STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. ABOUT THE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1.1 The University

1.11 If the University decides that a Complaint is vexatious or frivolous, it may terminate consideration of that Complaint. Please see Appendix 2 of this Procedure for full information.

1.12 This Procedure has been implemented following consultation with RUSU (Reading University Students' Union).

1.13 Terms used in this Procedure are set out in more detail in the Glossary in Appendix 1.

2. HOW TO RAISE A COMPLAINT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE

2.1 Where early and informal resolution of your concern has not been possible, as set out in paragraph 3, you can make a Complaint under this Procedure.

2.2 This Procedure comprises three stages:

2.2.1 Stage 1: an initial consideration of your Complaint, with an emphasis on conciliation and local resolution. This stage will not be appropriate for all Complaints.

2.2.2 Stage 2: a more formal procedure, requiring detailed investigation, which may include mediation.

2.2.3 Stage 3: a request for a review of Stage 2.

2.3 This Procedure is for all Students registered with the University. If you wish to make a Complaint you must invoke Stage 1 within 3 calendar months of any alleged incident which is the cause of your Complaint.

2.4 If you have left the University either through completion of studies or because you have withdrawn for any other reason, you may also raise a Complaint under this Procedure within 3 calendar months of the alleged incident. This means that your Complaint may be raise after the end of your studies, provided it is within the 3 month time limit.

2.5 You may raise issues which may also be covered by different University procedures – for example a related appeal against an academic misconduct decision when pursuing a Complaint under this Procedure. In these circumstances the University has discretion to decide how to progress matters in the best interests of all parties involved. This may involve deciding which matter should take precedence or whether interlinked matters can be considered together under one procedure.

2.6 You are encouraged to seek independent and confidential advice and support as set out at Appendix 3 of this Procedure, particularly where you wish to raise a complaint at Stage 2 or beyond of this process.

2.7 Complaints can be wide-ranging and might include, but not be limited to:

2.7.1 teaching and supervision;

2.7.2 general unfair treatment or inappropriate or poor delivery of University services by a Staff member;

2.7.3

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4.1.2 If you are unsure about what to do, you should contact the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team.

5. WHAT IS THE FORMAL PROCESS FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT?

5.1 Stage 1 – Local Early Resolution

5.1.1 The University expects that most Complaints can be resolved locally in Schools or Functions through open and straightforward discussion and negotiation between the Student and Staff at the point closest to where the matter originated.

5.1.2 If informal resolution under paragraph 4 has not been successful or was not appropriate, you should raise a Stage 1 Complaint by emailing the relevant member(s) of Staff from your University email account. If you are unsure who to contact, email studentcomplaints@reading.ac.uk. When reporting, you should:

(a) Be specific about your Complaint and describe it succinctly;

(b) Provide supporting documentary evidence where available and appropriate; and

(c) State the outcome you are requesting, being clear and realistic.

5.1.3 If you request a meeting the relevant Staff member(s) will arrange this promptly and discuss your Complaint with you.

5.1.4 Stage 1 will normally result in one or more of the following outcomes:

(a) A solution to your Complaint;

(b) An explanation where your desired outcome cannot be achieved;

(c) An apology, where it is appropriate to do so;

5.1.5 The University may decide that it is not appropriate to consider your Complaint locally and ask you to submit a Stage 2 Complaint within 10 working days. Examples of reasons why the University may consider that the Complaint is not suitable for local consideration include, but are not limited to where:

(a) a detailed investigation is required;

(b) you are seeking a financial outcome; or

(c) the Complaint is of a sufficiently serious nature.

5.1.6 Where it is reasonable to do so, or at your request, the Staff member(s) should issue a written outcome of this stage of the Procedure within 5 working days.

5.1.7 If you are dissatisfied with the Stage 1 outcome and you wish to pursue the matter more formally as Stage 2 Complaint, or if the University has deemed that it is not appropriate to consider the issue Under Stage 1, you should submit a Stage 2 Complaint in accordance with paragraph 5.2 of this Procedure.

5.2 Stage 2 Complaint

5.2.1 If, after having tried to resolve the matter through Stage 1 you remain dissatisfied or you have been told to do so by the University, you should initiate a Stage 2 Complaint by using the Student Complaint Form within 10 working days of the completion of Stage 1 of this Procedure or the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team advising you to do so. You should email the completed Student Complaint Form, and any supporting

evidence to the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team at studentcomplaints@reading.ac.uk.

5.2.2 Within 3 working days a member of the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team will respond to you to acknowledge receipt of your Complaint.

5.2.3 If you have not taken steps to address the issue locally under Stage 1, a member of the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team may advise this as a first course of action and offer a referral into Stage 1 of this Procedure or support in facilitating mediation where appropriate. This will not apply where the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team have already determined that the matter should be escalated to Stage 2 as set out at paragraph 5.1.5 of this Procedure.

5.2.4 For your Complaint to be considered under Stage 2, a

6.2

10. COMPLAINTS MADE BY A THIRD PARTY ON BEHALF OF A STUDENT

10.1 The University would always encourage Students who wish to make a Complaint to deal with the University directly. The University cannot accept Complaints made by a third party on behalf of a Student unless a signed statement by the Student is sent to the University as part of that Complaint. This includes Complaints made by a parent, spouse, guardian, or partner of a Student.

10.2 The University will not accept a Complaint made by a third party on behalf of a Student where the Student has already made a Complaint on the same subject matter.

11. DOES THE UNIVERSITY ACCEPT ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS?

11.1 The University has discretion to consider Complaints received anonymously. The University encourages any Student to raise a concern openly without fear of suffering any disadvantage as a Complaint made anonymously could impede any investigation and communication of the outcome. The University will only exercise its discretion to accept anonymous Complaints in exceptional circumstances. In exercising that discretion, the following factors will be considered:

11.1.1 the seriousness of the Complaint;

11.1.2 the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources;

11.1.3 whether enough information has been provided to enable any further action;

11.1.4 whether a fair investigation can be undertaken;

11.1.5 whether anonymity can reasonably be maintained; and

11.1.6 whether resolution can be found through an informal process.

12. CAN A COMPLAINT BE ESCALATED TO THE UNIVERSITY VICE-CHANCELLOR OR CHANCELLOR?

12.1 Complaints will only be considered in the manner set out in this Procedure. The Vice-Chancellor and Chancellor of the University do not consider, investigate, or decide Complaint outcomes. In the event that a Student or third party contact any University officer or officers who are not responsible for handling a Complaint they will be referred back to this Procedure and no further action will be taken unless they agree to their Complaint being handled through the proper channels.

13. HOW DOES THE UNIVERSITY MONITOR COMPLAINTS?

13.1 The University keeps a record of all formal Complaints raised by Students and responds proactively where appropriate.

13.2 The Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team will report on the outcomes of this procedure annually to the Sub-Committee for Delivery and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (DELT) and they will decide what if any wider corrective action or policy changes should be recommended. These recommendations will be reported to the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience and Senate annually.

13.3 Overall responsibility for this Procedure sits with the Head of Governance.

Version control

Version	Section	Keeper	Reviewed	Approving authority	Approval date	Start date	Next review
1.0	AGS	MW	3 years	UBTLSE			
1.1	AGS	MW	3 years	UBTLSE	Jun 2022	Sep 2022	Spring 2025

APPENDIX 3

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILBLE TO STUDENTS WHEN BRINGING A COMPLAINT?

1. Any Student using this Procedure is entitled to seek advice and support on raising a Complaint from the RUSU Advice Service and the University strongly encourages all Students to access this service before initiating this Procedure. RUSU Advisers are professional staff with knowledge and experience of the University's procedures who can offer confidential and independent advice on the process, support Students in the preparation of their Complaint and attend meetings under this Procedure as a Representative. Details of the RUSU Advice Service can be found at Academic Advice | RUSU.

2. During all stages of this Procedure, a Student may be accompanied to meetings by a Representative, as defined in this Procedure. Please note that only in exceptional circumstances and by prior agreement may a Student be accompanied by someone who is external to the University (see definition above for further details).

3. Where a Student has protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 the University can make appropriate adjustments in order to prevent the Student being

APPENDIX 4

IS THE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE CONFIDENTIAL?

1. The University will process all personal information in accordance with its Data Protection Policy.

2. Any Complaint raised by a Student and any response should be treated with appropriate confidentiality by all parties at all stages of this Procedure. This includes witnesses to the procedure as well as the Student raising the Complaint, those the