



Student Complaints Policy and Procedures (BNU Registered Students)

Version 7

Approved by the Board of Governors

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This document sets out the School's policy and procedures for responding to students' concerns and complaints about the standard of service provided by the School. It has been reviewed and developed in line with *England's Regulatory Framework for Higher Education* and takes on board the Code's accompanying guidance with regard to Complaints, Concerns and Appeals; due regard is also given to:

- i. *The Competition and Market Authority's UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law;*
- ii. *The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)'s Good Practice Framework*



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. A student may decide to make a complaint if they feel dissatisfied with a service they have received and they wish for the issue to be investigated.
- 1.2. Where complaints concern processes or services are directly associated with the awarding body, Buckinghamshire New University, services, processes and resources, students should raise a complaint with them directly using the BNU Student Complaints procedure. Should a student submit a complaint to LSST, which should be directly handled by BNU, LSST Registry department may refer the complaint to BNU on behalf of the student for management and investigation. If this is the case the student will be notified that this action has been taken.
- 1.3. Complaints relating to the London School of Science and Technology services, resources or processes should be raised directly with LSST and will be handled in accordance with this policy. Should a student remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint by LSST, the student can request a review of the complaint outcome with the awarding body BNU.
- 1.4. If a student is unsure under which procedure and institution to raise a complaint, or need further guidance regarding the LSST complaints process and procedure, they can contact the LSST Registry Department (registry@lsst.ac) for guidance.
- 1.5. Former students who have either, withdrawn, completed their degree, or current students who have interrupted their studies/deferred, have the right to submit a complaint, however, this complaint must be received by LSST within three months of the student's date of last engagement stated on the student management system.
- 1.6. Complaints received from former students or current interrupted students after the three months, will be considered "Out of Time". However, should the student be able to provide reasonable explanation for the delay in submitting their complaint, and the complaint handler deems the investigation to still be possible the complaint can be accepted. Late complaints will be considered on a case-by-case basis and LSST make every effort to accommodate the student where possible.
- 1.7. LSST, may, at any stage, consider a complaint under another procedure if another process is considered more appropriate. Therefore, any evidence or information submitted as part of the complaint, will be considered as available for consideration under this new procedure. If this is the case, the student will be informed as to why this has been decided and guided to relevant information and support on the new process being adopted to manage their case.



- 1.8. Complaints which are deemed malicious or unprofessional will be considered carefully and may be rejected upon receipt. In cases where the complaint must be rejected on these grounds, written reasons for this rejection are provided to the student. Students who have submitted a complaint of this nature, may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the School's *Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures for BNU Registered Students*.
- 1.9. A malicious complaint is one that is made with the intention of causing harm e.g., deliberately seeking to defame a member of staff or student and raising a complaint with this intent; a dishonest account of an issue or incident in the knowledge that this will cause harm; knowingly basing a complaint on false information with the intention of causing harm. A complaint which has become malicious at later stages of the procedure is defined as: one that the investigation has shown to be without foundation (based on falsified information/evidence); one where the investigation evidence demonstrates that the complainant knowingly lied to the Investigation Officer; and there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate this at a disciplinary hearing on the basis of the balance of probabilities.
- 1.10. In most cases students should submit a complaint themselves, however, on occasions where a complaint is to be pursued by a third party, for example, a parent or guardian the student must provide written confirmation either by email or letter, confirming their student ID number, and stating their permission for a third party to act on their behalf before the complaint will be considered. The student reserves the right to withdraw the permissions of the third party at any time, in this instance the complaint will be rejected by LSST with immediate effect regardless of the complaint stage. LSST will not take any responsibility for the actions of the third party.
- 1.11. In some cases, a group of students may wish to raise a collective complaint regarding the same issue or concern. LSST are able to accept a group or collective complaint provided it meets the following criteria:
- One main contact for the group/collective complaint has been assigned in agreement with all other complainants in the group. This complainant lead must represent the group as a whole and be the main contact for all communication relating to the complaint.
 - All complaint group members must submit their consent in writing to agree to abide by the regulations set out in this policy and to be represented by the chosen complaint representative/lead. In this consent, students must state in full their agreement, providing their ID number, name, and the name and ID number, for the representative chosen. LSST will presume, that on receipt of this consent, all complaint members have chosen this representative in agreement and fair discussion between all members of the complaint has taken place to decide the main contact. LSST will proceed on the assumption that any agreements, discussions, and subsequent resolutions or outcomes



which take place during the complaint handling between the main contact and LSST are accepted by the rest of the group if accepted by the main contact.

- The Main contact must decide to accept or reject the outcome of the complaint proposed by LSST upon complaint of procedures. The decision of the main contact will be final and will be on behalf of the whole group they are representing. An individual from the group cannot then submit a complaint regarding the same concerns or issues raised by the group, if they do not agree with the main contacts decision and wish to achieve a different outcome.
 - Students who fail to submit their consent for representation, do not engage with attempts to contact or voluntarily withdraw from the group complaint, will be considered or included in further processing and communication regarding the complaint.
- 1.11. Should any student, whether as part of a collective complaint, or as an individual complainant feel coerced, forced, bullied or pressured into making a complaint or accepting a representative for a complaint by any fellow student they should contact registry@lsst.ac for guidance and support.
- 1.12. In general complaints raised will be considered as being against LSST and not against an individual member of staff. Any resolution achieved, including written apology, will be offered by the School, opposed to being from the individual member of staff involved. If a complaint is the direct result of the inappropriate conduct of a member of staff, the complaint will be raised to stage 2, Formal stage, upon receipt for investigation. Should staff's conduct be in breach of the LSST Employee Code of Conduct, the matter will be escalated to the LSST Human Resources (HR) Department who will decide the further actions to be taken. HR investigations will remain private and confidential in accordance with HR policies and the complainant should receive clear information on the level of information they will or will not receive, if any, on conclusion of the HR investigation.
- 1.13. Anonymous complaints are typically not accepted. However, we may make exceptions when there is sufficient evidence or compelling reasons to warrant further investigation.
- 1.14. Where the term Registrar is referenced in this policy, this includes the authorised nominee from the Registry department. In most cases, this will be the Assistant Registrar or designated registry officer.

2. Principles for Handling Student's Complaints



- 2.1. The London School of Science and Technology (LSST) strives to provide a high-quality academic experience and encourages students to raise concerns with the School where they feel the standard of any aspect of their learning experience is below their expectations.
- 2.2. The School will consider students' concerns and complaints at three stages:
 - Stage 1: Early (Informal) Resolution
 - Stage 2: Formal Complaint Procedure
 - Stage 3: Review of Formal Complaint Procedures

The full complaints procedure is given in Section 3

- 2.3. The School will seek to resolve all complaints and concerns promptly in the first instance through informal dialogue between those directly involved. Where informal conciliation is not possible or has been unsuccessful, students should make a formal complaint. The Registrar reserves the right to request from the complainant a summary and detail of the attempted informal resolution before proceeding with the formal process. Should the Registrar conclude that no informal resolution has been attempted, the Registrar may revert the complaint back to the first stage to allow for early resolution to be attempted. Should this be the case, the complainant will be notified accordingly by email or letter. The 90 days resolution window will commence from the date the Registrar receives and approves the formal complaint for stage 2 procedures.
- 2.4. The School will ensure that procedures for dealing with formal complaints are fair and transparent to all parties, and that complaints are resolved in a timely fashion; where possible the School will seek to resolve all formal complaints fully (including any review under Stage 3) within 90 calendar days of the receipt of a formal complaint.
- 2.5. Students will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the School's investigation of their formal complaints. Where a complaint takes longer than 90 calendar days to resolve, the complainant will receive an explanation for this and be given an indication of how long the issue is likely to take to fully resolve.
- 2.6. Complaints which possess multiple concerns relating to multiple departments, or different areas of the School may require additional time to investigate, as each area may require their own separate investigation. While LSST will make every effort to avoid delays in the complaint outcome being achieved, should there be a delay or requirement for different timescales for different areas of the School subject to their resources and availability, the student will be notified.
- 2.7. Should a student obtain new evidence part-way through a complaint investigation, the complaint handler will decide whether this evidence can be considered. Evidence which raises new concerns, and does not relate the original



concern raised cannot be considered. Evidence which is received late and relates to the original complaint, may lead to increase in time taken to resolve the complaint as new investigation may be required. The student will be notified should this be the case and informed of the estimated additional time required.

- 2.8. All complaints will be taken seriously and investigated in the spirit of natural justice; no student will be at a disadvantage for having made a genuine complaint, even where the complaint is found to be without merit, provided it has been made in good faith. Any person about whom a complaint is made shall be supplied with a copy of the complaint and given the opportunity to make their representations.
- 2.9. The School will ensure that advice and guidance on making a formal complaint is clearly accessible to all students and prospective students. Where requested, Student Support staff will guide students through the process of making a formal complaint.
- 2.10. Anonymised information about the quantity and substance of students' complaints will be used by the School to reflect on its performance in the delivery of learning opportunities and to drive continuous enhancement of the services it provides.
- 2.11. The School shall maintain a record of all complaints made by students relating to the course and the outcome of each complaint.
- 2.12. The School will issue the Completion of Procedures Letter at the end of the relevant procedure allowing the student to complain to the OIA if they wish to do so.

3. Scope of LSST's Complaints Policy

Important:

- 3.1. LSST delivers learning opportunities under validation and franchise agreements with external awarding bodies, with whom it works to resolve students' formal complaints. The procedures for submitting formal complaints vary depending on the course a student is enrolled on.
- 3.2. Prospective students who are undertaking the application stage with admissions, cannot use these procedures and should refer to the LSST Admissions Policy for guidance and procedures on raising a complaint or concern.



- 3.3. Students on courses leading to awards from **Buckinghamshire New University (BNU)** should use this policy and its procedures, only in the first instance, except in the instance where the complaint relates to the awarding-body's services. In the case of any misconduct, other than academic misconduct that requires disciplinary action, shall be investigated, only in the first instance through the School's Disciplinary procedures.
- 3.4. Complaints regarding LSST processes, resources, staff, and services, will be handled under the first and second stages of this process; Informal/Early Resolution and Formal Complaint Procedure. Should the student be dissatisfied with the outcome following conclusion of both stages, the student may wish to raise Stage 3; Request for Review with the awarding body, BNU. Student interested in raising a review of their complaint with the awarding body they should refer to the BNU Website "Resolving problems" page and complete the "Request for Review Form". Students must complete the form in full and submit to resolution@bucks.ac.uk within 10 working days of the outcome of the Formal Complaint received from LSST. All evidence to support the complaint should be included with the form. Students who submit this request are agreeing to any information and evidence they submit being shared as is necessary to process the Request for Review.
- 3.5. In some cases, Request for Review (RfR) (Stage 3) will not be accepted by BNU. This may be in the case where complaints are solely based upon staff breach of LSST conduct and/or HR have been involved at formal stages. In these cases, BNU will refer the Request for Review back to LSST and LSST will complete Stage 3. Should this be the case, BNU and LSST will notify the student on this update and the next steps.
- 3.6. LSST will work with its awarding body partners to ensure that all complaints are dealt within accordance with standards as set out in the *Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)'s Good Practice Framework*.
- 3.7. Where a student is in doubt about how to submit a formal complaint, they should consult a member of the Student Support team, who will guide them through the correct process.

4. Definition of a Complaint

- 4.1. For the purpose of this policy, a complaint is defined as:

'An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a provider's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by the School'.



4.2. This procedure is designed to deal with complaints arising from, but not limited to:

- Provision of academic services described in the School's publications including teaching, content of courses and support for learning;
- Incorrect or misleading information about services provided by the School;
- Provision of other services described in literature published by the School;
- Problems with the provision, condition or accessibility of School facilities or learning resources;
- The conduct of our staff or of any contractors we employ;
- Any perceived inequitable treatment of individuals or unlawful discrimination*

**Serious instances of discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation may warrant a separate investigation under LSST's Anti-bullying and Harassment procedures.*

4.3. The student complaints procedure does not cover the following:

- Complaints about admissions procedures prior to enrolment as a student of the School, which are dealt with separately under the School's *Admissions Policy*;
- Any matters relating to examination and assessment procedures or academic appeals, which are dealt with through the *Appeals Policy*.

4.4. Complaints received about the behaviour of other students will normally be considered under the School's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures, except where they are indicative of a failure by the School to provide a safe and respectful study environment in accordance with its own policies. The Registrar will use discretion in determining the most appropriate procedure under which to consider such complaints.

4.5. **Note: If a complaint has been linked to a particular request (e.g., a change of class) the request may not be processed until the complaint has been investigated and closed.**

5. The Complaints Procedure



5.1. Stage 1: Early (Informal) Resolution

- 5.1.1. Where a student wishes to discuss a concern before making a formal complaint, they should consult their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT), a Student Union Representative or a member of the Student Support or Registry Team.
- 5.1.2. The concern may be raised verbally, in writing or by email, and should ideally be given within 10 working days of the incident or action from which the complaint arises, or as soon as possible.
- 5.1.3. School staff will work with the complainant to resolve concerns promptly and decisively without resorting to the formal complaints process. Where a formal complaint is received and it is not apparent that informal resolution has been attempted, or there is no clear indication that informal resolution is inappropriate, the complaint will usually be referred back to this stage.
- 5.1.4. The member of staff receiving an informal complaint will attempt to resolve the matter there and then or refer the matter on to someone who can help.
- 5.1.5. If resolution of a concern cannot for any reason be reached informally between the affected parties, the student should then submit a formal complaint.

5.2. Stage 2: Formal Complaints Procedure

- 5.2.1. The School will ensure that when handling complaints, decision-makers will come to the matter afresh and will have no prior involvement in the complaint or issues raised. This ensures fairness, maintains objectivity and avoids bias in the process. In most cases the Registrar will act as Complaints Manager, however, where this is not possible a suitable substitute Complaints Manager will be assigned.
- 5.2.2. Formal complaints should be directed to the LSST Registry department in writing (letter or email), ideally within 10 working days of the incident or action from which the complaint arises, however, complaints can be accepted up to 3 months from the incident or action concerned. Complainants are encouraged to raise their complaint as close to the incident or action of concern as possible, as this allows for the most efficient and effective investigation and resolution opportunity. Complaints which have already received an attempt for resolution under stage one procedures, must be submitted to the Registry within 10 working days from the outcome of the informal resolution. Complaints received after the advised time may be considered 'out of time'



and will be investigated only where good reason can be shown that the complaint could not have been raised at the time; decisions whether to investigate 'out of time' complaints will be at the discretion of the Head of Registry.

- 5.2.3. It is preferred that students use the LSST Complaint Form available on the VLE or from Student Support. If providing the School with a physical copy of the complaint, the following address should be used:

*F.A.O. Head of Registry,
The London School of Science and
Technology, First Floor, Memo House,
Kendal Avenue, Park Royal, W3 0XA*

Or the complaint can be submitted electronically to: registry@lsst.ac or using [e-forms on the student portal](#).

- 5.2.4. The following details must be provided by the complainant when making a formal complaint:

- The complainant's name and student ID number (if a Student);
- A full statement of the substance and circumstances of the complaint and all persons involved (if known);
- Brief details of the steps already taken to resolve the complaint (early resolution); including those involved (if known) and the date stage 1 completed;
- Reasons for the complainant's dissatisfaction with the attempts to resolve the complaint informally;
- The desired outcome of the complaint (i.e., what resolution does the complainant seek);
- Copies of any documentary evidence the complainant wishes to submit (original copies should not be provided);
- A preferred means of contacting the complainant on the issue; this will be on their LSST email account for Students unless otherwise stated. If alternative details are provided by the complaint, these must be those of the complainant and not details for another person.

- 5.2.5. The initial review of the complaint by the Registrar/Complaint Manager will



consider the following:

- Does this complaint or concern, need to be managed under another procedure/process?
 - Has early resolution been attempted already, or can this complaint be referred back for early resolution?
 - Has the complainant provided clear explanation of the reason for complaint, and the area/department of the School involved?
 - Has the complainant provided relevant, clear supporting evidence to accompany their complaint?
 - Has the complainant stated the resolution they wish to achieved and is this manageable/reasonable?
 - Does this complaint involve any concerning content which may need to be addressed following another process either instead of/or in conjunction with this procedure e.g., safeguarding?
 - Is the complainant aware of, or have they accessed any additional support services available to them while their complaint is under investigation e.g., Student Union Centre?
- 5.2.6. The Registrar/Complaints Manager will determine whether all the necessary information has been provided and may contact the student requesting additional details and evidence where required. In all cases the Registrar/Complaints Manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint by letter/email.
- 5.2.7. If early resolution has not been attempted, the Registrar/Complaints Manager will forward the complaint to the appropriate person or department within the School, to carry out early resolution stage.
- 5.2.8. Complaints submitted to the Registry, where evidence of early resolution has been provided and all other criteria has been met, will be accepted for formal stage 2 procedure. Complaints accepted for formal stage will be assigned an appropriate investigatory officer by the Registrar/Complaints Manager, who will investigate the matter using the information provided by the complainant in their written submission. The assigned investigatory officer will have had no previous involvement in the complaint or related incident or action from which the complaint arises.
- 5.2.9. After the Registrar/Complaints Manager has conducted initial review of the complaint, and assigned an investigatory officer, the Registrar/ Complaints



Manager will notify the complainant of complaint receipt and the name and contact details of the investigatory officer assigned.

5.2.10. The complainant will have 3-working days from this notification to raise any concerns regarding the investigatory officer assigned. Should the complainant have a valid reason for the Registrar/Complaints Manager to assign an alternative investigatory officer, the Registrar/Complaints Manager will accommodate the complainant where possible. In any case, the complainant is not able to select their preferred investigatory officer, only dispute any assigned where they have valid reasons to do so.

5.2.11. If no response is received within 3-working days, the investigation will proceed with the assigned investigatory officer. Complainants should note that changes to investigatory offer may cause a delay in the investigation and outcome being concluded.

5.2.12. A Complaint Outcome Letter will be sent to the complainant within 20 working days of the formal complaint being received by the School. This Outcome Letter will state the final outcome and any required actions to be completed within the 90-day timeframe as determined by the assigned investigatory officer.

5.2.13. In instances where it has not been possible to resolve the complaint within the School's 20-day target, the person/s investigating the complaint shall promptly write to the complainant and inform them of:

- The name of the person/s investigating their complaint,
- The reason for the delay,
- The date by which the student will be notified of the outcome.

5.2.14. The letter sent to the complainant will be copied to the Registrar and all relevant parties.

5.2.15. Where it is felt that the complaint is unfounded, the complainant will receive an explanation as to why this is the case. In certain circumstances where a complaint is partially upheld, the Registry may take a discretionary approach in making a conciliatory or goodwill gestures.

5.2.16. If the substance of the complaint is concerning, then the Registrar/Complaint Manager may discuss the formal complaint with other relevant departments or staff members to seek guidance and to determine the most appropriate person to handle the complaint. For example, complaints which contain evidence, or statement of safeguarding or prevent concern.

5.2.17. The complainant will receive a formal letter and/or email at the conclusion of



the formal complaints procedure, clearly explaining the outcome and the actions the School has taken or will take in resolving the issue. To accompany the letter the Investigatory Report will be provided which details the evidence considered, and how the evidence informed the final outcome. Where necessary, the investigatory officer may provide actions for completion in order to resolve the complaint with deadlines for their completion and responsible parties. The letter will also detail instructions on how to request a review of the decision (Stage 3) with BNU should the complainant have concerns about how their complaint was handled.

5.2.18. The Investigation Procedure

5.2.19. The investigation will be carried out by the appointed investigating officer who will review the complaint documents, and determine the best method to proceed with investigation based on the information available.

5.2.20. The Investigating Officer will seek to contact the complainant within 5-working days of their appointment to confirm the main issues outlined in the complaint and to provide an expected outcome date.

5.2.21. The Investigating Officer is required to provide regular updates to the complainant on the progress of the investigation, particularly if there are any delays.

5.2.22. In certain cases, to assist with the investigation, the Investigating Officer may choose to hold meetings with relevant parties, including, the complainant and/or any employee or student involved in the case.

5.2.23. The Investigating Officer will aim to complete the investigation within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. However, this timeline may vary depending on factors such as the complexity of the complaint, resource availability, and the scheduling of interviews with staff or students.

5.2.24. The Investigation Meeting

5.2.25. The purpose of holding a meeting is to allow all parties to express their perspectives and clarify the key issues the complainant wishes to address. Both the complainant and respondent are encouraged to present their cases in person. At the meeting the complainant/respondent will be provided the opportunity to outline and further detail the main issues stated in the complaint and provide additional evidence or information relevant to the case. It should be noted that if either the complainant or respondent decides not to attend the meeting, it will not affect the fairness of the investigation; however, the outcome will be based solely on the evidence available.

5.2.26. The investigating officer may also have questions prepared they wish to



address. This meeting will be conducted formally and comprise of the complainant/respondent, investigating officer, note-taker (if not the investigating officer), and a friend, colleague or Student Union representative that the complainant/respondent may choose to accompany them. The meeting minutes will summarise the key points discussed, not a verbatim account of the meeting, and will be shared with the meeting attendees to ensure there are no discrepancies in understanding between parties.

5.2.27. No legal representation can be present at this stage for either party.

5.2.28. Recording of in-person meetings are only allowed where all attendees have given consent. Virtual/online meetings will be recorded automatically, and all attendees must be notified of this at the point of invitation. All attendees should be permitted the opportunity to request and review any notes or recordings made during this meeting. All recordings will be stored in accordance with the Schools Student Data Protection Policy and, where applicable, the Schools Employee Data Protection and Records Management Policy.

5.2.29. **The Investigation Report**

5.2.30. The official investigation reporting documents will be issued to the investigatory officer on appointment of the role. The reporting documents must be filled out comprehensively and clearly by the investigatory officer, and provided to the registry department on completion of the investigation. The Registry department will be responsible for issuing the complainant with these reports with the accompanying the outcome letter.

5.2.31. An investigation into the issues mentioned in the complaint will be carried out by the investigating offer who will produce a comprehensive written report on the findings. This report will be given a general timescale of 20 working days for completion; however, this may not be possible to achieve due to availability of resources or staff and/or nature of the complaint. In this case, additional time may be granted to the investigating officer and the complainant will be notified of this update.

5.2.32. The investigation report should address all matters raised by the complainant in their complaint and detail the time and date of any meeting held as part of the investigation. All evidence relevant to the case should be made available to all parties, with the exception of evidence which must be withheld to meet GDPR requirements. It is the Investigatory officer's responsibility to ensure that all evidence considered is clearly represented in their report, and has ensured that any sensitive information and/or data has been redacted from the provided copy. 5.35. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the investigation officer will submit the full report, support documentation/evidence and meeting minutes to the LSST Registry



department. The outcome will be stated in the report which will provide clear and detailed reasons for the decision made. Where appropriate the report should also include details of remedial actions to be taken/offered and recommendations to improve current practice or regulations highlighted by the findings of the investigation.

- 5.2.33. The investigation report should address each concern raised by the complainant and address them individually providing a detailed response to each within the report and linking to any evidence considered. The report must confirm whether the complaint is Upheld (fully or partially), or is Not Upheld, with detailed reasons supporting this decision.
- 5.2.34. The completed investigation report, along with all accompanying documentation must be provided the Registry Department for the Registrar/Complaint Managers final review and approval.
- 5.2.35. If the investigation report concludes that there has been inappropriate conduct by a member of staff, the complainant will be informed that the matter will be referred to the LSST Human Resources Department for further investigation.
- 5.2.36. The Registry department will be responsible for issuing the formal response to the complainant. The Registry will issue the complaint outcome, investigation report and outcome letter to the complainant by email and post where a postal address is available. This formal response will be issued to the complainant within 5-working days of receipt of Registrar/Complaint Manager confirmation of decision and outcome. In this response, where appropriate, details of the actions or recommendations for resolution will be outlined. If there are follow up actions required to close the case, the Registry will be responsible in issuing a deadline for the completion of any actions and track the progress of action completion.
- 5.2.37. The complainant will be permitted 10 working days to respond to the given outcome, stating whether they wish to decline or accept the outcome, and proposed recommendations and/or or actions for resolution. Should the complainant wish to pursue the matter further, they should communicate their wish for Request for Review to the Registry. The formal outcome issued must contain clear information on the next steps in the complaints process with signposting to relevant sources for further guidance and information where applicable. This may include direct contacts and forms for requesting review with the awarding body where available.
- 5.2.38. Once the 10-working day window has ended, should the complainant have failed to respond, the Registry will conclude the case as closed and send confirmation of this action to the complainant. Within 1 month of the 10-working day window has passed the complainant will be issued with a

Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter confirming the case is now closed, and procedures have completed. This CoP will state that the matter is closed and that the complainant has not completed the Schools procedures in full.

5.3. Stage 3: Review of Formal Complaints Outcomes

- 5.3.1. If a complainant has reason to believe that their complaint has not been handled fairly, objectively or in accordance with the procedures described above, they should notify the Registry within 10-working days of the date of the formal stage outcome letter, to request a review of the decision. Complainants who are students studying on a Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) course with LSST, can contact the Resolutions team to request Review directly themselves. BNU student complainants should refer to [Resolving problems | Buckinghamshire New University \(bucks.ac.uk\)](https://www.bucks.ac.uk) on the BNU website. Here they can obtain further information on the review process with BNU, and complete the Request for Review Student Complainants form. This completed form must be issued to resolution@bnu.ac.uk with the outcome letter for stage 2 and all investigatory reports, within 10-working days of receiving the outcome from the school.
- 5.3.2. The awarding body will investigate the matter in accordance with its policies and procedures. Any further actions arising from the awarding body's review of the complaint will be agreed between the School and the awarding body, and will be promptly notified to the student in an outcome letter. The letter will set out in detail all steps taken in considering the complaint, any action taken to resolve it and the rationale for the School and the awarding body's final decisions.
- 5.3.3. A review of a formal complaint decision will be considered by the School only where there is evidence that:
- The procedures during the formal stage were not followed properly,
 - The outcome was not reasonable given the circumstances presented,
 - The outcome was not consistent with the outcome of any other similar complaints,
 - New information has come to light which was unavailable, for valid reasons, or could not have been considered earlier in the process and which would have had a significant ('material') effect on the decision.
- 5.3.4. The complainant must clearly outline which of the grounds stated above they wish to raise review under. Dissatisfaction with the outcome of a complaint will not of itself constitute grounds for a review of a formal complaint decision.
- 5.3.5. The review of the formal complaint outcome will not consider any new issues raised by the student that were not part of the original investigation, involve

the original investigation being carried out again, or consider the complainant as a fresh case.

- 5.3.6. The Registry Department will appoint a review officer, who has not been involved in any previous stage in the handling of the complaint. The review officer will consider the integrity of the original decision in respect of the request for review and any supporting evidence submitted; their findings will be presented in a report to the Registry within 10 working days of being instructed to investigate. The reviewer will be asked to evaluate whether:
- The procedure was properly followed during the formal stage.
 - The outcome was reasonable under any circumstance.
 - New, substantive evidence has been presented which could have a material effect on the outcome.
 - The student has provided valid reasons for not submitting this evidence during the formal stage.
- 5.3.7. If a review finds issues with the outcome from the formal stage, the review will be upheld and the case will be referred back to the formal stage for further consideration. The complainant will be informed in writing about this decision, including an explanation of the next steps in the process and the expected timeframe.
- 5.3.8. On receipt of the review officer's report, the Registry will convene a Complaints Panel meeting to consider the integrity of the original complaint outcome in light of the report's findings; the membership of the Panel will vary to ensure that no person involved in the original decision under review has any influence over the outcome of the Panel's deliberations.
- 5.3.9. The Complaints Panel will move to uphold, partly uphold or rescind the earlier decision in the light of the review officer's report, specifying any remedial actions and the timeframes in which these must be carried out.
- 5.3.10. Following the panel meeting, the outcome of the panel's deliberations, and the rationale for its decisions will be conveyed by letter/email to the complainant and, where appropriate, other parties. This letter will advise the complainant of any further recourse for review that may be available to them.
- 5.3.11. Where a request for review is not accepted, or has been accepted and subsequently not upheld, the registry will communicate this in writing to the complainant. This will be provided in the form of a Completion of Procedures (CoP) letter which outlines the reasons for decision. The CoP letter must clearly state the complainant's right to request review from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), the timescale in which this request must be made to the OIA and signposting to further guidance and information on this action.



6. Referrals to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

- 6.1. The School subscribes to the scheme for the independent review of complaints and appeals by Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Students who believe their complaint has not been properly or fairly handled by the School or the awarding body can request for an independent review to be conducted by the OIA; where such requests are eligible for review, the OIA will investigate in accordance with its rules.
- 6.2. Referral to the OIA must be made within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter, and should be submitted using the OIA's complaints form, which can be found here: <http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/oia-complaint-form.aspx>
- 6.3. Further information on the OIA' procedures and eligibility for review of a complaint can be found on the OIA's website; www.oiahe.org.uk, or alternatively students can contact the OIA directly on:
 - Tel: 0118 959 9813
 - Email: enquiries@oiahe.org
 - Office of the Independent Adjudicator
Second Floor
Abbey Gate
57-75 Kings Road
Reading RG1 3AB

7. Complainants' Conduct

- 7.1. Whilst it is understood that a complainant may be experiencing anxiety as the result of the circumstances surrounding their complaint, they are expected nonetheless to conduct themselves in a reasonable manner and in accordance with the School's *Student Code of Conduct*.
- 7.2. Students are expected to refrain from making complaints which are of a frivolous, vexatious, petty, or harassing nature, or make unreasonable demands of the persons dealing with their complaint. Examples of unreasonable demands on the part of the complainant may include: requesting responses within an unreasonable timeframe; insisting on seeing or speaking to a specific member of staff; continual phone calls, emails or letters; repeatedly changing the substance of the complaint, or raising unrelated concerns.
- 7.3. Where the complainant is considered to be acting unreasonably, they will be told



why this is unacceptable and given the opportunity to modify their behaviour. If the unreasonable behaviour continues, the School will take the appropriate measures, including referring students to the disciplinary procedures and terminating consideration of the complaint.

8. Formal Investigations

- 8.1. During Stages 2 and 3 of the complaints procedures, the School may open a formal investigation into the issue.
- 8.2. The member of staff handling the investigation of a complaint may request the complainant to attend an interview as part of the investigative procedure. The member of staff will agree to a date, time and location with the complainant and confirm this in writing. The complainant has the right to be accompanied by a friend or student representative as an observer.
- 8.3. Any person about whom a complaint is made (the 'respondent') shall be provided with a copy of the complaint with sufficient time for them to prepare their representations ahead of any formal meeting concerning the complaint; the respondent shall have the same right of representation as the complainant.
- 8.4. Where either the complainant or respondent are accompanied in a formal meeting, details of their companion must be provided to the investigating officer in advance of the meeting; the School does not permit representation by an external organisation or professional legal representation during such investigations.

9. Complaints about Staff Members or Other Students

- 9.1. Should a student raise a complaint which appears to show that staff or students have acted in breach of School regulations, the matter will be investigated through the appropriate investigatory procedure, which may be the School's:
 - Student or Staff Disciplinary Procedures
 - Assessments Regulations and Procedures
 - Academic Misconduct Regulations
- 9.2. This includes, but is not limited to, abusive or threatening behaviour, victimisation, bullying or harassing behaviour, actions likely to cause injury or threaten safety and unauthorised disclosure of confidential information.

Note: Where the issue is referred to be dealt with under a different School policy, then the 90-day timeframe given for resolving complaints may no longer apply.



- 9.3. If a complaint results in a hearing under another procedure or policy, the complainant may be asked to give evidence at a hearing. In instances where the complainant is not willing to give evidence, the School may not be able to proceed with the case.
- 9.4. Where the complaint results in a hearing under another procedure or policy, the School will comply with the provisions of the *Data Protection Act*. This means that the School may not be able to disclose full details of this procedure and any outcomes to the complainant. Legally, there is a recognised expectation that internal disciplinary matters of an individual will be private. If the School is unable to disclose the details of the outcome to the student, the student will be informed of the reasons for any such non-disclosure.

10. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

- 10.1. A record of complaints received from students and the means of resolution will be kept by the Registrar and reported to the Academic Board as part of the School's monitoring and quality assurance processes.
- 10.2. School staff dealing with complaints matters may at times be in receipt of potentially sensitive information regarding students' personal circumstances; all such information disclosed by the student when making a complaint will be held securely within the Registry Office and shared only with those who need to be aware of it in order to carry out these procedures.
- 10.3. It is expected that those in receipt of concerns and complaints will respect confidentiality and retain anonymity for students raising concerns where this is appropriate. However, complainants should never be promised confidentiality as there may be instances where information disclosed must be passed on to fulfil a public function (such as reporting a crime).
- 10.4. Anyone dealing with a concern or complaint who is unsure whether information is confidential should clarify with the source of the information and speak to the School's Data Protection Officer:
 - it@lsst.ac

11. Training and Awareness of the Complaints Policy and Procedures

- 11.1. The School will periodically organise activities to raise awareness of the Complaints Procedure, and how it is to be used; students will have access to



information about this policy and the correct process of making a complaint in their Student Handbooks and during Induction.

- 11.2. The School will additionally provide ongoing support and guidance for LSST Staff in handling complaints on how to best resolve them informally and how to respond to formal complaints.

12. Review and Update

- 12.1. This policy and procedure will be reviewed and updated annually by the Head of Registry and the School's Quality Office; changes to it will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and ratified by the School's Board of Governors.



Version History

Version	1.0 – 4.1	
Original author(s):	Head of RegistryPrincipal	
Reviewed by:	Executive Committee	September 2015 September 2016 September 2017 September 2018 September 2019
Version	5.0 – 5.5	
Revised by:	Quality Audit Manager Head of Registry	
Revision summary:	<i>Clarifies alternative university processes to UWL and BNU-validate courses. Revisions to general structure of document and guiding principles; clarification of procedural elements; references to other school policies added with information on when to use these; section on expected complainant conduct added. Provisions for secure record keeping and data protection; revised document formatting, numbering and version control added.</i>	
	<i>Reviewed by Publications Committee; amendments recommended by the Executive Committee for ratification by the Board of Governors.</i>	
Approved by:	Board of Governors	August 2020
Version	5.6	
Revised by:	Quality Manager Head of Registry	
Revision summary:	<i>Annual review; partnerships amended. Document reformatted and version control added.</i>	
Approved by:	Board of Governors	December 2021
Version	5.7	
Revised by:	Quality Manager Head of Registry	
Revision summary:	<i>Annual review; procedures and processes amended in accordance with BNU's Student Complaints Policy; Document formatting and version control applied.</i>	
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Version	5.8	
Revised by:	Quality Manager Head of Registry	
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Approved by:	Board of Governors	December 2022



Version	5.9	
Revised by:	Head of Registry	
Revision summary:	<i>Data Protection Officer details changed.</i>	
Approved by:	Board of Governors	March 2023
Version	6	
Revised by:	Quality Manager Head of Registry	
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Approved by:	Board of Governors	
Version	7	
Revised by:	Quality Office Assistant Registrar	
Revision summary:	<i>Annual review and update, Independent Reviewer recommended instead of Principal for Stage 3 Review of Complaints, par. 1.8 and 1.9 added on malicious complaints, title change from 'Awarding Body – BNU', to 'BNU Registered Student', minor grammatical corrections, document format applied, version control applied.</i>	
Approved by:	Board of Governors	October 2024