

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE FOR NON ACADEMIC and NON ACADEMIC-RELATED MATTERS

1. OVERVIEW

- 1.1. Situations may arise where students are dissatisfied with an aspect of their experience at Richmond. The university welcomes feedback from students – if there is a genuine problem, Richmond officials need to be informed about it in order to respond.
- 1.2. The *Complaints and Appeals Procedure for Non Academic and Non Academic-Related Matters* applies when a student has a complaint or concern about a matter related to the broad context of the non-academic student experience at Richmond. In line with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, a complaint is understood as, “an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a university’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the university”.
- 1.3. When a student has a complaint or concern about an academic matter **not** related to a specific grade or set of grades for a course or programme or to academic progression these are dealt with under the [Academic and Academic Related Complaints Procedure for Matters Not Related to Grading \(AARCP\)](#). When a question or issues related to a grade or progression arises this must be addressed through the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#).
- 1.4. On occasion the University may make a decision regarding a specific student or group of students that is not specifically related to an academic or academic related matter as outlined in III above. This may include disciplinary matters under the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Where a decision is not covered by either the academic and academic-related appeals procedures or by the *Student Code of Conduct* a student may request a review of a decision (‘appeal’) in any area including, but not limited to, those listed under 1.8 below.
- 1.5. The information in this document outlines the procedure to follow should you have an issue or a complaint. This document does not override the wider legal obligations of the university or to employees under contract, or the obligations of students and employees to the University.
- 1.6. ALL ISSUES OR COMPLAINTS WILL BE TREATED IN STRICT CONFIDENCE AND THE UNIVERSITY CONFIRMS THAT BRINGING A COMPLAINT OR RAISING AN ISSUE WILL NOT HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON YOUR ACADEMIC TREATMENT.

- 1.7. The University welcomes input from students as this enables us to develop and improve our academic offerings and the academic support we provide to students. However if the university receives a formal complaint which is demonstrably false or vexatious it reserves the right to take action under the *Student Code of Conduct*.
- 1.8. Non Academic and non academic-related complaints may include, but are not limited to:
- a. Admissions, Marketing and Recruitment
 - b. Estates and Facilities, including accommodation and catering
 - c. Financial matters
 - d. Computing and information technology
 - e. Student Affairs
 - f. Issues or complaints related to official university polices or procedures
 - g. Other matters

2. REMIT AND LIMITATIONS OF THE COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURES

- 2.1 The Complaints and Appeals Procedures only apply to those areas where Richmond, The American International University in London has responsibility.
- 2.2 The University and its staff are required to work with a range of external bodies, and delays or problems may arise because of issues or problems in external bodies which are beyond Richmond's control. Where possible and appropriate the University will provide advice and support to assist students in their interaction with external bodies, but a complaint or appeal is only possible when it can be demonstrated that the University is responsible or has made an error.
- 2.3 For the avoidance of doubt, a student may not make a Complaint or an Appeal under this policy about an error, issue, or problem which arises because of the policies, procedures, decisions or working of an external body.**
- 2.4 If a student wishes to complain about the service of another organisation provided on behalf of the university, the student should contact the appropriate organisation directly. The University will make reasonable efforts to ensure that those organisations have appropriate complaints procedures in place.
- 2.5 Students may also complain directly to the University about a service provided by another organisation, which the student feels has impacted on his or her learning experience.

3. MARKETING, RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS (MRA)

- 3.1** Early Resolution. If you have an issue related to the admissions process, the way the university is marketing or how the recruitment system operates you are advised to raise this with the relevant member of the MRA team in the first instance, who will attempt an informal resolution of the issue. If you do not wish to speak with a member of staff or are not satisfied with the staff member's response, you should arrange to meet with the Director of Recruitment and Admissions.
- 3.2** Remember also that the Admissions and Recruitment Policy Committee holds regular meetings and the Student Government is represented on this committee, and you can also raise issues at the Student Experience Committee.
- 3.3** Formal Stage. If you wish to make a formal complaint about a specific issue this should be made to the Director of Recruitment and Admissions, in writing. The complaint should provide:
- a.** a detailed description of the issues and, where possible, provide evidence to support the complaint;
 - b.** you should also indicate what outcome you are looking for by making a complaint: are you raising the matter for information, are you looking for a change of some kind to the curriculum or the assessment methods etc.;
 - c.** the Director of Recruitment and Admissions will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, normally in 10 working days, and provide a provisional response to the issues you raise. This response may also indicate what formal action, if any, the Department will take;
 - d.** note that if the complaint concerns the Director of Recruitment and Admissions, it should be referred to the President.
- 3.4** The Review Stage. If you are not satisfied with the Director of Recruitment and Admission's response you should resubmit your complaint, along with the response of the Director, within five working days of receipt, to the Office of the President. The President will review the complaint and, where necessary, make recommendations for further action at the relevant University committee or board.
- 3.5** Should an error, an example of bad practice, or failing be identified the University will take timely action to resolve the issue.
- 3.6** If you wish to appeal an admission decision please see the University [Admissions Policy and Summary of Practice](#)
- 3.7** In line with OIA expectations, once a student has finished the University's internal complaints or appeals procedures, the University will promptly send a [Completion of Procedures Letter](#) to the student. This Letter will set out clearly what issues have been considered and the University's final decision:

Please note that the OIA will not consider complaints related to Admissions if made by an individual who has not been admitted by the University.

4. ESTATES AND FACILITIES

4.1 Estates and Facilities complaints may include, but are not limited to:

- Accommodation;
- Catering;
- University facilities including lighting, bathrooms and toilets;
- External facilities including gardens;
- any other matter related to the physical infrastructure of the University.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Complaints related to classrooms, academic facilities, library resources, etc. are covered by *Academic and Academic Related Complaints Procedure* Section 4.
- Complaints about room allocation, sharing and other issues not related to the physical condition of accommodation are the responsibility of Student Affairs.
- Students are reminded that they may access the online reporting system when an issue occurs

4.2 Early Resolution. If you have an issue or complaint related to Estates and Facilities you are advised to raise this with the relevant member of the estates and facilities team in the first instance, who will attempt an informal resolution of the issue. If you do not wish to speak with a member of staff or are not satisfied with the staff member's response, you should arrange to meet with the Head of Estates and Facilities.

4.3 Remember also that Estates and Facilities Committee holds regular meetings and the Student Government is represented on this committee, and you can also raise issues at the Student Experience Committee.

4.4 Formal Stage. If you wish to make a formal complaint about a specific issue this should be made to the Head of Estates and Facilities, in writing. The complaint should provide:

- a. A detailed description of the issues and, where possible, provide evidence to support the complaint.
- b. You should also indicate what outcome you are looking for by making a complaint: are you raising the matter for information, are you looking for a change of some kind to the curriculum or the assessment methods etc.

- c. The Head of Estates and Facilities will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, normally in 10 working days, and provide a provisional response to the issues you raise. This response may also indicate what formal action, if any, the Department will take.
- d. Note that if the complaint concerns the Head of Estates and Facilities, it should be referred to the Pro Vice Chancellor for Human Resources and Administration.

4.6 The Review Stage. If you are not satisfied with the Head of Estates and Facilities response you should resubmit your complaint, along with the response of the Head of Estates and Facilities, within five working days of receipt, to the Pro Vice Chancellor for Human Resources and Administration. The Pro Vice Chancellor will review the complaint and, where necessary, make recommendations for further action at the relevant University committee or board.

4.7 If you are not satisfied with the Pro Vice Chancellor's response you should resubmit your complaint, along with all documentation to the Office of the President, within five working days of receipt, for review. If you are not satisfied with the Presidential review you may take the matter to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#).

4.8 Should an error, an example of bad practice, or failing be identified the University will take timely action to resolve the issue.

4.9 If you wish to appeal a decision of the Estates and Facilities Department please see **Section 9 below**

4.10 In line with OIA expectations, once a student has finished the University's internal complaints or appeals procedures, the University will promptly send a [Completion of Procedures Letter](#) to the student. This Letter will set out clearly what issues have been considered and the University's final decision.

5. THE FINANCE OFFICE AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

5.1 Finance complaints may include, but are not limited to:

- Issues or complaints related to charging, billing and invoicing;
- issues or complaints related to the University's processing of grants, loans and scholarships.
- Issues or complaints related to service and delivery, such as unprofessionalism; unreasonable delays; inadequate or insufficient support; inappropriate behaviour; poor conduct; unresponsiveness or unavailability etc.
- Issues or complaints related to poor or inappropriate advice.
- Other matters.

5.2 Remember also that you can also raise issues at the Student Experience Committee and with Student Government.

- 5.3 Formal Stage.** If you wish to make a formal complaint about a specific issue this should be made to the Financial Controller, in writing. The complaint should provide:
- a.** A detailed description of the issues and, where possible, provide evidence to support the complaint.
 - b.** You should also indicate what outcome you are looking for by making a complaint: are you raising the matter for information, are you looking for a change of some kind to the curriculum or the assessment methods etc.
 - c.** The Financial Controller will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, normally in 10 working days, and provide a provisional response to the issues you raise. This response may also indicate what formal action, if any, the Department will take.
 - d.** Note that if the complaint concerns the Financial Controller, it should be referred to the Director of Finance and Planning.
- 5.4 Early Resolution.** If you have an issue related finance, you are advised to raise this with the relevant member of the finance team in the first instance, who will attempt an informal resolution of the issue. If you do not wish to speak with a member of staff or are not satisfied with the staff member's response, you should arrange to meet with the Financial Controller.
- 5.5 The Review Stage.** If you are not satisfied with the Financial Controller's response, you should resubmit your complaint, along with the response of the Financial Controller within five working days of receipt, to Director of Finance and Planning. The Director of Finance and Planning will review the complaint and, where necessary, make recommendations for further action at the relevant University committee or board.
- 5.6** If you are not satisfied with the Director of Finance and Planning's response you should resubmit your complaint, along with all documentation to the Office of the President, within five working days of receipt, for review. If you are not satisfied with the Presidential review you may take the matter to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#).
- 5.7** Should an error, an example of bad practice, or failing be identified the University will take timely action to resolve the issue.
- 5.8** If you wish to appeal a decision of the Finance Department please see Section 9 below
- 5.9** In line with OIA expectations, once a student has finished the University's internal complaints or appeals procedures, the University will promptly send a [Completion of Procedures Letter](#) to the student. This Letter will set out clearly what issues have been considered and the University's final decision.

6. COMPUTING AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

6.1 Computing and IT complaints may include, but are not limited to:

- Issues or complaints related hardware and equipment, including Wi-Fi
- Issues or complaints related to software
- Issues and complaints related to the reprographics department
- Issues or complaints related to service and delivery, such as unprofessionalism; unreasonable delays; inadequate or insufficient support; inappropriate behaviour; poor conduct; unresponsiveness or unavailability etc.
- Issues or complaints related to poor or inappropriate advice
- Other matters

6.2 Early Resolution. If you have an issue related computing and IT, you are advised to raise this with the Help Desk staff or relevant member of the IT team in the first instance, who will attempt an informal resolution of the issue. If you do not wish to speak with a member of staff or are not satisfied with the staff member's response, you should arrange to meet with the Head of IT. Students are reminded that they may access the [online reporting system](#) when an issue occurs. Remember also that you can also raise issues at the Student Experience Committee and with Student Government.

6.3 Formal Stage. If you wish to make a formal complaint about a specific issue this should be made to the Head of IT, in writing. The complaint should provide:

- a. A detailed description of the issues and, where possible, provide evidence to support the complaint.
- b. You should also indicate what outcome you are looking for by making a complaint: are you raising the matter for information, are you looking for a change of some kind to the curriculum or the assessment methods etc.
- c. The Head of IT will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, normally in 10 working days, and provide a provisional response to the issues you raise. This response may also indicate what formal action, if any, the Department will take.
- d. Note that if the complaint concerns the Head of IT, it should be referred to the Director of Finance and Planning.

6.4 The Review Stage. If you are not satisfied with the Head of IT's response you should resubmit your complaint, along with the response of the Head of IT within five working days of receipt, to the Director of Finance and Planning. The Director of Finance and Planning will review the complaint and, where necessary, make recommendations for further action at the relevant University committee or board.

6.5 If you are not satisfied with the Director of Finance and Planning response, you should resubmit your complaint, along with all documentation to the Office of the President, within five working days of receipt, for review.

6.6 If you are not satisfied with the Presidential review you may take the matter to the

[Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#)

6.7 Should an error, an example of bad practice, or failing be identified the University will take timely action to resolve the issue.

6.8 If you wish to appeal a decision of the IT Department please see Section 9 below

6.9 In line with OIA expectations, once a student has finished the University's internal complaints or appeals procedures, the University will promptly send a [Completion of Procedures Letter](#) to the student. This Letter will set out clearly what issues have been considered and the University's final decision.

7. STUDENTAFFAIRS

7.1 Student Affairs complaints may include, but are not limited to:

- Issues or complaints related to Resident Advisors and Resident Directors.
- Issues or complaints related to student events and trips.
- Issues or complaints related to student societies.
- Issues or complaints about room allocation, sharing etc. Complaints related to the physical condition of accommodation are the responsibility Estates and Facilities.
- Issues or complaints related to service and delivery, such as unprofessionalism; unreasonable delays; inadequate or insufficient support; inappropriate behaviour; poor conduct; unresponsiveness or unavailability etc.
- Issues or complaints related to poor or inappropriate advice.
- Other matters

7.2 Early Resolution. If you have an issue related to Student Affairs you are advised to raise this with the relevant member of the Student Affairs team in the first instance, who will attempt an informal resolution of the issue. If you do not wish to speak with a member of staff or are not satisfied with the staff member's response, you should arrange to meet with the Associate Dean for Student Leadership.

7.3 Remember also that you can also raise issues at the Student Experience Committee and with Student Government.

7.4 Formal Stage. If you wish to make a formal complaint about a specific issue this should be made to the Associate Dean for Student Leadership, in writing. The complaint should provide:

- a. A detailed description of the issues and, where possible, provide evidence to support the complaint
- b. You should also indicate what outcome you are looking for by making a complaint: are you raising the matter for information, are you looking for a

change of some kind to the curriculum or the assessment methods etc.

- c. The Associate Dean for Student Leadership will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, normally in 10 working days, and provide a provisional response to the issues you raise. This response may also indicate what formal action, if any, the Department will take.
- d. Note that if the complaint concerns the Associate Dean for Student Leadership, it should be referred to the Pro Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

7.5 The Review Stage. If you are not satisfied with the Associate Dean for Student Leadership's response you should resubmit your complaint, along with the response of the Associate Dean for Student Leadership within five working days of receipt, to the Pro Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. The Pro Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs will review the complaint and, where necessary, make recommendations for further action at the relevant University committee or board.

7.6 If you are not satisfied with the Pro Vice Chancellor's response you should resubmit your complaint, along with all documentation to the Office of the President, within five working days of receipt, for review. If you are not satisfied with the Presidential review you may take the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator

7.7 Should an error, an example of bad practice, or failing be identified the University will take timely action to resolve the issue.

7.8 If you wish to appeal a decision of the Office of Student Affairs please see Section 9 below but remember also to refer to the Student Code of Conduct.

7.9 In line with OIA expectations, once a student has finished the University's internal complaints or appeals procedures, the University will promptly send a [Completion of Procedures Letter](#) to the student. This Letter will set out clearly what issues have been considered and the University's final decision

8. ISSUES OR COMPLAINTS RELATED TO OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY POLICES OR PROCEDURES

8.1 General issues or complaints regarding University policies and procedures may include, but are not limited to concerns related to:

- a. Accessibility
- b. Clarity or transparency
- c. Proportionality
- d. Timeliness
- e. Fairness
- f. Independence
- g. Confidentiality

8.2 Usually these would be addressed under items a-e above, or via the relevant academic and academic related complaints procedures found on the Student Appeals and Complaints section of the website.

8.3 However should you have a general issue or complaint about a university policy or procedure, you are advised to raise this with Student Government and/or the Department of Student Affairs, in the first instance. They will assist you in contacting the appropriate member of staff or faculty to deal with your concern.

8.4 Please remember that student representatives are members of the key committees of the university, including University Board, Academic Board, and the Student Experience Committee. If you wish to see a policy changed you are expected to take this through formal channels.

8.5 In line with OIA expectations, once a student has finished the University's internal complaints or appeals procedures, the University will promptly send a Completion of Procedures Letter to the student. This Letter will set out clearly what issues have been considered and the University's final decision.

9. OTHER MATTERS: ADVICE AND SUPPORT AND EXTERNAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

9.1 A student may ask for informal advice and support at any time, on a range of issues, academic and non-academic. If you would like more information, contact the Department of Student Affairs, your faculty academic advisor, the Student Government, or the Registry Services.

9.2 External service providers.

- If a student wishes to complain about the service of another organisation provided on behalf of the university, the student to contact the appropriate organisation directly. The University will make reasonable efforts to ensure that those organisations have appropriate complaints procedures in place.
- Students may also complain directly to the University about a service provided by another organisation, which the student feels has impacted on his or her learning experience.

10. APPEALS

10.1 A student may appeal the decision of a University officer, but an appeal may only be made on the basis of the following:

- Mitigating circumstances exist, that for good reason could not have been presented at the appropriate time, and that, if they had been known, it is reasonably likely would have changed the decision that was made. Mitigating circumstances claims must be supported by medical or other documentary evidence;
- a procedural irregularity occurred in the conduct of the work of the University

(including an administrative error), or a matter was not dealt with in accordance with the current regulations, policies and procedures of the University;

- there are reasonable grounds to believe that a decision was manifestly unreasonable or influenced by prejudice or bias on the part of the decision-maker(s).

10.2 An appeal must be made in writing to the appropriate Pro Vice Chancellor or Director and should provide a detailed description of the issues, addressing one or more of the categories provided under 9.2 above. Evidence must be provided to support the appeal. You should also, if possible, indicate what outcome you are looking for by making an appeal.

10.3 The Pro Vice Chancellor or Director will acknowledge receipt of your appeal in writing, normally in 10 working days, and provide a decision on your appeal. This decision may also indicate what action, if any, the University will take.

10.4 If you are not satisfied with the Pro Vice Chancellor or Director's decision you should resubmit your appeal, along with the response of the PVC or Director, to the Office of the President within five working days of receipt. The President will review the decision and respond to you, normally within five working days and, where necessary, make recommendations for further action. The President may ask a Pro Vice Chancellor or the Deputy Vice Chancellor with no prior involvement in an appeal to act on the President's behalf.

10.5 Students may not use the appeal procedures to bring frivolous or vexatious matters to the University's attention.

10.6 In a review of any case, policies stated on the University website and in written correspondence with a student will be understood to have been viewed and accepted by the student concerned.

10.7 A student may withdraw his or her appeal at any time, thereby halting the process; at the formal or review stage the withdrawal should be submitted in writing to the relevant University officer. Once an appeal has been halted it cannot be reinstated on the same grounds.

10.8 Guidance and support for students making an appeal is available from the Office of Student Affairs and the Registry Services, as appropriate.

10.9 The University pledges that students studying at all levels have the right to appeal without the risk of disadvantage.

10.10 In line with OIA expectations, once a student has finished the University's internal complaints or appeals procedures, the University will promptly send a [Completion of Procedures Letter](#) to the student. This Letter will set out clearly what issues have been considered and the University's final decision.

11. RECORDING, REPORTING, PUBLICISING AND LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

- 11.1** Complaints and appeals provide the University with feedback which may be of use in identifying opportunities to improve services and facilities.
- 11.2** In line with the requirements of the OIA, the University will keep a record of all complaints and appeals at the formal and review stage, with a view to using the information to provide training and introduce improvements.
- 11.3** Concerns, complaints and appeals will be recorded in sufficient and proportionate detail, and care will be taken to ensure that a student is not identifiable.
- 11.4** There will be an annual review and summary of complaints and appeals, including Completion of Procedures Letters, at the relevant Committee; those Committees will produce a summary report for discussion at the University Board.
- 11.5** The Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor serve as the University's point of contact with the OIA, but each department remains responsible for ensuring that appropriate records of complaints and appeals are maintained.
- 11.6** The University Executive and members of the University Board are reminded of the following from the OIA Good Practice Framework (p.26). Senior management should ensure that:
- the university's final position on a complaint or academic appeal investigation is signed off by an appropriate person/officer in order to provide assurance that this is the definitive response of the university and that the student's concerns have been taken seriously;
 - named individuals from the senior management maintain overall responsibility and accountability for the management and governance of concerns, complaints and academic appeals handling within the university;
 - senior management has a clear understanding of, and role in, the complaints and academic appeals handling procedures (this will include an oversight role and not necessarily mean being involved in the decision-making process);
 - mechanisms are in place to ensure a consistent approach to the way concerns, complaints and academic appeals handling information is managed, monitored, reviewed and reported at all levels in the university;
 - concerns and complaints information is used to improve services to students and the student experience, and this is evident from regular publications;
 - complaints and academic appeals procedures meet the requirements of chapter

B9 of the UK Quality Code.

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