
15. The Proctors' Office will also notify the outcome to anyone who is a subject of the Complaint and any University bodies that need to be made aware of it.

#### **E. Third Stage: Review**

1. If you are dissatisfied with the Proctor's decision you may request a review of the decision on one or more of the following grounds:
  - a. there was a procedural irregularity or error in the Proctor's investigation;
  - b. the Proctor's decision was unreasonable (you must identify which aspects of the Proctor's decision you consider to be objectively unreasonable and explain why);
  - c. you were not provided with clear reasons for the Proctor's decision; or
  - d. you have material evidence which the Proctor has not yet seen which you have valid reasons for not having provided earlier.
2. The review will be carried out by a Reviewer who will be a member of the Review Panel. The Reviewer will not have been previously involved in your Complaint.
3. You should submit a Complaint Review Request Form ([available here](#)) to the Proctors' Office ([review@proctors.ox.ac.uk](mailto:review@proctors.ox.ac.uk)) within 10 working days of the date of the Proctor's decision letter. Exceptionally, the Reviewer may consider a review request made in another format where it is fair to do so.
4. The Reviewer will only consider the matter on the grounds listed above, and will not consider the issues afresh or carry out a further investigation.
5. The Reviewer will usually reach a decision and send a decision letter within 10 working days of receiving your Complaint Review Request Form. The decision letter will set out the Reviewer's decision and their reasons for that decision.
6. If the Reviewer rejects your review request, you will have reached the end of the University's procedures and the decision letter will be a Completion of Procedures letter.
7. If the Reviewer upholds your review request, you will be informed that the matter has been referred back to the Proctors. A Proctor who has not previously been involved in your Complaint will then reconsider your Complaint in light of the Reviewer's decision. This may involve further investigation.

8. The Proctor will send you a final decision letter within 10 working days of the Reviewer's decision letter. This will set out the Proctor's reasons for the decision and any directions and/or recommendations. You will have reached the end of the University's procedures and the decision letter will be a Completion of Procedures letter
9. The Completion of Procedures letter will also set out other sources of advice and support available to you and will state that you have the right to seek review by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator and the time limit for doing so.