

# Student Complaints

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## Procedure

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## Table of Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b><i>Summary .....</i></b>	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b>2.</b>	<b><i>Principles .....</i></b>	<b><i>2</i></b>
<b>3.</b>	<b><i>What are the possible outcomes of a complaint? .....</i></b>	<b><i>3</i></b>
<b>4.</b>	<b><i>Stages of Procedure.....</i></b>	<b><i>3</i></b>
4.1	Stage 1: informal direct complaint at source.....	4
4.2	Stage 2: formal complaint to the Complaints Officer .....	4
4.3	Stage 3: review .....	5
<b>6.</b>	<b><i>Other Complaint Options.....</i></b>	<b><i>8</i></b>
6.1	Group Complaints .....	8
6.3	Complaints outside of the expected timeframe .....	8
<b>7.</b>	<b><i>Final Arbitration.....</i></b>	<b><i>9</i></b>
7.1	Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) .....	9
7.2	Completion of Procedures Letter .....	9
<b>8.</b>	<b><i>How will my personal information be dealt with? .....</i></b>	<b><i>10</i></b>
<b>9.</b>	<b><i>Additional Information and Support.....</i></b>	<b><i>11</i></b>
<b>10.</b>	<b><i>Guidelines for Members of Staff .....</i></b>	<b><i>11</i></b>
	<b><i>Appendix A: Overview of UCEM Complaints Procedure .....</i></b>	<b><i>13</i></b>

# Student Complaints Procedure

## 1. Summary

The University College of Estate Management (UCEM) is committed to providing a high-quality learning experience through its programme provision and range of services.

However, no service is perfect: mistakes can happen; things could be arranged better.

Students are encouraged to let us know if things could be improved. There are lots of ways to let us know what needs to be improved, from speaking to your Student Representatives, for students studying on taught programmes responding to surveys on your modules or responding to the annual survey.

Sometimes, you may feel that the issue you have experienced warrants making a complaint. UCEM welcomes constructive complaints and encourages a positive environment where complaints can be dealt with effectively.

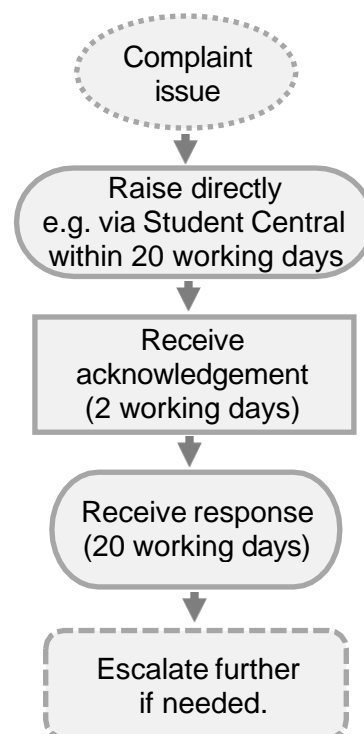
## Definitions

A 'complaint' is defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about UCEM's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by, or on behalf of, UCEM'.*

An 'appeal' is *'a request for a review of a decision taken by an individual or academic body charged with making decisions about students' progression, assessment, and awards'.* Examples include appealing against results, mitigating circumstances decisions, disciplinary or academic misconduct decisions. Appeals are dealt with through the [Student Appeals Procedure \(opens new window\)](#) for undergraduate and postgraduate taught and through the PGR Student Appeals Procedure for postgraduate research students. Normally a formal complaint cannot be raised whilst a matter is in the process of being considered as an appeal.

## How do I raise a complaint?

- You should first raise your complaint directly with the department at the source of the complaint, as soon as possible and normally within 20 working days of the issue arising. For example, if you have a complaint about a module, contact your module or programme leader directly, or if you have a complaint about admissions, contact the admissions team directly. If you are unsure who to raise your complaint to, you can raise an enquiry in Student Central. If you are a Postgraduate Research Student, you can raise an enquiry with the Graduate Research School (GRS).
- You will receive an acknowledgement within 2 working days.
- The relevant department at the source of the complaint will respond to your complaint (classified as a Stage 1 informal complaint) within 20 working days.
- The aim is to resolve the problem directly and informally at the earliest opportunity. It is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be resolved in this manner. However, if you are not satisfied with the department's response, there are further options for escalation.



# Student Complaints Procedure

## Worried about making a complaint?

We know that sometimes students worry about raising complaints, but we work to ensure that no student is disadvantaged because they raised a complaint. We believe in an open, fair, and accessible complaints procedure and we try to resolve your complaint promptly, fairly, and courteously. If we are not aware that there is a problem, we cannot put it right. Alerting us to problems can also help other students and future students to get a better service. By raising a complaint where you feel there is real justification, you are helping yourself, helping other students and helping UCEM. You can see examples of [How UCEM responds to Student Complaints](#) on the UCEM website.

## 2. Principles

- 2.1 The [UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(opens new window\)](#) requires that UCEM have fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students. In practice, UCEM ensures its Student Complaints Procedure follows the [principles of a good complaints process as set out by the](#) i.e. Accessible, Clear, Fair, Independent, Confidential, Inclusive, Flexible, Proportionate, Timely and Improving the Student Experience.
- 2.2 The Student Complaints Procedure applies to all individuals who are applying to study or are studying on UCEM programmes. Former students may complain according to the timelines set out in this Procedure.
- 2.3 UCEM aims to handle complaints in a manner which:
  - is clear and accessible, ensuring, as far as possible, that the parties involved are on an equal footing procedurally and able to participate fully in the proceedings, including assisting or otherwise facilitating the student in presentation of their case;
  - is proportionate and encourages early, informal resolution nearest to the source of the complaint;
  - is efficient, avoiding delay as far as is compatible with fairness and the proper consideration of the matter;
  - is fair and treats complaints courteously and with appropriate seriousness, sympathy, and confidentiality;
  - safeguards the interests and wellbeing of all those associated with a complaint; and
  - where relevant, ensures that UCEM practice improves as a result.
- 2.4 The procedures outlined below have been established with the aim, where possible, of resolving complaints informally and through negotiation between those individuals who are immediately concerned with the issue. UCEM recognises, however, that some complaints cannot be resolved by informal means alone and may require formal intervention. The formal procedure is therefore available to students in the event that informal pursuit of a complaint proves unsatisfactory.
- 2.5 UCEM is confident that the overwhelming majority of students will use this procedure in a positive spirit. However, it is possible that a very small minority may misuse the procedure. In exceptional circumstances, therefore, UCEM reserves the right to investigate complaints, and then to decline to consider any that are merely vexatious or abusive (including complaints made against staff due a protected characteristic held by the staff member).

## Student Complaints Procedure

UCEM will provide a brief response outlining the reasons for deciding not to investigate further but will not enter into lengthy correspondence about such cases. Making repeated and/or unfounded false, malicious and/or vexatious complaints may be considered misconduct and result in the application of the [Disciplinary Procedure \(opens new window\)](#).

- 2.6 While using this procedure, UCEM expects that students and staff act reasonably and fairly towards each other. Unacceptable behaviour, as outlined in the [UCEM Code of Practice Chapter on Student Academic and Behavioural Conduct](#) (opens new window), will not be tolerated. UCEM reserves the right to pause investigation into a complaint if the student does not act reasonably and fairly with those involved in the complaint investigation.
- 2.7 The complaints procedure is a stand-alone process. Any student raising a complaint should continue to engage with their studies, including any resubmissions on the premise that the original decision stands until their complaint outcome is provided. Engagement with the complaints procedure will not be recognized or considered as mitigating circumstances in accordance with UCEM's [Mitigating Circumstances Procedure](#) (opens in new window)

### 3. What are the possible outcomes of a complaint?

- 3.1.1. When making any sort of complaint, it is always worth thinking about how the complaint can be resolved and what UCEM can do to address the problem. This can help you when writing the complaint and makes it clear to the person addressing the complaint what outcome is desired.
- 3.1.2. Having considered your complaint, UCEM will find that your complaint is either:
  - Justified;
  - Partly justified; or
  - Not justified.
- 3.1.3. UCEM will ensure, as far as we reasonably can, that where a complaint is found to be justified or partly justified, appropriate corrective action is taken.
- 3.1.4. All outcomes will include clarification on the decision-making process.

### 4. Stages of Procedure

If you wish to make a complaint, the steps that should be taken are detailed below. If your complaint is about staff conduct, see instead [section 5](#) for the procedure.

Before making a complaint, it is recommended that you seek advice and guidance from a trusted source, such as the Student Support, your Apprenticeship Outcomes Officer, relevant module leader or for postgraduate research students from your personal tutor. The Complaints Officer will be pleased to provide impartial advice regarding the Student Complaints Procedure.

If a complaint is deemed by UCEM to be of a particularly serious nature, UCEM reserves the right to move the complaint to formal investigation at the most appropriate stage of the procedures from the beginning.

Please note that there is a separate process for complaints for employers of apprenticeship students please see UCEM's [Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers of Apprentices](#) (opens new window).

## Student Complaints Procedure

### 4.1 Stage 1: informal direct complaint at source

- 4.1.1. The aim of Stage 1 is to resolve the problem directly and informally at the earliest opportunity. It is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be resolved this way.
- 4.1.2. You should first raise your complaint directly with the department at the source of the complaint, as soon as possible and normally within 20 working days of the issue arising. For example, if you have a complaint about a module, contact your module or programme leader directly; if you have a complaint about admissions, contact the admissions team directly; or if you have a complaint about your apprenticeship, you can contact your Apprenticeship Outcomes Officer directly. If you are unsure who to raise your complaint to, you can raise an enquiry in Student Central. If you are a Postgraduate Research Student, you can raise an enquiry with the Graduate Research School (GRS).
- 4.1.3. Where possible, you should raise your complaint immediately, and within 20 working days of the cause for complaint. Raising your complaint promptly means that a better investigation into your complaint can take place and usually means there will be more options available to UCEM to put the issue right.
- 4.1.4. You will receive an initial acknowledgement of your complaint within two working days.
- 4.1.5. Your complaint will be investigated by a member of staff from the department at the source of the complaint. They will provide you a full response to your complaint within 20 working days. They may provide this response verbally, or via a discussion forum or other media. If the response is provided verbally, a summary of the response will follow in writing.
- 4.1.6. We aim to resolve all complaints when you first raise them but, if you are not satisfied with the action taken at this level, you may choose to proceed to Stage 2 of the procedure within 20 working days of receiving the outcome of Stage 1. See section 4.2 for details on how to raise a Stage 2 complaint.
- 4.1.7. If you feel unable to approach the relevant department or Student Central to raise a Stage 1 complaint, please contact the Complaints Officer on [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk) and advise them of this.
- 4.1.8. The staff member responding to your Stage 1 complaint must also send a summary of the outcome to the Complaints Officer on [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk). The Complaints Officer will record this and, if appropriate, share it internally within UCEM to improve the student experience. This allows complaints to be recorded so trends can be identified and acted on to improve UCEM's service.

### 4.2 Stage 2: formal complaint to the Complaints Officer

- 4.2.1. You can raise a Stage 2 complaint if you are not satisfied with the action taken at Stage 1 within 20 working days of the Stage 1 response.
- 4.2.2. You can raise a Stage 2 complaint by completing the [Student Complaint Form](#) (downloads document) and submitting it, along with any relevant evidence, to the Complaints Officer on [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk). Alternatively, you can send the completed form and evidence to the following address:

The Complaints Officer,  
University College of Estate Management, Horizons,  
60 Queen's Road, Reading, RG1 4BS

## Student Complaints Procedure

- 4.2.3. Relevant evidence could include medical evidence, communication on the VLE or copies of relevant correspondence. All evidence received will be confidential, and only those who need to review the evidence as part of the complaints process will have access to the information.
- 4.2.4. You will receive an initial acknowledgement of your complaint within two working days.
- 4.2.5. For former students, UCEM reserves the right not to investigate a complaint at Stage 2 if it is initially raised significantly outside of expected timescales.
- 4.2.6. After a brief investigation by the Complaints Officer into the issues raised, the complainant will be contacted again to be advised of the timescale of the inquiry into the complaint.
- 4.2.7. The Complaints Officer will allocate your complaint to an 'Investigating Officer' to review your case. The 'Investigating Officer' will be a member of UCEM's Senior Leadership Team with no previous involvement in the case.
- 4.2.8. To investigate the complaint, the Investigating Officer will review all papers submitted and meet with relevant members of staff. The Investigating Officer may also speak with you if they need to clarify any facts of the complaint.
- 4.2.9. The Investigating Officer will normally provide you a response within 20 working days.
- 4.2.10. If you are not satisfied with the action taken at this level, you may choose to proceed to Stage 3 of the procedure within 20 working days of receiving the outcome of Stage 2. See section 4.3 for details on how to raise a Stage 3 complaint.
- 4.2.11. If you are a postgraduate research student on an Open University validated award and are not satisfied with the action taken at Stage 2 of UCEM's procedure, you can escalate your complaint to the Open University by contacting [studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk](mailto:studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk). See section 4.4 for details on how to raise your complaint to The Open University.
- 4.2.12. The Complaints Officer will record the outcome of your complaint and, if appropriate, share internally within UCEM to improve the student experience.

### 4.3 Stage 3: review for Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Students

- 4.3.1. You can raise a Stage 3 review if you are not satisfied with the action taken at Stage 2.
- 4.3.2. To raise a Stage 3 review, contact UCEM's Complaints Officer on [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk) within **20 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 response and request that your case is referred for Stage 3 Review
- 4.3.3. UCEM will acknowledge receipt of your request within 2 working days.
- 4.3.4. The Complaints Officer will allocate a Stage 3 Reviewer to consider your appeal.
- 4.3.5. The Stage 3 review is completed by an external independent reviewer, normally an Independent Trustee from the Board of Trustees, who sits outside UCEM's management structure.
- 4.3.6. The Reviewer will normally provide a response within 20 working days.



## Student Complaints Procedure

4.3.7. The Stage 3 Review is confined to:

- A review of whether the appropriate procedures were followed at Stage 2 of the complaint.

A consideration of whether the decision was reasonable in all circumstances.

- A review of any new material evidence which the student was unable, for valid reasons (to be decided by the Reviewer), to provide earlier in the procedure.

4.3.8. A member of UCEM's Executive will also consider the report from the Stage 3 Reviewer when providing UCEM's response to your Stage 3 complaint.

4.3.9. This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure. For all outcomes you will be issued with a 'Completion of Procedures' letter detailing UCEM's final response to the complaint within 28 days of the Stage 3 outcome. The Completion of Procedures letter is a requirement of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and confirms that the complaint has reached the end of the UCEM's complaints procedure.

4.3.10. If you are not satisfied with the response at Stage 3 your complaint may be eligible for consideration by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. ([How to complain to the Office of the Independent](#) Adjudicator (OIA) (opens new window)).

### 4.4 Stage 3: review for Postgraduate Research (PGR) Students

4.4.1. This section outlines the process for postgraduate research students on an Open University validated award to raise their complaint to The Open University (OU) on completion of Stage 2 of UCEM's procedure.

4.4.2. To raise a Stage 3 review, contact the OU's Student Case Work Office on [studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk](mailto:studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk) within **20 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 response and request that your case is referred for Stage 3 Review.

4.4.3. The OU will acknowledge receipt of your request within 3 working days.

4.4.4. The OU Student Case Work Office will normally provide a response within 20 working days.

4.4.5. Where a request for a review has been accepted, an OU Casework Manager will conduct a review on behalf of the OU Vice-Chancellor's Delegate and submit the report for review. The Stage 3 Review is confined to:

- A review of whether the appropriate procedures were followed at Stage 2 of the complaint.
- A consideration of whether the decision was reasonable in all circumstances.
- A review of any new material evidence which the student was unable, for valid reasons (to be decided by the Reviewer), to provide earlier in the procedure.

4.4.6. Once the OU Vice Chancellor's Delegate has reviewed and approved the report, the OU Student Case Work Office will send a copy of the report to you, to UCEM, and to the OU Director, Academic Services.



## Student Complaints Procedure

- 4.4.7. If the UCEM decision is confirmed following the review, the OU will send a completion of procedures letter together with the OU Vice-Chancellor's Delegate's report.
- 4.4.8. If the decision of the OU Vice-Chancellor's Delegate is to set aside the decision of UCEM, in whole or in part, the OU will refer the complaint back to UCEM, with recommendations for reconsideration of the complaint. UCEM will contact you directly within 15 working days of the referral confirming how the OU's recommendations will be implemented. A copy of the UCEM correspondence will be sent to the OU Student Case Work Office.
- 4.4.9. Following the OU Stage 3 Review the OU will send you a completion of procedures letter which confirms that both UCEM's and OU internal processes have been concluded. If you are not satisfied with the response at Stage 3 your complaint may be eligible for consideration by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator as outlined in section 7 below.

## 5. Student Complaints about UCEM Staff Conduct

- 5.1 If your complaint is about the conduct of a member of staff, you must submit a formal complaint by submitting a completed [Student Complaint Form \(opens new window\)](#) to [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk) as soon as possible and normally within 20 working days.
- 5.2 You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt within 2 working days.
- 5.3 For former students, UCEM reserves the right not to investigate a complaint about staff conduct if it is initially raised significantly outside of expected timescales.
- 5.4 Your complaint will initially be reviewed by the Director of HR who will determine who is the best person to investigate your complaint. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the Director of HR to lead the investigation, either informally or formally in accordance with the UCEM Staff Disciplinary Procedure.
- 5.5 To investigate your complaint, the Investigating Officer will review all papers submitted and meet with relevant members of staff. The Investigating Officer may also speak with you if they need to clarify any facts of the complaint.
- 5.6 We will try to provide you with a written response to your formal complaint within 20 working days of receipt of your complaint as required by Stage 2 of the procedure (see section 4.2). However, sometimes the nature of employment-related investigations means they can be complex and lengthy, and UCEM is required to adhere to employment legislation and statutory guidance throughout the process. In these cases, UCEM will aim to provide you with a response as soon as reasonably possible and will keep you updated on progress.
- 5.7 Due to the confidential nature of employment investigations, UCEM may not be able to disclose the findings of the investigation, nor confirm what action has, may, or may not be taken as a result of the outcome of the investigation. This includes whether UCEM will deal with the complaint on an informal or formal basis with the member of staff. However, UCEM will still provide a formal written response outlining UCEM's position in as much detail as is possible to give.
- 5.8 If it is stated that any part of the complaint response is provided on a confidential basis, you have an obligation to keep this information confidential.
- 5.9 The Complaints Officer will record the outcome of your complaint and, if appropriate, share internally within UCEM to improve the student experience.

## Student Complaints Procedure

- 5.10 If you are not satisfied with the action taken at this level, you may choose to proceed to Stage 3 of the procedure within 20 working days of receiving the outcome of Stage 2. See section 4.3 for details on how to raise a Stage 3 complaint for students on taught programmes of study, and section 4.4 for Postgraduate Research Students.

## 6. Other Complaint Options

### 6.1 Group Complaints

- 6.1.1. If a group of students are dissatisfied and wish to make a complaint, a group complaint may be submitted, following the usual complaints process. However, a representative should be nominated from the group who will be the contact person with UCEM. It will be the responsibility of the representative to liaise with the other students who are part of the group complaint. Each student forming part of the group complaint needs to confirm (e.g., via a signature, or email) that they consent to the representative acting on their behalf.

### 6.2 Complaint about another student

- 6.2.1. If you need to make a complaint about another student, you can contact the Complaints Officer in the first instance on [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk). The Complaints Officer will then provide advice on which of UCEM's student behaviour procedures is most appropriate to use, for example, the Anti-bullying and Harassment Procedure, the Disciplinary Procedure, the Academic Misconduct Procedure or Plagiarism and Research Misconduct Policy for Postgraduate Research Students.

### 6.3 Complaints outside of the expected timeframe

- 6.3.1. UCEM will respond to all Stage 1 complaints even if made after the deadline. However, you should be aware that if a complaint is made outside the deadlines stated, this may hinder our ability to fully investigate the complaint or provide appropriate outcomes. UCEM will only consider Stage 2 or 3 complaints made after the deadlines in exceptional circumstances where there is medical evidence, such as mental health issues, which has prevented submission. Such requests will be considered in consultation with the Disability and Welfare Manager, to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.3.2. For former students, UCEM reserves the right not to investigate a complaint at Stage 2 if it is initially raised significantly outside of expected timescales.

### 6.4 Anonymous Complaints

- 6.4.1. Only in exceptional circumstances can an anonymous complaint be made, and there must be exceptional reasons why the complaint has to be anonymous. These should be discussed with the Complaints Officer in the first instance.
- 6.4.2. Individuals who are the subject of a complaint are entitled to know who is complaining and the nature of the complaint. If you are at all concerned about this, you should get advice from the Complaints Officer. If, in exceptional circumstances and for justifiable documented reasons, you wish to remain anonymous, this may be considered, for example, in the initial stages of harassment procedures. However, the Complaints Officer will normally wish to undertake confidential discussions with you for further information.

# Student Complaints Procedure

## 6.5 Complaints raised on a student's behalf.

- 6.5.1. You should normally submit your own complaint because you are the expert in your own experiences.
- 6.5.2. However, if you have a disability or other impairment which makes you unable to make your complaint effectively, please contact the Complaints Officer on [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk) for details on how to appoint a representative.
- 6.5.3. If you are an apprentice:
  - While your employer cannot raise a complaint “on your behalf”, we do have a separate [Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers of Apprentices](#) where your employer can raise a complaint with us. However, if your employer raises the complaint, we will deal directly with them and we will not provide you a copy of our response.
  - You can choose to make an individual student complaint using this procedure even if your employer also chooses to use separate Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers of Apprentices to make a complaint.
  - If an issue is raised by both you and your apprentice employer, the issue will be investigated using both this procedure and the Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers of Apprentices. Separate responses will be provided to each party, taking into account the different perspectives, the level of information that can be shared, and the different resolutions appropriate for apprentices and employers.

## 7. Final Arbitration

### 7.1 Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

If you have completed the three stages of UCEM's Student Complaints Procedure and are still not satisfied, you can choose to raise your complaint, free of charge, to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) within 12 months of being issued with a Completion of Procedures letter from UCEM.

The OIA is an independent body set up to review student complaints about higher education providers. For further information about the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education and how to submit a complaint please visit the [OIA website \(opens new window\)](#). Please note there are some complaints that the OIA cannot look at and these are outlined on their website.

### 7.2 Completion of Procedures Letter

A Completion of Procedures Letter will be issued, or offered, to the student complaining at the end of the internal procedures, when there are no matters outstanding, and the final decision has been reached by UCEM regarding the matter raised. The Completion of Procedures Letter for Postgraduate Research Students will be issued by the OU. This will confirm one of the following complaint outcomes:

- a) Justified;
- b) Partially justified;
- c) Not justified.

## Student Complaints Procedure

d) Submitted out of time.

The letter will contain the following information:

- Date of completion of internal procedures.
- Summary of the issues raised.
- Summary of the issues considered.
- Details of UCEM's final decision for students on taught programmes of study, or the OU's final decision for Postgraduate Research Students.
- What procedures/ regulations were applied.
- Details of final (external) arbitration, including the deadline for submission.

Completion of Procedures Letters will be issued no more than 28 days after the completion of UCEM's internal procedures for students on taught programmes of study, or no more than 28 days after the completion of the OU's and UCEM's internal procedures for Postgraduate Research Students. However, students may request a Completion of Procedures Letter in advance of this, as appropriate.

Completion of Procedures Letters will not be issued while there are still outstanding matters under the same procedure.

### 7.3 Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) – Apprentices only

- 7.3.1. If you are an apprentice student and have completed all internal procedures and are still not satisfied, you can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The ESFA may be able to consider your complaint under their [Complaints Procedure](#).
- 7.3.2. Please note that the ESFA will not usually investigate complaints more than 12 months after the original decision or action has been taken.
- 7.3.3. A complaint may be escalated to the ESFA via email to [customer.complaints@education.gov.uk](mailto:customer.complaints@education.gov.uk), or in writing to:
- Customer Service Team,  
Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT
- 7.3.4. See also: [the ESFA Procedure for dealing with complaints about providers](#) (opens new window).

## 8. How will my personal information be dealt with?

- 8.1 UCEM will treat students' personal information gathered on complaints confidentially, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Sensitive personal information gathered through the complaint will only be disclosed to those who need to investigate the complaint and provide a response. Relevant case information will be disclosed within UCEM only to support providing a good student experience. Postgraduate research students' information will be shared with the OU to support the investigation of complaints raised to the OU at stage 3 of this procedure.

## **Student Complaints Procedure**

- 8.2 Identifiable student information on complaints will be retained for 3 years from the date of completion of the complaints process. Completion may occur at stage 1, 2, or 3, depending on whether you have decided to progress your complaint or not.
- 8.3 To preserve the confidentiality of others, you are asked not to include unnecessary personal information about third parties such as family members when submitting a complaint. Under the GDPR, UCEM is required to notify third parties if it is processing their information, so please think carefully before submitting personal information about yourselves or others. You may wish to seek advice from UCEM's Data Protection Officer or Complaints Officer.
- 8.4 In line with guidance from the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Students in Higher Education (OIA), the Complaints Officer will record all appeal outcomes. Monitoring complaints is an effective way of helping UCEM to ensure that procedures are fair and are working as intended.
- 8.5 UCEM may be required to inform relevant Professional Statutory and Accrediting Bodies about information relating to complaints.
- 8.6 Details of complaints, including outcome, are reviewed on a quarterly basis by UCEM Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees. The complaint log is analysed for continuous improvement in processes and provision. An anonymised summary of complaints and how they are managed are reported annually to UCEM's Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee. Numbers of complaints raised by postgraduate research students will be shared with the OU as required.

## **9. Additional Information and Support**

- 9.1 The Complaints Officer is happy to provide impartial advice on the complaint's procedure, how to present your complaint and to help you if you struggle to formulate ideas in writing. You can contact the Complaints Officer on [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk).
- 9.2 If you are an apprenticeship student, your Apprenticeship Officer can also provide advice and guidance.
- 9.3 If you are a postgraduate research student, you can contact the [Graduate Research School](#).
- 9.4 UCEM has a dedicated Disability and Welfare Team that can provide information, advice, and guidance to support disabled students to fully engage with UCEM processes. If students are experiencing any barriers to engaging in a process or are finding their mental health is being impacted, they can contact [wellbeing@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@ucem.ac.uk) for support.

## **10. Guidelines for Members of Staff**

### **General**

- 10.1 All members of staff must encourage a positive environment where contact with, and feedback from, students is welcomed, and constructive complaints can be dealt with effectively.
- 10.2 All members of staff must have a good working knowledge of the Complaints Procedure and its underlying principles. UCEM will notify staff of where this procedure can be accessed and will advise of any updates.

## **Student Complaints Procedure**

- 10.3 All members of staff must have due regard to treating students' personal information gathered on complaints confidentially, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Sensitive personal information gathered through the complaint should be appropriately stored and only disclosed to those who need to investigate the complaint and provide a response. Relevant case information can be disclosed within UCEM only to support providing a good student experience.
- 10.4 Complaints should be dealt with as near to the source as possible, in a timely manner and progressed to the next stage of the complaints procedures as appropriate.
- 10.5 Staff are encouraged to speak with students directly to clarify their understanding of the complaint.
- 10.6 Members of staff involved in handling the various stages of complaints are obliged to ensure that student complaining is not disadvantaged either in the manner of treatment or in discrimination in academic assessment as a result of raising the complaint.
- 10.7 All complaints must be reported to the Complaints Officer via [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk) so they can be recorded, trends can be identified and acted on to improve UCEM's service.

### **The Complaints Officer**

- 10.8 Clear written records of the various stages of the complaint's procedure must be confidentially maintained, in accordance with data protection guidance, and with a note of decisions and actions taken (with dates) and a record of outcomes.
- 10.9 The Complaints Officer must ensure that any members of staff involved in a student complaint are kept informed of the outcome of each stage of the process and of how the matter has been resolved, including the Apprenticeship Team for all complaints involving apprenticeship students (via the Director of Apprenticeships).
- 10.10 The Complaints Officer will provide information to the OU to support the investigation and their oversight of complaints raised by postgraduate research students.

# Student Complaints Procedure

## Appendix A: Overview of UCEM Complaints Procedure

**For Postgraduate Research (PGR) Students only:** Postgraduate Research Students on an Open University validated award can, following completion of Stage 2 of UCEM's procedure escalate their complaint to the Open University by contacting [studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk](mailto:studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk).

### Appendix A: Overview of UCEM Complaints Procedure

