Q9.2.3 Complaints
Student Guide

Complaints – Student Guide

If you feel dissatisfied with your experience at The University of Law then you have the right to make a complaint. This guide is designed to give you a brief overview of the University’s complaints procedure and some tips for filling out the complaint and review forms. As this is only a guide, it is important that you read the Overarching Policy for Academic Appeals and Student Complaints and the Student Complaints Policy before making your complaint.

What can I complain about?
Complaints can be made about any aspect of your University experience, except:

- Appeals against the decisions of Examination Boards, or issues related to assessments (conduct or content), final results or concession applications, as these are dealt with under the Academic Appeals procedure (please see the Academic Reviews and Appeal Policy);
- Appeals against decisions taken under disciplinary proceedings as these are dealt with under the disciplinary procedure (please see the Student Discipline Regulations);
- The contractual liability for the payment of course fees (as distinct from the processes or administration employed in relation to fee payment – please also note that the chasing of outstanding fees will not be suspended during investigation of a complaint); and
- Appeals against decisions taken regarding Disability Support provisions (these are dealt with under the Disability Support Review process).

How do I complain?

Informal Complaint

First you must raise your concern informally with the person concerned, student services or your course supervisor. Until you tell us, we won’t know there is a problem and most complaints can be dealt with quickly and effectively at this local level. In the event that the outcome is unsatisfactory you may then issue a formal complaint.

Formal Complaint

The formal complaint form is found attached to the Student Complaints Policy located in the University of Law Policies box on the home page of ELITE. You need to fill it out and return it by post or email along with supporting documents to evidence your complaint. The addresses are complaints@law.ac.uk or Academic Registry (University Complaints Officer), The
University of Law, 14 Store Street, Bloomsbury, London, WC1E 7DE. It is important that you do this **within three months** of the event you are complaining about.

You will receive an acknowledgement within seven calendar days, and an Investigating Officer (IO) will be appointed. You may be asked to provide further details or to meet with the IO to discuss your complaint. The IO will carry out an investigation and produce a report which will be sent to you along with the outcome within five weeks of the acknowledgment of the complaint.

**I’m not happy with the outcome of my complaint; what can I do?**

If you aren’t satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, then the University offers an appeal process. The appeal form is sent to you with the outcome of your original complaint and must be completed **within 14 calendar days** of receipt and returned in the same way as the complaints form. You must either:

1. provide further evidence to support your original complaint and explain why you didn’t provide this initially; or
2. demonstrate that the formal complaints procedure was not followed correctly and that this had a detrimental impact on the outcome of your complaint; or
3. demonstrate that the investigation reached a decision that no reasonable body could have reached.

The appeal follows the same process as the complaints investigation except that it will be investigated by an Appeal Officer (AO) with no prior involvement in the case. **Please note that the AO can reduce the offer made to you in the initial outcome, as well as potentially increasing it.** Upon the conclusion of your review the University will give you a Completion of Procedures Letter along with the report.

**I don’t agree with the outcome of the appeal; what can I do?**

After the review process you have exhausted all complaints routes within the University. However if you are unhappy with the outcome of the review process then you may request a further review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). **Further details will be provided with the review outcome and can also be found at www.oiahe.org.uk.** You must provide the OIA with your Completion of Procedures Letter and complain to them **within twelve months** of the date of that letter.
I'm outside the time limits to complain

If you’re outside the time limits but still wish to make a complaint you must prove that there were exceptional circumstances which justified your delay in submission.

I have a question not covered here

For further details please contact the University Complaints Officer on complaints@law.ac.uk.

Tips for filling out the forms

Evidence

You need to be clear about the grounds for your complaint and how you intend to evidence it. Evidence may include letter or email correspondence or excerpts from policies or the student handbook that you believe have been breached.

Content

When filling out either form it's important to remember that it will be investigated by someone who has no prior involvement with your complaint. Therefore you need to include plenty of detail such as what happened, when, what was said, who was involved and what the consequences have been. The more specific you can be the more likely the complaint is to be resolved quickly.

However, it is important to keep in mind the grounds for your complaint. Detail is good, but irrelevant details will simply confuse the investigator. If you feel your complaint requires context, put the background details in a separately labelled paragraph.

On the complaint form you also need to detail what you have already done to resolve the issue: this is the informal stage. Your complaint will have more weight if you can show that you have made a real effort to resolve it informally, and where you have missed the informal stage you may be referred back to it before your complaint will be investigated. Where you have tried the informal stage you need to state what you have done, when, who was involved, what was the outcome and why you are unsatisfied with it.
Remember when completing the appeal form there are only three possible grounds for review and you must explain why you believe one of these grounds exists. You cannot simply reiterate the original complaint.

**Structure**

You're trying to persuade someone to your point of view. Therefore you want to make your complaint as easy to follow as possible. Approach things in a logical order; use sub-headings and bullet points if appropriate. Don’t feel constrained by the size of the box; you can continue on a separate sheet. It’s better to have a longer but clearly laid out complaint than one crammed onto the form. If you do decide to use an additional sheet, make sure that this is indicated on the form.

**Style**

We know that making a complaint can be upsetting; however it helps to try and remain detached when completing the forms. It is best to keep to the facts and avoid personal opinion. We do want to know how you feel, but overly emotional language may cause confusion.

**Outcome**

Both forms ask what outcome you seek. When thinking about this please remember that requests have to be reasonable, relevant to your complaint and practicable to implement. Example remedies may be a formal apology, a change of timetable or an offer of additional tuition normally by joining another class.
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Raise your complaint informally as soon as possible with the person concerned, student services or your course supervisor.

Happy with response?

Yes

Complaint resolved

No

Complete the complaint form within 3 months of the event you are complaining about.

Acknowledgment within 7 calendar days of receipt of complaint.

Report within 5 weeks of acknowledgement.

Happy with response?

Yes

No

Complete the appeal form within 14 calendar days of the complaint outcome.

Acknowledgment within 7 calendar days of receipt of appeal form.

Report within five weeks of acknowledgement with Completion of Procedures Letter.

Happy with response?

Yes

No

Request review by the OIA within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter.
Version History

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