



Student Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Student Complaints Procedure is the name given to the process under which you are able to complain about a course of study or a service offered by the Arts University Bournemouth.
- 1.2 If you are considering making a complaint, you should refer to the *Student Complaints Procedure Guidance for Students* for further information and advice.

2. Definition of a complaint

- a. Under this procedure a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the University's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University. Examples of this might be where the University has not followed its own policies and procedures, or where the service outlined in one of its published documents has not been delivered.
- b. You should raise any complaint within 6 months of the cause of your complaint, or within 3 months of leaving the University. The Arts University Bournemouth will not accept complaints which fall outside these timescales unless you can provide evidence that you were materially prevented from submitting a complaint more promptly.

3. Early Resolution

- 3.1 The most effective way of raising and addressing any matter which is causing you concern is to discuss it directly with the person involved on an informal basis. The Arts University Bournemouth expects the majority of complaints to be resolved in this way. The *Student Complaints Procedure Guidance for Students* includes advice on how best to raise an informal complaint.
- 3.2 If you do not feel able to discuss your informal complaint with the person involved, the Head of Student Services can help you prepare and accompany you to the meeting.
- 3.3 If your complaint concerns a particular member of staff, you may be offered mediation with a trained mediator to help resolve the issue. The meeting or mediation will usually take place within 10 working days.
- 3.4 If you do not feel able to attend mediation or believe that early resolution is not possible or appropriate, you should make a formal complaint.

4. Formal complaint

- 4.1 You should complete a Student Complaints Form (available from Student Services), summarising your complaint and any resolution you are seeking. You should make clear any attempts at Early Resolution which have been made, and the outcome. Additional details or any supporting evidence should be attached securely to the form.

- 4.2 You should take your completed complaints form to the Head of Student Services. The Head can offer you advice about the complaints process, and will undertake an initial evaluation to check that your complaint is appropriate for formal investigation under the Student Complaints Procedure. The Head of Student Services may refer your complaint to a different procedure, or may request that you take steps to resolve your complaint informally if you have not already done so. The Head of Student Services will also check that your complaint has been raised within the timescales specified in 2.2 above.
- 4.3 If the Head of Student Services accepts the complaint, s/he will appoint a member of AUB staff to investigate your complaint, in consultation with the University Secretary. This may be a Principal Lecturer (not from a course within your own Faculty), a Dean of Faculty (not the Dean of your own Faculty), a Manager, or a Head of Section. The Head of Student Services will provide the investigator with copies of your Student Complaints Form and any supporting documentation, including summary notes of any meetings at the Informal Resolution meeting.
- 4.4 The investigator will contact you within 5 working days to acknowledge receipt of your complaint. The investigator will conduct an investigation into your complaint and will prepare a report outlining the findings. He / she will let you know how long the investigation is likely to take and will set a date by which you can expect to receive their report. This will usually be within 1 calendar month of receiving the details of your complaint. The investigator may request a meeting with you to clarify and agree the issues to be investigated.
- 4.5 The investigator will provide you with a report detailing the outcome of their investigation (note that information relating to other staff or students may be masked for reasons of confidentiality). A copy will also be sent to the Head of Student Services.
- 4.6 You have up to 10 working days after receiving the report to let the Head of Student Services know if you wish the matter to progress to the Review stage of the Student Complaints Procedure.
- 4.7 You may request that your formal complaint is reviewed on the following grounds:
- To request a review of the procedures that were followed at the Formal stage;
 - To request a consideration of whether the outcome stated in the report was reasonable, given all the circumstances;
 - That you have new material evidence which you were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process
- 4.8 If you wish to progress your complaint to the Review stage you should state clearly the grounds for your request; you may do this in person, by email or in writing. If you do not notify the Head of Student Services of your wish to progress to the Review stage within 10 working days of receiving the investigator's report, the Head of Student Services will assume that you do not wish to pursue your complaint and will issue a letter confirming that your complaint has been concluded.

5. Review Stage

- 5.1 The Head of Student Services will refer your complaint to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, or a nominee who is a member of the University Management Team who has not previously been involved with your complaint. The Head of Student Services will provide the Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee with copies of your Student Complaints Form and any supporting documentation, including a copy of the investigator's report.

- 5.2 The Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee will review your complaint and the grounds under which you have requested a review, and will make one of the following decisions following consideration of the complaint:
- That the complaint is not upheld. This decision will be made where the Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee finds that you have not established sufficient grounds to substantiate the complaint or complaints alleged.
 - That the complaint is upheld. In this instance, the Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee will recommend the action that should now be taken by the University, or its representatives, to redress the complaint. In making this judgement, the Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee will have due consideration for your own preferred resolution and may if appropriate overturn the outcome of the Formal stage.
 - That there are outstanding issues for investigation. In this instance, the Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee will refer the outstanding issues to the investigator who investigated the Formal Complaint. The investigator will provide the Deputy Vice Chancellor with a report detailing the outcome of their additional investigations within 5 working days. You will also receive a copy of this report. The Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee will then make a judgement to uphold, or not uphold, your complaint.
- 5.3 The Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee will inform you of the outcome of their review in writing within 10 working days of the complaint being referred to them or, if there were outstanding issues for investigation, within 10 days of receiving the investigator's additional report.
- 5.4 In all cases the decision of the Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee is the final stage of AUB's Students Complaints Procedure.

6. Completion of Procedures

- 6.1 The Head of Student Services will send a Completion of Procedures letter to you within 10 working days of the written notification from the Deputy Vice Chancellor or nominee. This letter is the formal notification that all AUB procedures have been completed.
- 6.2 If you are not satisfied with the outcome and wish to pursue the matter further, you have the right to refer your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). You must do this within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter. Details of the OIA will be enclosed with the Completion of Procedures letter, or may be obtained from AUB's Student Services. Information is also available from the OIA's website: www.oiahe.org.uk
- 6.3.1 Copies of all documents will be held confidentially by Student Services and will be used for statistical monitoring purposes. A summary of all formal complaints is reported within AUB's Annual Service Review. It is also reported within the Overview Report on annual monitoring, presented to Academic Board.

The Arts University Bournemouth is committed to the provision of a working and learning environment founded on dignity, respect and equity where unfair discrimination of any kind is treated with the utmost seriousness. It has developed and implemented an Equalities Strategy and Action Plan to guide its work in this area. All the University's policies and practices are designed to meet the principles of dignity, respect and fairness, and take account of the commitments set out in the Equalities Strategy.

This policy has been subject to an equality analysis to ensure consideration with regard to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

Date of last EA review: July 2014
Date of last Policy Review: July 2015

