

## Introduction

UKCBC is committed to monitoring and evaluating all its services to enhance quality. Feedback and comments on these services are always welcome. Relevant individuals, including students and other stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback to College staff and management via the normal channels of email. For concerns or issues that require resolution this **Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure** is the mechanism by which UKCBC active or recent students and other stakeholders can raise an issue for investigation.

In all cases, complaints received will be considered with the highest level of consideration and with full confidentiality of the complainant and UKCBC officers wherever possible.

This policy resonates with the “Good Practice Framework” published by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. Following the guidance of the Good Practice Framework, UKCBC is committed to concluding all formal complaint, including any subsequent appeal within **90 calendar days** of receipt of a complaint.

## Links to other policies

The remainder of this policy will relate to both general and academic complaints. UKCBC recommends that this policy is understood in the context of the wider maintenance of quality and standards, and particularly in relation to the following policies:

- Student Appeals Policy
- Admissions Appeals Policy
- Academic Misconduct Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

## Scope and Definition of Complaints

A complaint is defined as an expression of concern or dissatisfaction that requires a response or resolution. This may regard the experience through all the services of the College whether accessed by a member of public, employers, prospective and current students, or alumni. In 2022 UKCBC establish a new single channel online system that will handle all complaints and appeals wherever the source.

Each complaint is entered onto the online **Complaints and Appeals System** via a standard **Complaint Form**, including some drop-down entries which requires the name and other identifying inputs of the complainant as well as details of the complaint. The complainant is also asked to categorise the type of their complaint, such as Academic, Administrative, Technology and Facilities are available in the drop-down menu but for a complaint that doesn't fall into one of these categories, an 'Other' option is provided. It is anticipated that new commonly occurring different categories may well evolve, creating large numbers of 'Other' complaints surfacing. The **Complaints and Appeals Team Manager** will respond to such a situation by introducing appropriate new categories in the drop-down menu thus gradually stabilising the system so that a significant majority of the complaints are readily categorised, and the 'Other' entries become rarer.

Complaints by members of the public will be considered through the system outlined above, however there is no final recourse of review for these cases by the **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**.

Complaints will be cleaned, where necessary by re-categorising to the internally correctly named category, and then directed to the **Investigating Officer** responsible for this category. An **Investigation Officer** must be someone not involved in the daily operation of the category of the complaint to mitigate against perceived bias and any potential conflicts of interest. Where this is not possible due to operational constraints, and with the student's agreement, other staff members will be co-opted for the purpose of the investigation.

As the 'Academic' category is likely to be potentially the most relevant one to UKCBC students, it should be noted that complaints regarding simply on a mark awarded being unsatisfactory to the student will be rejected by the **Investigation Officer**. This is because academic judgement in all UK educational establishments cannot be questioned. Such educational complaints regarding a mark awarded can only be made on the grounds of process failure in awarding that mark.

Complaints received anonymously will not be accepted by the **Complaints and Appeals System** as the input requires a name to be given.

All complaints accepted by the **Complaints and Appeals System** will be considered in a fair, consistent and timely manner. No student or stakeholder will be disadvantaged by raising a complaint in good faith, in line with the Student Charter and Student Code of Conduct.

Only one person can be the named complainant on the **Complaint Form**. In the case where several individuals wish to raise the same issue, each should submit an individual **Complaint Form** on the **Complaints and Appeals System**, and these will be considered as a collective when received by the relevant **Investigating Officer**.

Current students must submit a **Complaint Form** within 3 months of the incident to which the complaint relates. A **Complaint Form** raised by a graduate student must be received within 6 months following cessation of their student enrolment, subject to the related incident occurring when the student was enrolled at UKCBC.

### **Process of Complaints Investigation**

Before raising a **Complaint Form** on the **Complaints and Appeals System**, all potential complainants are encouraged to raise concerns through discussions with critical friends or a UKCBC staff member who they trust. However, if this process fails to resolve the issue the individual should submit their **Complaint Form** on the **Complaints and Appeals System**.

Once the **Complaint Form** is received by **Complaints and Appeals Team Manager** on the **Complaints and Appeals System**, it is if necessary re-categorised and forwarded to the appropriate **Investigating Officer**. The **Investigating Officer** examines the **Complaint Form** and communicates with the complainant as well as any other person directly involved in the complaint to ascertain if an informal low-level resolution to the complaint can be found, one that is agreeable to all parties concerned.

If a resolution is found at this juncture, the **Investigating Officer** completes an online **Complaint Resolution Form** on the **Complaints and Appeals System**, and an email is sent to the complainant requesting their signed agreement to the **Complaint Resolution Form**. Once this is signed by the complainant, the complaint is

archived with the data of the time taken to resolve the issue etc added to the database of records of the complaints.

If no such informally derived resolution is made, the **Investigating Officer** will identify the most suitable individuals to form an **Investigating Panel** to begin a more formal investigation of the complaint. In extreme cases where finding a resolution is particularly challenging, the **Director of Education** can be called to the **Investigating Panel** or even external consultants brought in who specialise in such cases.

The complainant will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation **every 5 working days**. Where possible the resolution of the complaint will be **within 30 working days** of the **Complaint Form** being entered on the **Complaints and Appeals System**. At the conclusion of the investigation, the **Investigating Officer** will inform the complainant of the outcome and any action in writing.

If the complainant is not satisfied by the outcome, they can appeal the decision. **Appeals** are again made through the same **Complaints and Appeals System** and a similar process is followed to the one explained above. However, an appeal cannot be made just on the grounds of the decision made but only on the grounds that either new evidence has come to light or that the original complaint was not processed properly by the **Complaints and Appeals Team**. As with the original complaint, the complainant will receive updates of the progress of the complaint every 5 working days and the outcome of the appeal within 30 working days.

Ultimately if the complainant at the end of the complaint process remains not satisfied by the outcome, they may request a **Completion of Procedures** letter where eligible if they wish to progress the complaint directly with **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**. The letter will note that the internal procedures have been fully exhausted and to what stage.

Details of the complaint, investigation and action will be recorded and added to the database of records of Complaints Performance.

### **General Points regarding the Complaints Process**

If an individual is unsure about the complaints and appeals process, designated UKCBC staff can provide support and guidance through the process. Furthermore, a complainant may receive support and assistance from a chosen representative during the process and at investigation meetings.

### **Complaints against the College to University of West London (UWL)**

Students enrolled under UWL Partnerships who are advised that their complaint is within the **Academic category** and are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint and appeal to the **UKCBC Complaints and Appeals System** can make a complaint to UWL. Such complaints are received and processed as per the Complaints Procedures of UWL. The University will make a final decision on the outcomes of their complaint made to UKCBC.

Students enrolled under UWL Partnerships are advised that if their complaint is not within the **Academic category**, they cannot make such a complaint to the University of West London as it is a matter solely for UKCBC.

## **Data Protection**

UKCBC is fully compliant with The Data Protection Act 2018, the UK's implementation of the **General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR). Data submitted to the **Complaints and Appeals System** is secure and will not be shared. UKCBC's **Data Protection Officer** can be contacted by any potential or active complainant to assuage any concerns they have regard their data.

## **Data Usage**

Although individual complaints data is not shared, UKCBC will use the collective data for analytic purposes to measure and evaluate the performance of the **Complaints and Appeals System**. The regular reports generated with various metrics will empower UKCBC to respond quickly to change the **Complaints and Appeals System** when required.

## **Complaints Annual Review**

In addition to the data generated in the regular reports of the **Complaints and Appeals System's** performance, other data is considered in annually reviewing the efficiency and efficacy of the complaints and appeals handling. All complaints are reviewed, considered, and investigated to inform improvements for the complainant experience. This is formally reviewed each semester resulting in a report by the **Academic Standards and Quality Committee** for academic related complaints and the **Operations Management Committee** for the College infrastructure or non-academic student experience complaints. These reports are annually collated and evaluated by the **College Management Committee** leading to the ratification of enhancements that mitigate against activity or situations that have triggered complaints.

Complaints relating to University of West London registered students are shared with the university link tutor for internal records.