

STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The University is committed to providing the highest quality of education possible within the limits imposed by the resources available to it, and it strives to ensure that its students gain maximum benefit from the academic, social and cultural experiences it offers. Where students feel that their legitimate expectations are not being met, or where misunderstandings about the nature of the University's provision occur, the University expects that problems will be speedily and effectively dealt with at local level. Its complaints mechanism is based on the assumption that staff will at all times deal thoughtfully and sympathetically with students' problems, so as to minimise the extent to which formal procedures need to be followed.

Students are expected to utilise the consultative and organisational arrangements in place at departmental and institutional level (these include heads of department, the personal tutor system, staff/student committees and the Staff/Student Council, the services of the Students' Union's sabbatical officers and its Education Unit, Hall JCR officials, and various user groups). Students are expected to familiarise themselves with the constitution and membership of those bodies which are intended to represent their interests, and for general complaints about academic matters to avail themselves of the opportunities provided for direct feedback on the performance of individuals or in relation to the provision of services (such feedback might include course questionnaires, comment boxes and user surveys).

If matters cannot be resolved informally, students should address any formal complaint in writing to the senior officer responsible for the relevant area of activity.

Senior officers comprise:

The Deans of the Faculties (in relation to academic matters) – in such cases, assistance to the Deans in the consideration of the complaint will be provided by the Secretary of the relevant Faculty Board

The Librarian (in relation to the Library)

The Director of the Computer Centre (in relation to the Computer Centre)

The Director of Residential and Catering Services (in relation to student accommodation, and the University's catering and conference services)

The Registrar and Secretary (in relation to any aspect of the University's administration and the operation of its administrative offices)

The President of the Students' Union (in relation to the Students' Union; a complaint to the President will initiate proceedings under the Union's own complaints procedure, as set out in the Regulations of the Union).

At this formal stage, the complaint must include full details of the unresolved issue, the attempts made to secure a resolution, and the identification of the desired remedy. The complaint must be accompanied by a complaints form which can be found on the Academic Office website (www.le.ac.uk/academic/registry/studentindex.html). The form requires complainants to provide their personal details (name, address, etc), and a short summary of their complaint and the way in which it has been pursued to date, including the names of those to whom their concerns have been addressed to date. The senior officers have the right to refuse to consider complaints where students have made no attempt to find a negotiated solution.

Students must complain on their own behalf; senior officers will not discuss or correspond about such matters with third parties, including family members, other than in the most exceptional circumstances, and then only with the student's written permission. Anonymous complaints are disallowed. Complaints submitted by e-mail will be accepted by senior officers and will trigger the initiation of formal procedures. Complainants will, however, be contacted by letter and asked to submit a signed complaints form in order to ensure that the submission is genuinely their own.

Senior officers will immediately acknowledge in writing the receipt of any complaint, and will initiate a review by seeking a written report from the head of the department/section/unit against which the complaint is being issued. So far as is practicable the senior officer will respond to the complainant in full within twenty eight days. The complainant will normally, unless there is a significant practical impediment (for example, because the student is overseas or is for some other reason unable to attend the University, be called for interview during the period of investigation

The University will respect a complainant's desire for confidentiality unless this impedes the course of the investigation, in which case the complainant will be given the options of pursuing the complaint with a reduced level of confidentiality or accepting the *status quo*.

Appeals

Appeals against the responses of senior officers to formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the Academic Registrar, Fielding Johnson Building, who will immediately acknowledge the receipt of any such appeal and assign a member of the administrative staff of the Academic Office to manage the appeal process. The appeal will be heard by a panel comprising either the Vice-Chancellor or the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair) and one other Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Unless the complaint relates to the activities of the Students' Union, the President of the Union, will be invited to attend the appeal as an observer. The panel will interview the student, who may be accompanied by a member of the University of his/her choosing, the senior officer responsible for considering the complaint, and such other parties to the complaint as it feels is necessary, and it will review all the relevant paperwork. The panel is also authorised to request further informal discussion between the parties. So far as is practicable, the appeal process will be conducted, and the outcome announced, within twenty five working days of the receipt of the appeal request, and dates in the University's calendar of meetings will be set aside to facilitate this. The decision of the appeals panel shall be regarded as final.

At the conclusion of the appeal, the student will be sent a completion of procedures letter and details about the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

Advice on the operation of the complaints procedure can be obtained from the Academic Registrar, Fielding Johnson Building (tel 0116 2522419), or from the Education Unit, Students' Union (tel 0116 2231128, e-mail: educationunit@le.ac.uk). The latter can also provide assistance in formulating complaints, and in supporting students throughout the formal stages of the complaints procedure.

Academic Office