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**Queens' College  
Student Complaints Procedure**

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The College welcomes comments and suggestions about the services it provides. Junior members are encouraged to communicate any causes for concern, either academic or non-academic, to the College. Where possible, students should first raise these concerns informally with the senior member or member of staff directly concerned, or by contacting the person in charge of the relevant department (see [Suggestions and Comments](#) below). If in doubt about where to direct an enquiry, students should contact any member of the Student Support Team (details can be found below at Appendix 1 and also [here](#)).
- 1.2 The College anticipates that complaints will normally be dealt with informally in the first instance. Most complaints can be dealt with quickly and effectively without recourse to formal procedures. The College's procedures have been developed in order to encourage resolution of problems quickly, effectively and informally wherever possible.

## **2 Principles**

- 2.1 The College will provide fair and objective procedures for dealing with complaints from its students, and to ensure that its procedures are free from partiality arising from personal or institutional conflict of interest or other sources of bias.
- 2.2 No student will be treated less favourably by having raised a complaint in good faith, even where it is not upheld.
- 2.3 Where it is considered that a complaint made under this procedure is vexatious or malicious, the student bringing such a complaint may be subject to the College's student disciplinary procedure. A vexatious or malicious complaint is one which is clearly unsustainable, for example, deliberately attempting to defame the name or character of another person.
- 2.4 The College will seek early resolution of complaints with fairness, transparency and consistency, maintaining individual privacy and confidentiality and monitoring and reviewing anonymised records of complaints to bring about change where it is necessary and appropriate.

- 2.5 The College will not normally consider anonymous complaints. The procedure will be confidential save where the complaint must necessarily be disclosed to another person or body in order to investigate the complaint or where it is necessary to do so in order for the College to comply with its legal obligations (for example, under the Data Protection Act 1998), in which case the individual making the complaint will be notified in advance that such disclosure is to be made and their consent sought wherever this is appropriate in the circumstances. The College will comply with all relevant data protection legislation for the processing of data.
- 2.6 The rights of the complainant and the rights of any person against whom a complaint has been made are equally important and every effort will be made to ensure that both parties are treated with equal fairness and dignity. Students should also act reasonably and fairly towards each other in invoking these procedures.
- 2.7 Where a complaint is made to the College on behalf of a student, no action will be taken in respect of this complaint until the College receives the student's written consent to the complaint being considered in accordance with these procedures.
- 2.8 The College will make every effort to comply with any time periods set out in this procedure. However, individuals involved in a complaint to be, or being, considered in accordance with this procedure should be aware that this may not sometimes be possible, for example, where a complaint is received around the College vacation periods. The College will keep parties to a complaint informed of any necessary delays and will normally aim to complete its formal procedure within 90 calendar days.
- 2.9 The College is mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to disabled persons and reserves the right to adjust these procedures on a case-by-case basis where it considers that it is necessary to implement reasonable adjustments.

### **3 Scope of this Procedure and Alternative Procedures**

- 3.1 This complaints procedure is open to any junior member who is or was recently a student of the College (anyone who has graduated or otherwise left the College within the last 12 months).
- 3.2 This complaints procedure is designed to deal with student complaints, which are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the

College's action or lack of action or about the standards of service provided by or on behalf of the College. Examples include:

- 3.2.1 Problems with College accommodation or services
  - 3.2.2 Problems with the College's facilities e.g. boathouse, Buttery
  - 3.2.3 Problems with the quality of computer or library resources within College
  - 3.2.4 Problems with the service provided by staff (including teaching staff)
- 3.3 Students wishing to raise a complaint under this procedure should be aware that there are other formal procedures in place at the College and the University which may apply. The College reserves the right to manage the complaint through a different procedure if it appears more appropriate to do so in all the circumstances.
- 3.4 If in doubt about which procedure it would be best to use, students should contact any member of the Student Support Team (details can be found [here](#)).
- 3.5 Students may wish to consider whether their complaint would more appropriately fall under one of the following alternative procedures:
- 3.5.1 **College Discipline.** Information about disciplinary procedures, including how to raise a disciplinary issue, details of informal and formal hearings, codes of practice, disciplinary sanctions and appeals are outlined in the College's Student Disciplinary Procedure.
  - 3.5.2 **Harassment.** The College is committed to providing an environment free from any form of inappropriate behaviour including discrimination, bullying and harassment and takes complaints of this nature very seriously. Students are directed to the College's formal Harassment Policy ([here](#)) and the [University's Dignity@Study policy](#) which covers complaints that arise within the University teaching, learning and working environment.
  - 3.5.3 **Criminal Offences.** Where there is an allegation that an offence of a criminal nature has been committed the complainant may wish to report the matter to the police and/ or seek legal advice. The College will seek to offer advice and support where there is no conflict of interest but will not investigate such allegations pending any criminal investigations save that

the College reserves the right to take action under the College's Student Disciplinary Procedure where it is deemed appropriate in all the circumstances.

- 3.5.4 **Fitness to Study.** The College may intervene to support a student where there is concern that a student's behaviour or health has the potential to disrupt or threaten the welfare or academic progress of the student themselves or of others in the academic community. The College has a formal Fitness to Study process which can be found [here](#).
- 3.5.5 **University Examinations Appeals.** Students should be aware that a separate procedure exists for appealing to the University in a case where the student feels that they has been unfairly classified in a University examination. The University Registry circulates further information on examination appeals. Details are contained in the University's Statutes and Ordinances ([here](#)).
- 3.5.6 **Matters of College Policy.** Complaints on matters of College policy can be directed to the JCR and can be raised on the student's behalf before a meeting of the Tutorial Committee. The key JCR contacts are ([here](#)).
- 3.5.7 **Outside of College.** A student may wish to complain about a matter that is not under the College's control but within that of another institution, such as the University of Cambridge or another Cambridge College. The University's own student complaints procedure covers Faculties, Departments and other University institutions and can be found [here](#).
- 3.5.8 Students wishing to make a complaint concerning such matters should either contact the person who is the appropriate point of contact within the Faculty, Department or Institution directly, or ask the DoS or Senior Tutor at the College to make contact on their behalf. The College will do all it can to assist students in identifying the appropriate pathway for dealing with the complaint and to offer assistance in making a complaint within the University.
- 3.5.9 Where a complaint relates to the behaviour or services of contractors and other staff working for the College the matter should be referred to the

Senior Bursar or the Student Support Team who will contact the Senior Bursar on the student's behalf. The College will do all they can to assist students in making contact with the individual's organisation and taking such action as is appropriate in the circumstances.

- 3.5.10 Students should note that where a complaint is made against an individual who is not a member of the College, action that the College could take might be limited.

#### **4 Suggestions and Comments about the College's provision**

- 4.1 Students wishing to make a suggestion or comment about the College's services or facilities, either academic or non-academic, can do so informally:

4.1.1 by contacting the person in charge of the relevant area (there is a helpful list of names at Appendix 2 or, if in doubt, the Student Support Team can help students to identify or approach the right individual);

4.1.2 by raising the matter with their Director of Studies;

4.1.3 by raising the matter with the Senior Tutor (unless the issue is with the Senior Tutor, in which case the student is advised to contact the President).

- 4.2 If the student is not sure how to proceed, the student is advised to contact a member of the Student Support Team (details can be found below at Appendix 1 and also [here](#)).

#### **5 Informal procedure**

- 5.1 Most complaints are likely to be resolved informally.

5.2 Where a student experiences a problem, they should raise the matter with the individual directly concerned, or the person with overall responsibility for the area relating to the complaint (see Appendix 2), or with a member of the Student Support Team.

- 5.3 If this is not possible, for example either because it does not fall within the remit of any particular individual or because the complaint is about the person with overall

responsibility for the area relating to the complaint, then the complaint should be made to the Senior Tutor either verbally or in writing.

- 5.4 A written or verbal acknowledgement of the complaint will be provided to the student within 7 days and a fuller response will be provided within 14 days.

## **6 Formal Procedure**

### **Stage 1: College Complaints Officer**

- 6.1 Students with a complaint that cannot be dealt with informally are advised to bring it to the attention of the College using the formal procedure outlined here as soon as possible following the occurrence of a problem and *within one calendar month*. Complaints which fall outside this time limit will only be considered if the student can give good reasons for the delay.
- 6.2 A senior Fellow, appointed annually by the Governing Body, will act as Complaints Officer, except where that complaint is specifically against that Fellow. In that event, the President should be informed in writing, and will appoint another Fellow of the College to act as Complaints Officer. The Complaints Officer may, if they consider it would assist the investigation, appoint an Assistant to assist with the investigation process.
- 6.3 At all stages the Complaints Officer will endeavour to resolve the complaint informally, for example by facilitating mediation between the student and the College or individual(s) complained against. Should informal resolution prove impossible or inappropriate they will formally progress the complaint.
- 6.4 The contact details of the Complaints Officer can be obtained from the Senior Tutor.
- 6.5 The student should write to the Complaints Officer, with a full statement of the complaint. Guidance for what it would be helpful for the statement to contain is set out in Appendix 3.
- 6.6 The Complaints Officer will have the right to dismiss any complaint which they consider to be frivolous or vexatious. In these circumstances, if the student disagrees with the decision to dismiss the complaint at a preliminary stage they may appeal to the President within 21 days of the decision. The President will convene a meeting within 14 days of receiving the appeal and will have discretion as to the order of



proceedings and whether he shall hear from the student in person or receive written representations. The President will issue a "Completion of Proceedings" decision letter within 5 working days of the hearing and the student will have a further right of appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, for which see para 6.22 below.

- 6.7 The Complaints Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and aim to arrange an initial meeting with the complainant, where possible, within 7 days of receiving the complaint, in order to discuss the issues and decide the best way to proceed.
- 6.8 If, either on receipt of the complaint or upon holding the initial meeting, it appears to the Complaints Officer that swift action upon the complaint is required, the Complaints Officer can expedite this stage of the procedure or may refer the matter directly to the College Complaints Review Committee.
- 6.9 The student may choose to be accompanied by a nominated representative from among the College's membership, either junior or senior, at the initial meeting with the Complaints Officer and at any subsequent meeting.
- 6.10 At the initial meeting the Complaints Officer will discuss with the student whether they wish to proceed with a formal complaint. If so, the Complaints Officer will:
  - 6.10.1 Notify the student that they will investigate the complaint or part of it or if the matter ought to be dealt with under a different procedure as outlined at para 3.2 – 3.5 above.
  - 6.10.2 Inform the student of the steps they intend to take to investigate the complaint.
  - 6.10.3 Inform the student of any other person whom they intend to notify about the complaint.
  - 6.10.4 Discuss the time-scale for investigating the complaint.
  - 6.10.5 Discuss the nature of the remedy the student is seeking and timescales for implementing the remedy.
  - 6.10.6 Discuss alternative methods of resolving the student's complaint, for example whether or not mediation would be helpful in the circumstances.

- 6.11 In order to investigate a complaint fully the Complaints Officer may consider it necessary to disclose information provided by the student making the complaint and/or the person or persons complained about to the other party (or parties) to allow that other party (or parties) to respond to the allegations. In such cases consent will be sought from the individual who provided the information to be disclosed before the information is disclosed. If the individual refuses to consent to disclosure of the information, the Complaints Officer reserves the right to refuse to continue to investigate the complaint where they deems disclosure of the information concerned is necessary to ensure a fair investigation.
- 6.12 The Complaints Officer should also invite the person or persons complained against (if relevant) to submit a written statement on the matter and subsequently invite them to an interview. Where individuals are interviewed during this stage of the procedure they may choose to be accompanied by a nominated representative from among the College's membership, either junior or senior.
- 6.13 Having carried out the investigation the Complaints Officer will record in writing the nature of the complaint, the remedy sought, the decision the Complaints Officer has reached and how long the process took as well as the reason for any delays which may have occurred. The Complaints Officer will also specify the timescales within which the remedy should be implemented.
- 6.14 The Complaints Officer will notify the student and the person or persons complained about in writing of the steps taken to investigate the complaint, giving reasons for the decision reached and the remedy recommended as well as timescales for implementation. It is anticipated that this written response should be sent to the student and the person or persons complained about within 21 days of the initial interview with the student. The Complaints Officer will keep all parties informed of the progress of the investigation and the reasons for any delays that may occur.
- 6.15 The Complaints Officer will confirm within 7 days of the written response whether or not the student and the person or persons complained about agree with their recommendations. If so, any recommended remedy should be implemented as soon as possible. If there is no agreement, the Complaints officer will ask the complainant whether they wish to proceed to a panel of the College Complaints Review Committee and if so will notify the Chair, who will convene a hearing.

## **Stage 2: College Complaints Review Committee**

- 6.16 The College Complaints Review Committee shall consist of 3 members from a panel appointed annually by the Governing Body. The panel will normally include a member of the JCR and a member of the MCR. No member of the Committee shall have any interest in, or previous involvement with, the issue or complaint, and the panel members shall jointly decide which of its members will serve on each occasion and which will act as its Chair. All members of the Committee will be bound by confidentiality.
- 6.17 The Complaints Officer will notify the panel of the Committee, who will:
- 6.17.1 Call a meeting of the Committee, to be held, whenever possible, within 14 days of notification, and appoint a Chair.
  - 6.17.2 Make all documents relating to the case available to the Committee.
  - 6.17.3 Inform both the student (and any person subject to the complaint) of the date and time of the meeting, the composition of the panel and of their right to be accompanied to the meeting by another member of College.
- 6.18 The Committee shall determine its own procedure, provided that both the complainant and any person subject to the complaint shall be allowed a full and fair opportunity to make representations to the Committee. In appropriate cases, the Complaints Officer may be called upon to present the case on behalf of the College to the Committee. The Committee shall form its own judgement of the merits of the complaint after full and careful review of the case and in the light of the representations made by the parties. A note will be taken of the meeting, recording attendance, a brief outline of the proceedings and the reasons for the decisions taken.
- 6.19 Upon reaching their final decision, the Committee shall issue their decision in writing in the form of a Completion of Procedures Letter within 7 days.
- 6.20 Where a complaint is upheld, appropriate remedies may include one or more of the following:
- 6.20.1 Recommendation that matters are referred on to a different procedure such as a referral on to the disciplinary procedure;

- 6.20.2 Financial redress;
  - 6.20.3 A written and/or verbal apology;
  - 6.20.4 A change in practice or policy;
  - 6.20.5 Any other remedy that might be appropriate in the circumstances.
- 6.21 It should be noted that the College's action may be limited in cases where the person subject to the complaint is not a member or employee of the College.

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

- 6.22 If, following receipt of the Committee's decision, the student remains dissatisfied, it is open to the student to make an application to the OIA. The Completion of Procedures Letter provided by the College in accordance with paragraph 6.19 will indicate how to make such a complaint, and details are also available at the OIA's website ([www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)).

## **7 Monitoring and review**

- 7.1 In order to monitor the quality of the College's services and responsiveness to student complaints, an anonymised record of reported complaints will be maintained by the Complaints Officer. The record will include details of the nature of the complaint, the procedure followed to deal with the complaint, the time taken to resolve the complaint and reasons for any delays and the outcome or remedy, including timescales for implementation.
- 7.2 The Complaints Officer shall be the Reporting Officer and shall report to a meeting of the Governing Body once a year.
- 7.3 The Governing Body shall, once a year, review the adequacy of information, advice, guidance and support for students on making complaints and the adequacy of understanding amongst Fellows, staff and students of the grounds on which a complaint might arise.

## **Appendix 1: Student Support Team**

Senior Tutor

Academic Tutors  
- Arts  
- Sciences

Welfare Tutors

College Chaplain

Nurse

Welfare Advisers

## Appendix 2: College Heads of Departments or persons of first contact

Academic	Senior Tutor Deputy Senior Tutor
Accommodation	Senior Bursar Domestic Bursar Accommodation Officer Head of Housekeeping
Accounts	Senior Bursar College Accountant Financial Office Senior Tutor (for matters relating to College bills)
Alumni	Alumni and Development Director Development Office Staff
Catering	Domestic Bursar Head of Catering and Conferences
Housekeeping	Domestic Bursar Head of Housekeeping
Maintenance	Estates Bursar Head of Maintenance
Data Protection	Senior Bursar (as Data Protection Officer)
Health and Safety	Senior Bursar College Safety Officer Regulatory Compliance Officer
Library	Fellow Librarian Librarian
Porters/security	Domestic Bursar Head Porter

Tutorial matters	Senior Tutor Deputy Senior Tutor Head of Academic and Tutorial Services
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Sportsground	Senior Treasurer of Student Union
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Boathouse	Senior Treasurer of Student Union
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### **Appendix 3: Statement of Complaints**

The statement of complaint should include the following:

- 1 Description of the circumstances leading to the complaint, including dates, times and other details.
- 2 The name(s) of the person(s) against whom the complaint is made
- 3 The names of any witnesses who may be in a position to corroborate details of the complaint.
- 4 Documentary evidence. All letters, other correspondence, records of phone calls etc. relevant to the complaint should be presented in chronological and numbered order, together with a list of contents.
- 5 An indication of the action or remedy sought by the complainant (without prejudice to the final remedy determined).
- 6 The name of any person who has agreed to accompany or support or represent the complainant at any meeting or hearing and his/her status.