



Student complaints procedure

December 2024

Document title		
Student complaints procedure December 2024		
Document author and department		
Samantha Hill, Information Disclosure and Complaints Manager, Office of the Executive Director of Corporate Governance		
Approving body		
Academic Council		
Date of approval		
19 November 2024		
Intermediate review date (to be undertaken annually)		
August 2025		
Confirmation that the intermediate review has been undertaken: yes/no		
Yes – new para 2.5 added 19 November 2024		
Full review date (to be undertaken every three years)		
August 2027		
Edition no.		
8		
ID Code		
47		
Date of effect		
1 December 2024		
For public access online (internet)?		YESV
Password protected <i>Tick as appropriate</i>		NOV
External queries relating to the document to be referred in the first instance to the Corporate Governance team: email address corporate-governance@port.ac.uk .		
If you need this document in an alternative format, please email corporate.communications@port.ac.uk .		

The latest version of this document is always to be found at:
policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-047.pdf

Summary	4
What is this procedure about?	4
Who is this procedure for?	4
How does the University know this procedure is followed?	4
Who can I contact if I have any questions about this procedure?	4
Executive summary	4
1. Introduction	6
Who the procedure covers	6
What the procedure covers	7
What the procedure does not cover	7
Expectations of all parties to the complaint	7
Confidentiality of investigations	8
2. Informal Procedure	8
3. Formal Procedure	9
How to submit your complaint	9
When we have accepted your complaint for a formal investigation	10
Investigation of formal complaints by the investigating officer	10
Potential Outcome of a formal investigation	11
Action following an investigation of a formal complaint	11
4. Review by the Executive Director of Corporate Governance	12
5. Review of your complaint by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)	13
6. External adjudication of complaints by organisations other than the OIA	13
7. Complaints against members of professional bodies	13
8. Withdrawing your complaint	14
9. Monitoring and reporting complaints	14
10. Keeping complaints documents	14
Annex A: Procedures followed when a complaint is referred to another department	15
Annex B: Further information	18
Related policies	18
Useful contacts	18
Useful information	18
Other websites	19

Summary

What is this procedure about?

This document explains both the University's informal and formal procedures and the independent ombudsman's procedure for dealing with complaints.

Who is this procedure for?

This procedure is for all students registered with us (the University of Portsmouth), whether full-time or part-time, home or international students, campus-based (Portsmouth or London), distance learning or degree apprentices. Students registered with our collaborative partner organisations can use this procedure to raise a complaint about any aspect of academic standards or learning opportunities on a course covered by a partnership agreement, once that complaint has been through the partner organisation's own complaint procedure.

We have separate complaints procedures for people applying to study with us, and for members of the public. For more details of these procedures, please visit: www.port.ac.uk/about-us/contact-us/complaints.

University of Portsmouth staff will also need to read and understand this procedure in order to advise students.

How does the University know this procedure is followed?

We believe this procedure is followed because we receive and handle complaints in line with it.

We also receive enquiries from staff, students and parents of students who either refer to, or are directed to, the complaints procedure. All formal complaints (and many straightforward complaints) are handled through our Complaints Team, who apply this procedure to all of the complaints with which they deal.

Who can I contact if I have any questions about this procedure?

If you have questions about this procedure, please contact our Complaints Team at complaintsadvise@port.ac.uk.

Executive summary

We are committed to providing education of the highest possible quality and recognise that an important part of that commitment must be providing a clear procedure for registering and dealing with complaints. This Complaints procedure is not a legal process and so it is not necessary to engage a legal representative to make use of the procedure. Where there is dispute over the facts of a case, the standard of proof to be applied shall be the **balance of probabilities**.

This document sets out the procedure for students to make complaints. Parents may raise their concerns via the [Complaints Procedure for Members of the Public](#), however, it is considered most beneficial for you as a student to raise your own complaints as part of your development.

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about something the University has done or not done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University, or any concern about, or dissatisfaction with, any aspect of the student experience. This does not include matters of academic judgement, academic appeals, matters relating to the conduct of other students and [concerns relating to other students](#), or matters relating to paid employment at the University, as these are all covered by separate procedures, as explained in this document. This complaints procedure explains both the informal, formal and review stages of this procedure and the independent ombudsman's procedure for dealing with student complaints.

We expect that most complaints will be dealt with under our informal procedures, and that we will only use the formal procedure if the informal procedure has not been successful in dealing with a complaint to a student's satisfaction.

So that the person investigating a complaint can consider and deal with it correctly and efficiently, they must be able to communicate and discuss the complaint with everyone involved. This is why we do not usually deal with

anonymous complaints under this procedure. If we receive an anonymous complaint, staff in the Complaints Team will decide whether to investigate it. In making our decision, we will look at how serious the issues raised are, how credible the allegation is, the evidence received, and how likely it is that the allegation can be confirmed.

We will make sure you are not discriminated against or suffer any disadvantage as a result of raising genuine concerns. However, if you make a petty or malicious complaint (as determined by an impartial member of staff), if you are abusive in the tone of your communications or towards staff dealing with your complaint, or if your communications become so frequent or continuous that it is not possible for the staff dealing with your complaint to work effectively and efficiently, we will deal with the matter seriously under the Student Conduct Policy. We have the right to suspend considering your complaint while we take steps to stop the unacceptable behaviour, or to stop considering your complaint altogether if this behaviour continues despite our attempts to stop it.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure aims to make sure that you will have a clear process to follow if you need to make a complaint about any aspect of your experience at this university.
- 1.2 When considering whether to make a complaint, you may find it helpful to get advice as to whether or not you have grounds for a complaint, who to approach first about a complaint and how to pursue the matter. You could ask student representatives, the appropriate Elected Officer, the Student Advice Coordinators of the Students' Union or the University Complaints Team.
- 1.3 The Complaints Team will make appropriate adjustments to the procedure set out below in cases where students have concerns that they may not be able to follow this procedure.

Who the procedure covers

- 1.4 This procedure is for all students registered with us (the University of Portsmouth), whether full-time or part-time, home or international students, campus-based (Portsmouth or London), or distance learning or as degree apprentices.
- 1.5 If you are studying with one of our collaborative partners, you may use this complaints procedure to complain about something that the partner has or has not done, once you have gone through their own complaints procedure. We will review the complaint and refer to the reasons given for asking for the review, the original complaint and the report into the investigation of the complaint. We will decide if our partner has followed their own procedures and whether the outcome of the complaint is reasonable in all the circumstances. This review will be carried out by the Executive Director of Corporate Governance (see section 4).
- 1.6 If you are studying at the International College Portsmouth (ICP), you should raise any complaint with staff in ICP. Complaints staff in ICP and the University's Complaints Team will agree which organisation's complaints procedure is most appropriate in the circumstances, and will tell you which organisation will be dealing with your complaint.
- 1.7 If you are a degree apprentice and your complaint does not concern University of Portsmouth facilities or teaching, we recommend that you approach the [Degree Apprenticeships team](#) for advice.
- 1.8 If you have concerns about a placement provider, you should raise those concerns with the placement provider (after discussing the matter with your placement team) so that the issue can be considered at a local level. If you are unhappy with the action taken by the placement provider, you may be able to raise a complaint with us. You should get further information from the Complaints Team (contact details in annex B).
- 1.9 If you are unhappy with a decision either to offer, or to refuse, a place at this University, you should use the **Applicant Complaints Procedure** to raise a complaint. You can find details of this procedure in Annex B and on our website at port.ac.uk/about-us/contact-us/complaints/applicant-complaints-procedure.
- 1.10 Other people who want to make a complaint to, or about, the University should use the complaints procedure for complainants who are not a student at the university. You can find details of this procedure in Annex B and on our website at <https://www.port.ac.uk/about-us/contact-us/complaints/complaints-from-members-of-the-general-public> .
- 1.11 For the purpose of this complaints procedure, we will consider you as a student for three months after you have finished your studies or graduated from the university. We may decide to consider complaints raised after this period under the procedure explained in 3.2 below.

What the procedure covers

- 1.12 Under this procedure, you may raise concerns about any aspect of the student experience except matters of academic judgement.
- 1.13 This procedure can be used for complaints made by either an individual student or by a group of students with the same complaint. In cases where the same complaint is made by more than one individual student, the Complaints Team may decide to group the complaints. If a complaint is made by a group, one student should act as the main contact. If the outcome of an investigation is that other students were similarly affected, the recommendation to resolve the complaint will be applied to all affected students.
- 1.14 A complaint must always be raised in the first instance by the student. If you then wish to appoint a representative for the duration of the complaint, for example, a student representative, family member or elected officer, you may do so. If you do appoint a representative, all future correspondence will be directed only to your representative. This complaints procedure is not a legal process and so it is not necessary for your representative to be a member of the legal profession, however, should you wish to involve a legal representative please let the Complaints Team know as soon as possible.

What the procedure does not cover

- 1.15 This procedure does not cover:
- Appeals, as explained in section 1.1 of the [Appeals Procedure](#)
 - Concerns about other students, as explained in section 2.1 of the [Student Conduct policy](#)
 - [Tuition Fee Appeals](#)
- 1.16 If a complaint contains elements that should be dealt with under the Academic Appeals Regulations, the Complaints team and DSAA will decide the most appropriate course of action, whether this is for the procedures to run concurrently or consecutively. Key factors in this decision will include the best chance of early resolution bearing in mind the complexity of the issues raised.
- 1.17 You cannot use this procedure for complaints about the services or facilities provided by the University of Portsmouth Students Union (UPSU), as it is a separate organisation. You should make complaints about UPSU in writing to the Students Union. You can find more information about the UPSU complaints procedure on their website at [<https://upsu.net/your-union/information/useful-documents>].

Expectations of all parties to the complaint

- 1.18 All parties to the complaint will treat each other with dignity and respect. The University aims to provide a service that is accessible to everyone who is entitled to it. However, the University retains the right, where we consider your actions to be unacceptable, to depart from the procedure. The University needs to ensure that all parties involved do not suffer any disadvantage from complainants who act in an unacceptable manner.
- 1.19 Should the University consider your actions or behaviours to be unacceptable we will write to you outlining our concerns, giving you the opportunity to modify your behaviour as suggested. If the unacceptable actions or behaviour continue, despite our request to modify your behaviour, the University reserves the right to take appropriate action to ensure all parties are able to participate in the investigation, which may include:
- Modifying the manner in which you are permitted to communicate with us
 - Restricting your right to communicate with us, both now and in the future
 - Suspending or terminating the complaints procedures
- 1.20 Parties to the complaint are not permitted to make a recording on any recording device, of discussions held

under the Complaints Procedure, whether at a meeting or by telephone or otherwise, unless with the express permission of all parties to the discussions.

- 1.21 If the Complaints Team believes that the behaviour of any party of the complaint is becoming unreasonable or the level of communication is becoming excessive, either via email contact, or verbal contact, the Complaints Team will issue a formal notice of unacceptable behaviour to that individual, giving details of the behaviour that is considered inappropriate and asking them to modify their behaviour. Persistently contacting too many University staff will be considered as poor behaviour as will any falsification of evidence to support your complaint. If poor behaviour persists despite our efforts to stop it, the Complaints Team has the right to suspend the consideration of the complaint whilst attempting to stop inappropriate behavior. If the poor behaviour continues despite the formal warning, the Complaints Team has the right to terminate the consideration of your complaint. The Complaints Team may also raise the matter as a disciplinary issue under Section 2.2 of the Student Conduct policy.

Confidentiality of investigations

- 1.22 The person carrying out an investigation into a complaint needs to be able to communicate and discuss the complaint with everyone involved. It is for this reason that we will not generally investigate anonymous complaints. You should be aware that it is not usually possible to withhold your name as the complaint itself will, in most cases, identify the people concerned. Each case will be determined on its own merits by the Complaints Team.
- 1.23 To fully investigate your complaint, we may need to share it, and any associated documents, with the members of staff who are asked to comment on your complaint. The Complaints Team will handle your correspondence sensitively and will only reveal the information necessary to each member of staff as appropriate.
- 1.24 As a result of this, if the outcome of a complaint recommends disciplinary action against a student or member of staff, this recommendation will be included in the report into the complaint. Following the disciplinary procedure, only you and anyone else affected will be told the outcome. We will only tell you, and anyone else affected, whether we found the person complained about guilty or not guilty of the allegation. If a person is found guilty and the outcome / sanction affects you (for example, because they should apologise to you), we will tell you. If the sanction outcome does not specifically relate to you, we will tell you that we have issued an appropriate penalty (in line with section 3.1.4 of the [Student Conduct Policy](#) or the [Staff Disciplinary Procedure](#) as appropriate).
- 1.25 The University expects all parties to a complaint to respect and adhere to the confidentiality of the Complaints procedure. You may discuss the procedure but you are not permitted to share any of the information you receive as part of the investigation.

2. Informal Procedure

- 2.1 If you are not satisfied with any aspect of your experience as a student, except in matters of academic judgement, you may make a complaint. The complaint must, in the first instance, be raised informally by either speaking or writing to a member of the University staff in the area in which the complaint has arisen, or a member of the Complaints Team. For example, if your complaint is about how a course is managed, you can discuss this with your tutor or course leader as appropriate. Similarly, if your complaint is to do with a service such as the Library or the Department of Student & Academic Administration (DSAA), you should discuss the matter with a member of the Library or DSAA staff. Alternatively, all complaints can be raised directly with the Complaints Team, including those where you may not wish to raise the matter locally. You can raise your concerns with the Complaints Team by completing the [online complaints form](#) or by email to complaintsadvice@port.ac.uk
- 2.2 You need to make your complaint as soon as reasonably possible and ideally within 20 working days from when the matter you are complaining about happened, although we may accept a complaint after that

time if there are good reasons why the complaint could not be made earlier. You should receive a response to your complaint within 10 working days. You will need to reach some kind of conclusion at the end of this part of the procedure, which may be that you resolve the situation or you may decide you are still not satisfied.

- 2.3 We have signed up to the Universities UK Student Accommodation Code, so complaints concerning halls accommodation are, in the first instance, dealt with under the Residential Halls Complaints procedure, as set out on the [Residential Services webpages](#). If you cannot resolve the complaint under the Residential Halls Complaints procedure, the complaint will be dealt with under this procedure from section 3 onwards.
- 2.4 If informal discussions do not resolve your complaint, you may proceed to the formal stage of the procedure.
- 2.5 The University may issue a Completion of Procedures letter (which allows a student to take their complaint to the OIA - see section 5 below) if, at the end of this Informal stage, the University believes that
 - a) there is no realistic prospect of success for the student in pursuing the further internal stages of this complaints procedure, or
 - b) the outcome that the student is seeking cannot be realistically achieved.

3. Formal Procedure

How to submit your complaint

- 3.1 You may raise your concerns with the Complaints Team by completing the [online complaints form](#) or by email to complaintsadvise@port.ac.uk. You can find more guidance on the information you need to provide below.
- 3.2 You need to make your complaint as soon as reasonably possible, and no later than 20 working days from when you have completed attempts at informal resolution. We may accept a complaint after this time limit if you provide evidence to show you had a good reason for not making the complaint earlier.
- 3.3 In order for your complaint to be eligible for a formal investigation it must;
 - 3.3.1 relate to issues this procedure applies to, as set out in section 2.1 above;
 - 3.3.2 contain the necessary information to identify you and contact you; the nature and origin of the complaint; the steps taken to deal with the complaint through the informal procedure; the reason why you are not satisfied by the outcome of the informal procedure; and, as appropriate, how you want the complaint resolved;
 - 3.3.3 be accompanied by any evidence relating to the complaint; for example (the following is not an exhaustive list): copies of correspondence relating to the complaint, information about responses to your concerns from staff, copies of information you are relying on, such as course handbooks. In the case where you believe evidence exists to support your complaint, but you do not have access to that evidence, you must provide a description of that evidence you believe to exist.
 - 3.3.4 have been made within the time limits set out in section 3.2 above.
- 3.4 The Complaints Team will contact you if they believe any information or evidence is missing from the complaint.
- 3.5 We may decide, following discussion with relevant colleagues, that your complaint is better handled under another procedure. In doing so, we will decide whether to carry out an investigation and, if so, what form it should take. This may involve passing your complaint to another department in the University, so it can be handled under a more appropriate procedure. Further information about the procedures that will be followed if your complaint is referred to another department can be found at Annex A.

- 3.6 If your complaint concerns confidential services such as ASDAC or Wellbeing, it will be necessary for you to provide written consent for us to access your records with those services. If we cannot access your records, the investigation will only be able to proceed on the information available to the Investigating Officer.
- 3.7 If we decide your complaint does not meet the criteria in 3.3 above, specifically, if we decide your complaint is out of time and there are no good reasons for the complaint not being made earlier, we will write to you to explain why we do not think your complaint is valid and what further action you may be able to take. This letter may take the form of a Completion of Procedures letter.

When we have accepted your complaint for a formal investigation

- 3.8 Within five working days, we will write to you setting out the next steps for the investigation of your complaint and confirming the timeline for this to take place.
- 3.9 We will send valid complaints relating to aspects of academic studies to your head of department or school for investigation and tell the appropriate Associate Dean of the faculty that you have made a complaint. If your complaint is against, or involves, a head of department or school, we will discuss with the Dean whether they want to carry out the investigation or whether the investigation should be passed to another member of staff.
- 3.10 We will send valid complaints that relate to our services and facilities to the relevant head of service and tell the member of the University Executive Board responsible for the service that you have made a complaint. If your complaint is against, or involves, a head of service, we will discuss with the appropriate member of the University Executive Board who has responsibility for that service whether they want to carry out the investigation or whether the investigation should be passed to another member of staff.

Investigation of formal complaints by the investigating officer

- 3.11 The Head of department or service will investigate the complaint or make arrangements for it to be investigated or dealt with by an impartial member of staff or by a group of staff.
- 3.12 In cases where the complaint is against or involves the Head of department or service, either the Dean or the member of the University Executive Board, according to the nature of the complaint, or the member of staff the investigation has been delegated to, will carry out all the responsibilities the Head of department or service would have had. The person carrying out the investigation is called the 'investigating officer' in this procedure.
- 3.13 The investigation must be carried out as quickly as possible and should, normally, be completed within 30 working days of the start date. If, in rare cases, the investigation cannot be completed within that time, we must tell you in writing and give the reasons why more time is needed as well as the intended date the investigation will be completed. The Complaints Team will send a copy of that notice to the investigating officer and either the appropriate Associate Dean or member of the University Executive Board, according to the nature of the complaint.
- 3.14 As part of the investigation into the complaint, the investigating officer will hold separate meetings with you and any members of staff they believe may have information about the complaint. These meetings will generally be face-to-face but can be held virtually if you are not on campus. All meetings will be formally organised and you may bring a representative. We will take minutes at the meetings. These will be shared with the individuals attending the meetings and the Investigating Officer will incorporate any comments they believe are relevant to the investigation.
- 3.15 Once the investigation has been completed, the investigating officer will draft a written report of their findings. Where the Investigating Officer requires it, or where cases involve complex matters, the Investigating Officer may discuss the case and their initial findings with another member of staff, in order to clarify their thinking and apply consistency in consideration. This step of the procedure is not

compulsory.

- 3.16 The draft report will be sent to everyone involved in the complaint for them to check whether there are any inaccuracies in it. No new evidence can be provided at this stage. Everyone involved has five working days in which to return any comments to the investigating officer. At the end of the five working days, a final report (including copies of any documents referred to in the report) will be issued, considering any relevant comments by either you or any person you are complaining about. A copy of the final report will be sent to the Complaints Team, and to either the appropriate associate dean or the member of the University Executive Board, according to the nature of the complaint.
- 3.17 The letter sent to you with the final report of findings and conclusions must tell you about your right to ask for a review of your complaint by the Executive Director of Corporate Governance (as set out in section 4 below), and provide contact details for them, if you are still not satisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint.

Potential Outcome of a formal investigation

- 3.18 Following an investigation into a formal complaint, the Investigating Officer can reach one of three potential outcomes - that the complaint is Justified, Partially Justified or Not Justified. The Investigating Officer may make recommendations following their investigation as explained in section 3.18 below.
- 3.19 If your complaint is found Not Justified, the Investigating Officer will explain why this is the case, and explain the further steps you can take under this Procedure if you do not agree with the Investigating Officer's decision.
- 3.20 Potential recommendations for resolving a complaint may include, but are not limited to, suggestions for mediation between all parties, financial compensation, the ability to retake assessments or the reconsideration of previous decisions.

Action following an investigation of a formal complaint

- 3.21 If the report contains recommendations for action, the Head of department or school will decide whether to follow them or to take any other appropriate action to deal with your complaint. They will write to you with their decision within 10 working days of receiving the Investigating Officer's written report. They will also send a copy of their decision to the Investigating Officer and our Complaints Team.
- 3.22 Any proposals for resolving the complaint will not take place until after the period in which you can ask for a review by the Executive Director of Corporate Governance has ended, unless you agree to the proposals before that time.
- 3.23 If the investigating officer believes the findings have implications for assessing your work, they will write to the Chair of the relevant Unit Assessment Board responsible for the unit (or units) affected. Or, they will write to the Board of Examiners responsible for progression and award decisions for the student (or students) affected. The letter will ask the relevant board to review its decision.
- 3.24 The Unit Assessment Board or Board of Examiners (or the Chair who has been given authority, consulting as they believe appropriate) may take any action they judge is appropriate, taking account of the recommendations of the investigating officer. The Chair of the Unit Assessment Board or the Board of Examiners will report on the action taken to our Complaints Team.
- 3.25 It is the responsibility of the Complaints Team to ensure that the Recommendations are completed at which time the Complaints Team will confirm this with all appropriate parties.

4. Review by the Executive Director of Corporate Governance

4.1 If you are not satisfied with the report of findings or the proposals for action contained in it, you may ask for a review by the Executive Director of Corporate Governance. Grounds for review may include:

- the fact that the investigation was not completed according to the procedures set out above;
- A consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable in all the circumstances or
- you have new evidence which you were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.

It should be noted that the review stage will not usually consider the substantive issues of complaint again or involve any further investigation of these elements.

4.2 The grounds for review set out in 4.1 above will be the same in cases where you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint made to a collaborative partner (see 1.10) or a placement provider (see 1.12).

4.3 You must make this request in writing to the Executive Director of Corporate Governance (Paul.Mould@port.ac.uk) within 10 working days of the date the final report of findings was issued or the latest date by which the report should have been issued according to the timescale given in 3.13 above. Your request must also explain why you are not satisfied with the outcome.

4.4 The Executive Director of Corporate Governance will decide whether a review is appropriate by looking at your request, the formal complaint and the report of findings. They will then write to you, our Complaints Team, the investigating officer, and to either the appropriate Associate Dean or the member of the University Executive Board, according to the nature of the complaint, within 10 working days of receipt of your request, to say whether or not they have decided to carry out a review. If the Executive Director of Corporate Governance decides not to carry out a Review, they will explain their reasons in this letter, and issue a Completion of Procedures letter. If the Executive Director of Corporate Governance decides a review is necessary they will either carry out the review themselves or make arrangements for it to be carried out.

4.5 The Executive Director of Corporate Governance will agree the review arrangements (what the review will cover and the timetable) with you (and the reviewer if the investigation has been passed to someone else) within five working days of deciding to carry out a review. If this deadline is not met without good reason, the review will not take place. You should be told about any change to the review in a timely way. The review will normally be completed within 30 working days of the date of agreeing what the review will cover.

4.6 Once the review has been completed, the Executive Director of Corporate Governance will give you, our Complaints Team, the investigating officer and, either the appropriate Associate Dean or the member of the University Executive Board, according to the nature of the complaint, a report of their findings. If appropriate, it will include recommendations to the head of school or department for action to deal with your complaint.

4.7 If the report contains recommendations for action, the Head of department or school will decide whether to follow them or to take any other appropriate action to deal with your complaint. They will write to you with their decision within 10 working days of receiving the Executive Director of Corporate Governance's written report. They will also send a copy of their decision to the Executive Director of Corporate Governance, our Complaints Team and, either the appropriate Associate Dean or the member of the University Executive Board, according to the nature of the complaint.

4.8 The decision letter – otherwise known as a Completion of Procedures letter – must tell you about your right to refer your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

(or another adjudicator as appropriate [see section 6 below]) if you are still not satisfied with the outcome of the Executive Director of Corporate Governance's review.

5. Review of your complaint by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

- 5.1 You may apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) once we have issued a completion of procedures letter. This may be either when our procedures have been completed (see sections 4.3 and 4.8), or at an earlier time if the Complaints Team considers you to be out of time to continue with our procedures (see section 3.5).
- 5.2 You must fill in an OIA Complaint Form and send it to the OIA within 12 months of the date of the completion of procedures letter.
- 5.3 The OIA may try to settle the matter before carrying out a full investigation if it believes the matter could be dealt with in this way. Or, if the OIA completes a full investigation, it will provide a 'complaint outcome' which may include recommendations to resolve the complaint if your complaint is found Partially Justified or Justified.

6. External adjudication of complaints by organisations other than the OIA

- 6.1 The OIA will be the adjudicating body for most student complaints, but there may be occasions where it might be more appropriate for a different adjudicator, with specific sector knowledge, to adjudicate a complaint, as explained below.
- 6.2 One of these adjudicators is the Financial Ombudsman Service. Our Student Finance Department occasionally provides limited debt-counselling advice to students and can provide zero-interest emergency loans for up to six weeks if students are in need. Our Finance Department may agree debt-repayment plans with students who cannot afford to pay what they owe in one payment. If these loans have 12 or more payments or last for more than 12 months, this and the Student Finance activities fall within the Financial Conduct Authority's definition of regulated activities. Complaints about these issues will be investigated through our student complaints procedure until the point at section 4.8 when we will give you details of the Financial Ombudsman Service.
- 6.3 A complaint about the way we have processed your personal information will also be handled under the student complaints procedure until the point at section 4.8 when we will give you details of the Information Commissioner's Office, as the appropriate adjudicator for these matters.

7. Complaints against members of professional bodies

- 7.1 If a member of university staff is a member of a professional body that operates a complaints procedure, and your complaint is about them, you may be able to complain to the professional body. If the complaints procedure of the professional body can begin before ours, we may decide to suspend our own investigation, pending the outcome of the professional body's findings.

8. Withdrawing your complaint

- 8.1 You may withdraw your complaint at any time by giving written notice to the person to whom you made your complaint. You will receive a written acknowledgement.
- 8.2 Once a complaint has been withdrawn the matter is closed.

9. Monitoring and reporting complaints

- 9.1 Every year we report on all complaints received by the Complaints Team and issue this report to all heads of academic and service departments, to all members of the University Executive Board and to the Students' Union. The Report includes:
 - the number of complaints received and the number withdrawn;
 - the number of requests for review by the Executive Director of Corporate Governance;
 - the number of those requests accepted;
 - a summary of the nature of the complaints;
 - a summary of the findings and recommendations made; and
 - a summary of action taken in response to them.

The report will also include information relating to complaints made to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education or any other adjudicator. The Report also includes statistics relating to the profile of students making complaints, including equality-monitoring statistics. We take the relevant equality information from the central student records database and keep it anonymous once collected.

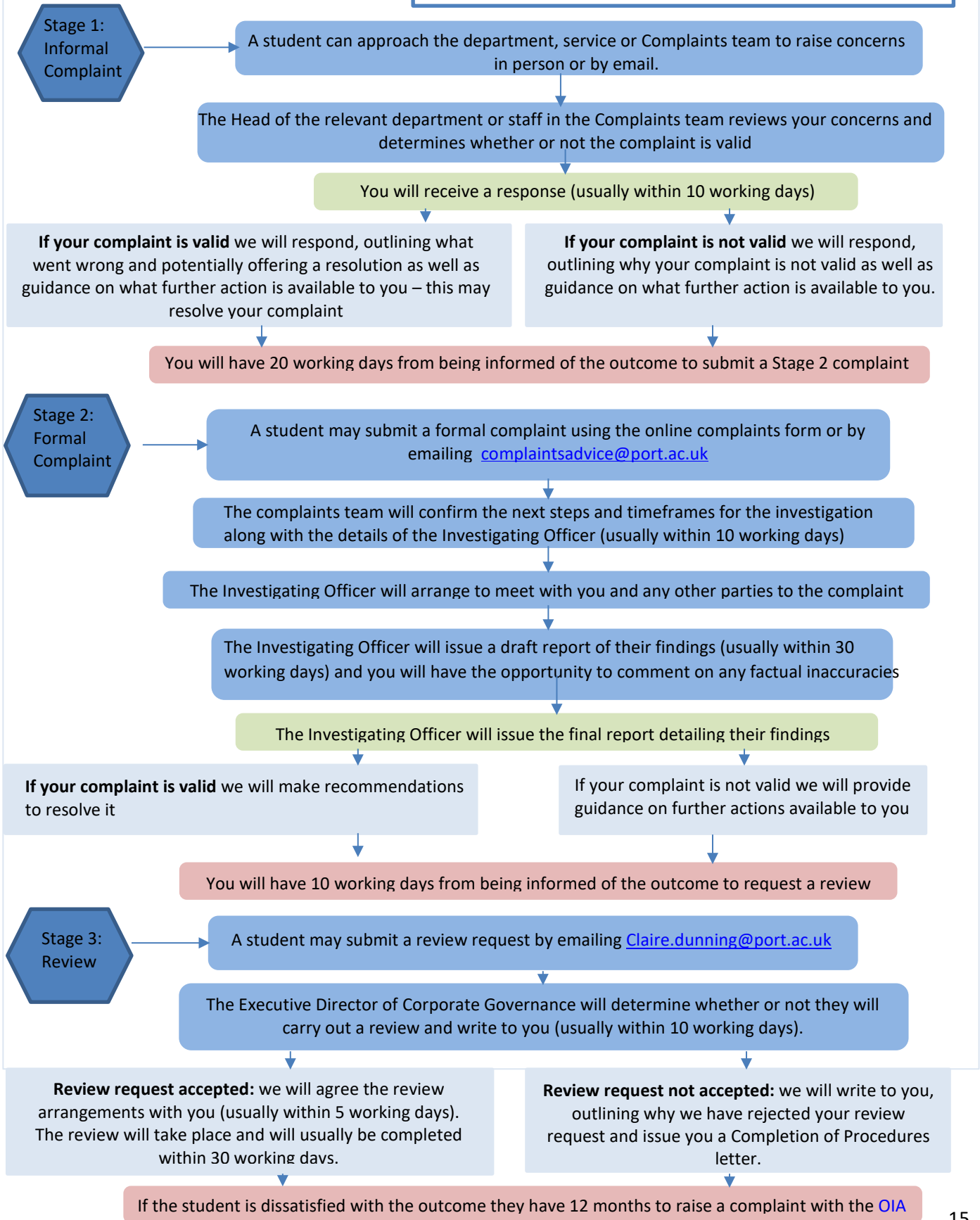
- 9.2 We make a summary of the report available to all staff and students on our [complaints webpages](#).
- 9.3 Academic quality and standards issues identified as arising from complaints will be included in the yearly cycle of departmental monitoring and review reports and these go to the Quality Assurance Committee.
- 9.4 The report is also sent to the first meeting of the Academic Council in the following academic year for its information and to consider any university-wide issues.

10. Keeping complaints documents

- 10.1 We keep documents relating to the students complaints procedure in line with our [Record Retention Schedule for student complaints](#). We keep documents relating to informal complaints for three years following the end of the academic year in which the complaint is resolved and then destroy them. We keep documents relating to formal investigations and complaints made to adjudicators for six years following the end of the academic year in which the complaint is resolved, and then destroy them.

Annex A: Flowchart

Complaints should be made no later than 20 working days from when the matter you are complaining about happened. We may accept a late complaint if you had a good reason for not making the complaint earlier

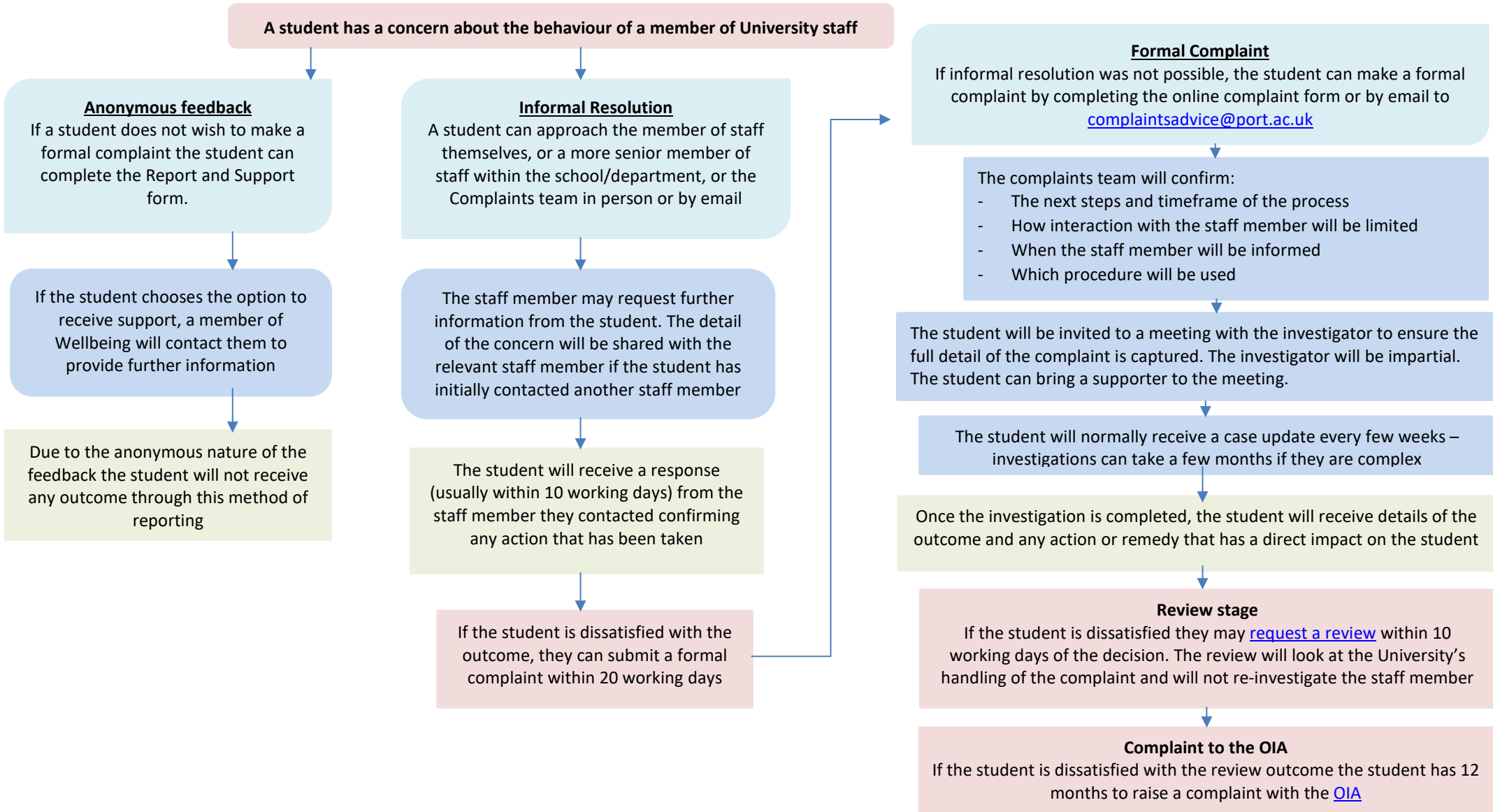


Annex B: Procedures followed when a complaint is referred to another department

1. If it is more appropriate to handle your complaint under another procedure, the Complaints Team will pass your complaint to the relevant department. For example, the Complaints Team will pass your complaint to the Human Resources department in cases where it is more appropriate that your complaint is investigated under staff disciplinary investigation procedures.
2. In most cases, we will make you aware that your complaint is being referred to another department within the first five working days following receipt of your complaint.
3. We will explain why it is felt that your complaint should be investigated under a different procedure from the Student Complaints procedure
4. You will be invited to meet the investigator to discuss your complaint.
5. At no point during the investigation will you be expected to be in the same room as the staff member about whom you have complained.
6. In cases where the issues raised are complex or where there is another reason for the investigation to exceed the timescales expected in an investigation under Stage 4 of this procedure, you will receive case updates every four weeks (or more often) throughout the investigation process. It should be noted, however, that these updates may be limited in detail.
7. At the completion of the alternative process, you will receive the following information:
 - i) Whether and why your complaint is upheld or dismissed, in part or in full
 - ii) Any information directly relevant to you (for example, a recommendation that the party about whom you complained should apologise to you). Where penalties do not relate specifically to you (such as a final warning), you will only be told that an appropriate penalty has been issued.
 - iii) Any non-confidential outcome (for example, a recommendation that a team or department undertake a training course)
8. On receipt of this information, should you be dissatisfied, you are entitled to request a review of the University's handling of your complaint, following the procedures set out at Section 4 of this procedure. Once the review is complete, you will be entitled to a Completion of Procedures letter which will enable you to refer your complaint to the OIA for independent review.
9. A flow-chart summarising the process of investigating complaints of relating to staff disciplinary cases can be found at <https://www.port.ac.uk/about-us/contact-us/complaints/current-students-complaints-procedure> in the section titled "Complaints about a member of University staff".

Flowchart of processes for student complaints about staff behaviour

Complaints should be made no later than 20 working days from when the matter you are complaining about happened. We may accept a late complaint if you had a good reason for not making the complaint earlier



Annex B: Further information

Related policies

Applicant Complaint Procedure

port.ac.uk/about-us/contact-us/complaints/applicant-complaints-procedure

Complaints Procedure for Complainants who are not a Student

port.ac.uk/about-us/contact-us/complaints/complaints-procedure-for-those-who-arent-students-at-the-university

Academic Appeals https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-260.pdf?_ga=2.156582395.138865502.1685431601-567148790.1626202100

Residential Halls Complaints Procedure – you can find this in the Halls of Residence handbook or at

https://articlehub.port.ac.uk/portal/articles/1998?search_id=a414270b-9b9c-4283-be4a-8fa3a61a4b22

Student Conduct Policy

policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-053.pdf

Dignity and Respect Policy Framework

policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-007.pdf

Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Expression

<http://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-032.pdf>

Principles on Freedom of Speech and Expression

<https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-181.pdf>

Useful contacts

You can contact our **Complaints Team** using the details below.

Nicola Young – Complaints Officer

Email: nicola.young@port.ac.uk

Nathalie Derrick - Assistant Complaints Officer

Email: nathalie.derrick@port.ac.uk

General email address: complaintsadvice@port.ac.uk

You can contact the **Executive Director of Corporate Governance** by email: paul.mould@port.ac.uk.

The Students Union

Executive Officers

Phone: 023 9284 3859

Advice Service

Phone: 023 9284 3478

You may contact the Advice Service using the phone number given above or by going to Advice Centre webpages at upsu.net/advice and filling in the support request form on that page.

Useful information

Complaints webpages

port.ac.uk/about-us/contact-us/complaints

Halls 'Report a Problem' webpage

https://articlehub.port.ac.uk/portal/articles/1825?search_id=dbccb082-a631-42a3-acc2-4410886f5a7b

Other websites

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education - oiahe.org.uk

Financial Ombudsman Service - financial-ombudsman.org.uk/

Information Commissioner's Office - ico.org.uk