



Code of Practice for Student Complaints and Appeals

1 The differences between complaints and appeals

1.1 The University has a Students' Complaints Procedure (see below) which students should use for pursuing complaints about most matters concerning teaching & learning (e.g. teaching facilities, supervision arrangements etc) and non-academic issues (e.g. support services, accommodation etc).

1.2 A complaint may be defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction that needs a response". The expression of dissatisfaction may take the form of an informal, verbal complaint or a written complaint.

1.3 The University has a range of Appeals Procedures which apply in cases where a student wishes to challenge an academic decision which has been made by an academic committee or body (such as an Academic Senate). These procedures are listed in paragraph 4.1 below.

2 Principles

2.1 The principles underlying the procedures for Complaints and Appeals include: the notions of fairness and reasonableness the resolution of problems swiftly and informally, at local level, if possible recourse to an appropriate formal procedure if not that complaints and appeals will be treated seriously, and may be made without fear of retribution that complaints and appeals should not be made frivolously or vexatiously the right to put one's case in writing, and to have a written response, with reasons the right to have the outcome of a complaint or appeal reviewed by a higher body complaints and appeals form part of the University's process of quality review and improvement and are considered as providing valuable feedback rather than criticism that procedures are made widely available to all students and staff that complaints and appeals are given priority and will be dealt with promptly as problems that are not resolved swiftly may be exacerbated by a delay that the importance of adhering to any stated time-scale is crucial

3 Complaints

3.1 Wherever possible complaints should be handled at a local level and without recourse to unduly formal proceedings. It is therefore essential that all staff who have contact with students are aware of the relevant procedures and are empowered to resolve issues as they arise. Where problems cannot be dealt with locally, the procedure sets out the steps that should be followed.

3.2 It is important that students follow through the steps in the procedure and are

discouraged from trying to jump straight to a higher level. Complainants who refer a problem direct to senior staff without first pursuing it at a lower level should be reminded of the procedure and required to follow the appropriate steps. Deans of Schools/heads of services and the Provost cannot be involved in the early stages as this may compromise their ability to be involved at a later stage.

3.3 Staff dealing with complaints are encouraged, whenever practical, to meet with the complainant. Face-to-face discussions are often very helpful to establish the precise cause of dissatisfaction, to explore the remedy sought by the complainant and to foster a mutual understanding of the issues involved.

3.4 Those dealing with complaints are reminded that electronic communications have the same status as written correspondence and should be handled in the same way. A complaint made by e-mail requires the same level of thorough consideration and should be addressed within the same timescale as any other written complaint.

3.5 The procedure is designed for use when a complaint is made by the student him/herself (or by someone acting on behalf of a student) or is made by a group of students. Where a third party makes a complaint, only general issues can be addressed (in accordance with the University's policy on disclosure of personal information). Where a complaint is being handled by a solicitor acting for a student, the case should be referred to the Registrar. Anonymous complaints are particularly difficult to deal with effectively, and will be treated individually on their merits.

3.6 Complaints should be handled sensitively, especially where individuals are named. Any member of staff named in a written complaint should be made aware of the complaint, normally by their line manager or by the recipient of the complaint. They should expect the complaint to be handled with discretion and confidentiality to be maintained.

3.7 It is not feasible to give specific advice about resolving complaints or to suggest possible remedies as the circumstances of each complaint will vary. However, when considering a response, staff should have regard for the outcome sought by the complainant. If the complainant can demonstrate that some financial loss has been incurred, the payment of compensation should be considered.

3.8 Where a complaint does not produce the outcome sought by the student, reasons should be given for any decision and it may be necessary to explain the constraints of resources or policy decisions at a University or national level.

3.9 Staff are encouraged to acknowledge when a mistake has been made and to take steps to ensure that similar problems do not arise in future.

4 Appeals

4.1 The University operates a policy and procedure procedures covering the rights of students to appeal against decisions of committees or other bodies concerned with academic matters.

5 Public interest disclosure

5.1 Regent University College of Science and Technology is committed to high standards of openness and accountability and conducts its affairs with due regard to probity.

5.1.1 Any student who wishes to disclose malpractice to the University should inform the Vice President and Registrar of the circumstances. The Vice President and Registrar will in all cases inform the President of the disclosure. (In cases of disclosure relating to the Registrar, disclosure should be made to the Provost).

5.1.2 The University will treat disclosure as confidential and the identity of the disclosure will not be revealed unless this is essential to the investigatory process.

5.1.3 Individuals making a disclosure are expected to reveal their identities and the University may decline to investigate disclosures made anonymously.

5.1.4 If there is prima facie indication of malpractice or wrongdoing, the Registrar will arrange for an investigation and a report to be made or, if appropriate, will refer that matter to the internal audit function or to an external agency as circumstances warrant. It will be recognised that the resultant report may lead to the matter being referred to the relevant discipline, harassment, complaint or grievance procedure.

5.1.5 In making this provision, it should be recognised that the discloser must act in good faith. The University will not pursue matters, which arise from disclosures which are shown to be malicious or frivolous.

5.1.6 Any enquiries about the operation of the procedure should be addressed to the Registrar.

6 Monitoring

6.1 The Student Affairs Committee will monitor the pattern of complaints, referring any relevant issues to other committees as appropriate.

6.2 Deans of Schools/Heads of Services have a duty to report annually to the Student Affairs Committee on any written complaints. This may be done by providing copies of the relevant correspondence (that is, the student's written complaint and the Dean of School's/Head of Service's written reply as set out in the Complaints Procedure) in confidence to the Secretary to the Student Affairs Committee, who will provide an anonymised report. They should also report on any general issues that have been highlighted by any informal or formal complaints.

6.3 The Taught Courses Committee will monitor the pattern of appeals, referring any relevant issues to other committees as appropriate.

6.4 The University is keen to develop and improve its procedures. If you have any comments about the complaints and appeals procedures please tell the Secretary to the Student Affairs Committee / Taught Courses Committee as appropriate.

7 Relationship to other procedures

7.1 Issues covered by other specific University policies cannot be dealt with under the procedures for complaints and appeals. For example, this procedure cannot be used to appeal against decisions made under the Student Code of Discipline.