

STUDENT COMPLAINTS FAQs (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)

This leaflet provides answers to frequently asked questions concerning the University's Complaints Procedure. The full detail can be found in the University's Policy and Regulation (UPR) [UPR SA16 Student-and-Applicant-Complaints.pdf](#)

Q1. Does the University have a student complaints procedure that I can use if necessary?

Yes. The aim of the University's complaints procedures is to resolve individual complaints quickly and fairly and as near to their source as possible. Some areas of the University (e.g. the Learning Resource Centres) have their own complaints procedures so first check if there is a local procedure and, if so, please use it. In most cases there is no local procedure and you will need to use the University procedure (UPR SA16). Each complaint will normally be considered individually although, depending on the circumstances, where a series of complaints involves the same subject matter or individual(s), the University may consider those complaints collectively.

(Note for guidance:

The University has a separate procedure for students who have a concern about an assessment result – please refer to [Assessments,-Examinations-and-Conferments-University-Delivered-provision-AS12-Apx-1-Regulations-for-Candidates.pdf](#)

The relevant appeal form(s), notes for guidance and FAQs may assist you. The University can advise you if you are uncertain on the most appropriate procedure to follow.)

Q2. Will I be disadvantaged as a result of having raised a complaint?

You should not be worried. The University is a large and complex organisation and, although it tries to ensure everything runs smoothly, things can sometimes go wrong. It is through complaints that the University learns about mistakes and improves its provision. UPR SA16 specifically states "...all Complainants will be treated equally, regardless of their status or seniority, and will not be treated adversely as a result of their having made a complaint".

Q3. If I am unsure about making a complaint where should I go for advice?

You should always seek advice and help as soon as possible. In the first instance you can approach <https://hertssu.com/your-support/> You can contact the Advice and Support Centre on e-mail: advice@hertssu.com tel. 01707 285022. Students can access a number of [support services](#) and remember that if you do require any emotional support, you may wish to make contact with the [University's Counselling Service](#) in Student Wellbeing.

Q4. What does the complaints procedure cover?

The procedure can be used for all student complaints however there are certain matters which have their own procedures. The exceptions are listed below:

- (i) [HR03-Staff-Grievance-Policy.pdf](#)- issues raised by students registered on programmes delivered at the University in connection with their **employment by the University**;
- (ii) [UPREQ10-Bullying-and-Harassment.pdf](#): issues raised by students registered on programmes delivered at the University concerning alleged incidents of **harassment or bullying**;
- (iii) [section 2.2, UPR SA16, section 2.2](#): students registered on programmes delivered at **Partner Organisations** which lead to awards of the University of Hertfordshire;
- (iv) [UPR-GV16-Whistleblowing-Policy.pdf](#) '**whistleblowing**' and the '**raising and escalation of concerns**' by students enrolled on programmes leading to University of Hertfordshire awards who are undertaking compulsory or optional placements that form part of their programmes of study or attend Study Centres recognised by the University.

Q5. How does the student complaints procedure work?

The student complaints procedure has two stages: Preliminary (Informal) Stage and Formal Stage. Complainants must complete each stage before they can progress to the next. There is also an appeal stage where, in limited circumstances, the Complainant may request a review by the Vice- Chancellor at the conclusion of the Formal Stage.

Q6. What is the Preliminary (Informal) Stage?

If you have a complaint it is usually better and quicker if you can raise it directly with the people concerned as most complaints can be resolved locally without using formal procedures. To ensure that complaints are dealt with in the most appropriate way, the University categorises them as either 'academic' or 'non-academic' complaints:

Academic Complaints	Non-Academic Complaints
Academic complaints should be lodged, as appropriate, with the Year Tutor, Programme Leader, Research Student Tutor, or Head of Department (where appointed).	Non-academic complaints should be lodged with the manager of the area in which the incident occurred.

Within ten (10) working days of receiving the complaint, the Recipient of the informal complaint will endeavour to take the steps necessary to resolve the problem and may meet the Complainant to discuss the matter.

Q7. What do I do if an informal approach has not resolved the complaint?

If an informal resolution has not been possible you can use the formal procedure. A formal complaint must be made, in writing, using the current version of the form 'Notification of a Formal Complaint under the provisions of the Student and Applicants Complaints Procedure (UPR SA16)' which is available from the Dean of Students Help and Support Page on StudyNet. Once complete you must send it to the *Dean of School* if it is an academic matter, or the *Head of Strategic Business Unit (SBU)* if it is a non-academic matter. Requests not submitted on the appropriate form will not be considered. With regard to the requirement to submit requests using the appropriate forms, the University will make reasonable adjustments for disabled students; you may also seek support from the [University's Disability Services](#) in Student Wellbeing.

Q8. What should I include in my complaint?

You need to give details of the events/incidents in chronological order and support them with any relevant evidence that you may have. You can also provide witness statements, if appropriate. Please explain the desired outcome of your complaint.

Q9. Are there any limits on the matters about which I can complain?

No, but some matters are not within the control of the University e.g. visa and payment regulation for International students. The University reserves the right to reject complaints made maliciously or vexatiously or frivolously.

Q10. Can I make a complaint about individual(s)?

Yes, but the University does have a legal duty to inform those individual(s) that a complaint has been made.

Q11. Are complaints treated as confidential?

Yes. Information will only be disclosed to those directly involved in the case unless the University has a legal duty to disclose information to others. Section 7.1.5 of UPR SA16 details confidentiality.

Q12. Are there any time limits on submitting a complaint?

Yes. Complaints must be made, either orally or in writing, and lodged within three (3) calendar months of the date on which the incident occurred.

Q13. What happens once I have submitted a formal complaint?

The Recipient of the formal complaint (known as the 'Presiding Officer') will instruct an independent Case Officer who will take all reasonable steps to investigate the formal complaint fully and appropriately and prepare a report. The Presiding Officer will provide you with a written response on the basis of that report and/or other documentation/further information provided and/or following meetings/Hearings at which the Complainant and any other persons involved may submit their respective cases (see Q14).

Q14. Will I have to attend any meetings/Hearings as part of the investigation?

That depends on the nature of the investigation, but it is possible. If you do have to attend any meetings/hearings you have the right to be accompanied. You must remember that the person accompanying you is there as your supporter and not your advocate/spokesperson. You may elect to be represented by a member or nominee of the Students' Union Executive. The Students' Union Advice and Support Centre can help you. Remember that mediation is available by agreement between both/all parties.

Q15. How long will it be before I have a response to my formal complaint?

You can expect a response within ten (10) working days or as soon as possible thereafter. If there is a delay you will be kept informed of progress.

Q16. If I am dissatisfied with the outcome following the conclusion of the formal stage, what other action can I take?

You can request that the Vice-Chancellor reviews your complaint but only on limited grounds:

- (a) you wish to present information that could not have been brought forward at earlier stages or new information which may be relevant to the case, to be considered;
- (b) you believe that there has been procedural irregularity or bias.

Q17. Are there any time limits on requesting a review by the Vice-Chancellor?

Yes. Requests must be made within ten (10) working days* of the date of the Letter of Decision from the Presiding Officer of the formal complaint. *Please note that this is *not* the date the letter was received by you.

Q18. How do I request a review by the Vice-Chancellor?

The request for a review by the Vice-Chancellor must be made, in writing, using the current version of the form 'Formal Student Complaint – Request for a review by the Vice-Chancellor (UPR SA16)' which is also available from the Dean of Students Help and Support page on AskHerts <https://ask.herts.ac.uk/office-of-the-dean-of-students> . The completed form should be submitted to the Student Procedures Coordinator via e-mail: studentprocedures@herts.ac.uk . Requests not submitted on the appropriate form will not be considered. With regard to the requirement to submit requests using the appropriate forms, the University will make reasonable adjustments for disabled students; you may also seek support from the [University's Disability Services](#) in StudentWellbeing.

Q19. What happens to my request for a review by the Vice-Chancellor?

The Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) will consider whether there is sufficient justification to merit a review. If your request is accepted, the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) will instruct an appropriate independent person to investigate. The Vice-Chancellor (or nominee):

- will be provided with all the necessary details of the case and an account of the measures which have already been taken to resolve the difficulties;
- will review the circumstances of the case;
- will, if necessary, take further advice;
- may seek to resolve the issue on the basis of the documentation provided and/or may call a meeting/Hearing to which he or she may invite both the Complainant and any Respondent (see Q20).

You will be notified, in writing, of the decision of the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee).

Q20. If my request is accepted will I have to attend any meetings/Hearings?

That depends on the nature of the investigation, but it is possible. If you do have to attend any meetings/hearings you have the right to be accompanied. You must remember that the person accompanying you is there as your supporter and not your advocate/spokesperson. You may elect to be represented by a member or nominee of the Students' Union Executive. The Students' Union Advice and Support Centre can help you. Remember that mediation is available by agreement between both/all parties.

Q21. When will I know the outcome of my request for a review by the Vice-Chancellor?

You can expect a response within ten (10) working days or as soon as possible thereafter. If there is a delay you will be kept informed of progress.

Q22. What happens if I am still dissatisfied following the outcome of my request for a review by the Vice-Chancellor?

You have now completed all of the internal procedures and there are no further options within the University but you can approach the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#) for a further review. To approach the OIA you will need a 'Completion of Procedures Letter'. The Office of the Dean of Students will provide this and advise you of the details of the OIA. You can use the Courts at any time.