

Complaints Policy and Procedure for Non-Student

Effective from 01 August 2026

Contents

Complaints Policy and Procedure for Non-Student.....	1
Contents.....	2
Introduction	4
Our aims.....	4
Definitions.....	4
1. Is the Complaints Procedure right for you?.....	6
1.1 Local Council	6
1.2 Other civil or community services	6
1.3 Report and Support.....	6
1.4 Complaints about Staff	6
2. Who can complain?	6
3. Types of complaint considered under this policy and procedure	7
4. Your complaint.....	8
5. Making a complaint	8
6. Our Complaints Procedure	8
7. Our commitment to you	8
8. Timescales.....	9
9. The process	9
10. Meeting to discuss a complaint	9
11. Principles of Investigation.....	9
11.1 Standard of evidence	10
11.2 Good Reason.....	10
11.3 Outcome	11
11.4 What should I expect from a response?	11
12. Complaints against a member of staff.....	12
13. Vexatious and malicious complaints.....	12
13.1 Vexatious complaints.....	12
13.2 Malicious Complaints.....	13
14. Anonymous complaints	14
15. Criminal behaviour and legal proceedings	14
15.1 Allegations of Criminal Behaviour	14

15.2 If You Are Subject to Allegations or Legal Proceedings	14
15.3 Complaints and Legal Proceedings Against the University.....	14
16. If your complaint relates to a partner institution of UWE.....	15
17. If the complaint relates to a student in a work placement	15
18. Ownership and oversight.....	16
19. Version history.....	16
Appendix 1 – Key related policies	17
Appendix 2: Key contacts.....	17

Introduction

The University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) is committed to providing high quality services and to treating complaints as a valuable source of feedback that can inform service improvement and institutional learning.

This procedure is designed to address expressions of dissatisfaction from individuals or groups about the University's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University, where a response is required.

Our aims

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicise the existence of our Complaints Procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To make sure everyone at UWE Bristol knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definitions

We/Us/Our/the University/UWE Bristol means the University of the West of England, Bristol.

You/Your means you, any individual or group of individuals not registered as a student at UWE.

Programme means a course or programme of study.

Partner/Partner Institution means an institution or organisation with which the university has a contractual agreement to deliver courses approved by the university and which lead to university awards.

Reasonable means an outcome or expectation that a reasonable person might expect. This is often based on the principle of a hypothetical average person used to judge conduct. It's a neutral, objective benchmark that avoids personal biases.

Balance of Probabilities means the standard of proof used in student casework. It requires that a fact is established if it is more likely than not to have occurred, i.e., there is a greater than 50% chance that the event or circumstance happened.

Proportionate Means a fair, focused, and balanced inquiry that is appropriately scoped, evidence-based, and conducted efficiently in line with institutional policy and student rights.

1. Is the Complaints Procedure right for you?

Whilst the Complaints Procedure can be used to address concerns relating to a wide variety of University matters, there may be other options available that are either better suited to the issue or that are considered preferable to raising a complaint. Other routes you can use include:

1.1 Local Council

If your concern relates to matters such as housing conditions, noise disturbances in the community, or issues with private landlords, your local council may be the appropriate authority to contact. They have powers to investigate and enforce standards in areas such as housing, environmental health, and public safety.

1.2 Other civil or community services

For issues involving personal wellbeing, safety, or legal matters, you may wish to seek support from services such as:

- **Citizens Advice** – for free, confidential advice on legal, financial, or housing issues.
- **Police or emergency services** – for incidents involving criminal behaviour or immediate safety concerns.
- **NHS or mental health services** – for health-related support, including counselling and crisis intervention.

1.3 Report and Support

If your concern involves student conduct e.g. harassment, bullying, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or other forms of unacceptable behaviour, you can report it through the Report and Support platform. This system allows you to report incidents anonymously or with your name, and access support services.

<https://reportandsupport.uwe.ac.uk/>

1.4 Complaints about Staff

If your concern involves the conduct or behaviour of a staff member or someone you believe to be a staff member, you may still use the Complaints Procedure. However, depending on the nature of the issue, it may be more appropriate to raise directly with People Services.

2. Who can complain?

The Complaints Procedure can be used by the following:

- Visitors to the University.
- Contractors working in the University.
- Employers and placement providers.
- Members of the public.
- Alumni, who are not currently registered.
- UWE Staff – for example where the complaint relates to a service (e.g., car parking), but not personal grievances (which are covered by the Grievance Procedure).
- Other organisations with which the University works, this includes, for example, placement providers, partner institutions delivery UWE courses.
- Third parties.

Prospective students can use this complaints procedure to raise issues or concerns about services and provision related to open/offers holder days and other services offered by the university. For issues specifically related to the application and admission process prospective students should consult the Admissions Policy.

If you wish to make a complaint it is strongly encouraged that you do so personally.

3. Types of complaint considered under this policy and procedure

A complaint may relate to the University's services, facilities, or the conduct of its staff, and can be submitted by anyone who interacts with the University. Complaints may concern, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- **Service Delivery and Administration:** Issues with the quality, accessibility, or timeliness of services provided by the University, including administrative processes, customer service, or the application of policies and procedures.
- **Facilities and Campus Environment:** Concerns about the condition, accessibility, or safety of university buildings, grounds, or other physical resources.
- **Staff Conduct or Behaviour:** Allegations of inappropriate, unprofessional, or discriminatory behaviour by University staff or representatives.
- **Communication and Information:** Inaccurate, misleading, or insufficient information provided by the University, including on websites, in printed materials, or during events.
- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion:** Experiences of discrimination, harassment, or unfair treatment based on protected characteristics or other personal attributes.
- **Health and Safety:** Concerns about unsafe practices, hazards, or breaches of health and safety regulations on university premises.
- **Freedom of Speech and Expression:** Issues relating to the upholding of lawful freedom of speech and academic freedom within University spaces or events.

4. Your complaint

When you submit a complaint, it is important to include all relevant points in chronological order, you should aim to be as clear and concise as possible as this will help us respond to your complaint more quickly.

Be clear and realistic about the outcome you are seeking. It will be more difficult to address your complaint if your goal is unclear, or if you are asking for something that is not possible.

Details of a complaint may need to be shared with relevant colleagues for a full investigation to take place, and individuals named in a complaint will be made aware of the allegations and can give their version of events.

5. Making a complaint

What should I include in my complaint? There is a form which you can complete on the website which asks the relevant questions in relation to the complaint. This includes:

- Complainant's name, address, telephone number, email address and programme (as appropriate)
- The nature of the complaint (in the complainant's own words)
- The steps already taken including at Stage One of this procedure
- Details of the response received
- A statement about why the complainant remains CA
- The outcome being sought

6. Our Complaints Procedure

Complaints should be made directly to the Casework Team via the online form, if this is not possible please contact studentcaseowrk@uwe.ac.uk for advice, the Casework Team will determine which service, team or individual within the university is best placed to consider the case.

7. Our commitment to you

Throughout the complaint process we will:

- Take all complaints seriously.
- Treat you with respect at all times.
- Not treat you differently because you have made a complaint.
- Be open and accessible.
- Be accountable and apologise if we are wrong.
- Be fair to all parties involved.
- Encourage local resolution in as many cases as possible.

8. Timescales

A complaint should be submitted as soon as possible after the event or incident being complained about occurs or the issue is identified. A complaint will not normally be accepted if submitted more than 28 calendar days after the incident or event unless there was good reason why a complaint could not have been submitted sooner.

We aim to provide you with an acknowledgement of receipt within seven calendar days giving an estimated indication of the timescale for a full response to be given.

The complaint will be allocated to a relevant member of staff who will commence the investigation. They will aim to respond in full within 42 calendar days of the complaint being received, providing there are no undue delays, for example in obtaining further evidence from you.

Where this is not possible, for example because a complaint is particularly complex, we will contact you to provide an update and an estimated timeframe.

In these cases, we would expect a response to be given within no more than 84 Calendar days.

9. The process

Once the complaint has been received:

- The Casework Team identify an investigator from the relevant school or service and will provide a brief outline of the concerns raised.
- If necessary, the member of staff investigating may telephone you to discuss your complaint and/or seek more details.
- The complaint will then be investigated, speaking to relevant parties and requesting further information or evidence as appropriate.

10. Meeting to discuss a complaint

In some circumstances, where the facts of the case warrant it, the investigator handling your complaint may arrange a meeting with you and other relevant University staff, to establish the precise cause of dissatisfaction or explore the remedy being sought.

11. Principles of Investigation

The University will take a proportionate approach to investigations. A proportionate investigation is one that is:

- Appropriate in scope to the seriousness and complexity of the issue raised.
- Focused on the specific allegations or concerns without unnecessary expansion.

- Balanced and fair, ensuring that the rights and interests of all parties involved are considered.
- Efficient and timely, avoiding undue delay while allowing sufficient time for a thorough review.
- Transparent and accountable, with clear documentation of decisions and rationale.

In practice, this means:

1. Limiting the investigation to the actual allegations made, avoiding excessive or irrelevant inquiries.
2. Gathering evidence that is necessary and proportionate to the seriousness of the case (e.g., not requiring extensive CCTV searches for minor complaints).
3. Mitigating bias by ensuring impartiality and recording decisions clearly.
4. Using discretion responsibly, guided by institutional policies and ethical standards.
5. Communicating regularly with the complainant about the progress and outcomes of the investigation.

11.1 Standard of evidence

When we review a complaint, we use the balance of probabilities as the standard of proof. This means we decide what is more likely than not to have happened based on the evidence available.

- We do not require absolute certainty or proof beyond doubt.
- Instead, we look at all the information provided and ask:
“Is it more likely than not that the events occurred as described?”

What This Means for You

- You should provide any evidence you have that supports your account (e.g., emails, letters, screenshots, witness statements).
- We will consider the reliability and relevance of all evidence, including information from University staff and records.
- If there is conflicting evidence, we will weigh both sides and decide based on what seems most probable.

Our aim is to be fair, impartial, and transparent in reaching a conclusion.

11.2 Good Reason

A “good reason” is an exceptional circumstance that prevented you from raising the issue within the 28-day timeframe. Examples of good reason may include, but are not limited to:

- **Serious illness or incapacity:** of you or a close family member during the relevant period.
- **Bereavement:** or another significant personal crisis.
- **Unavoidable absence:** or inability to access communication channels, for example being overseas without internet access.

- **New evidence or information:** that only became available after the 28-day period.
- **Reasonable reliance on advice:** from the University that delayed the complaint being raised.
- **Other exceptional circumstances:** beyond your control that made it impracticable to submit the complaint sooner.

We will ask you to provide an explanation and supporting evidence where possible to demonstrate why the delay was unavoidable.

11.3 Outcome

Upon concluding the investigation into your complaint, the investigator may decide that your complaint is either; not justified, partly justified, justified in part or justified.

Where a complaint is found to be justified, partly justified or justified in part, the outcome will depend heavily upon the accepted grounds of complaint.

Where the University is found to have made a mistake or fallen short of reasonable expectations, an apology will be given, the mistake rectified where appropriate, and actions taken to prevent the same mistake happening again.

11.4 What should I expect from a response?

A response will be sent to the complainant in writing, it will

- Indicate the outcome
- Reasons for the outcome

The outcome is final.

12. Complaints against a member of staff

It is recognised that a small minority of complaints may be made about actions or behaviour by a member of UWE staff. If a complaint refers to a specific member of staff, the complaint will be brought to the attention of that individual (generally by their relevant Line Manager) as part of the investigation of the complaint.

The staff member will be kept informed at all stages and will have the right to make representations to the investigator and/or the Student Casework Team if they are unhappy with the investigation or proposed outcome of the complaint.

A complaint against a member of staff will generally be investigated in line with this procedure, however, it may be necessary to refer a complaint to the People and Organisational Development department (see Appendix 2), particularly where the complaint is relevant to another University policy, for example:

- Staff Conduct
- Staff Performance
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Freedom of Speech
- Dignity and Respect
- Equality and Diversity
- Anti Bullying and Harassment
- Advice and support

13. Vexatious and malicious complaints

Malicious complaints differ from vexatious complaints in their intent: while vexatious complaints may arise from unreasonable behaviour or persistent grievances, malicious complaints are specifically designed to harm or deceive.

13.1 Vexatious complaints

The University understands that if you make a complaint then it is of concern to you no matter what others might think. However, we will dismiss a complaint at any time if, in our judgement, it is frivolous or vexatious. The following non-exhaustive list illustrates when we may determine that a complaint is frivolous or vexatious:

- The complaint provides no new information to that set out in a complaint previously submitted by you and considered under this scheme.
- You continually change the substance of a complaint.
- You have acted aggressively, or offensively, or abusively, or have made unreasonable demands on us.

- Your complaint does not clearly identify issues or matters that are the subject of the complaint.
- You have not complied with our information requirements on several occasions.
- Your complaint concerns matters which in the university's judgment are trivial.
- The complaints are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or repetitious.
- There is an insistence in pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.
- There is an insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.
- The complaints are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.

Deciding whether a complaint is vexatious is a difficult challenge for the University and any decision is only taken once all relevant circumstances have been considered. This may include considering interactions prior or parallel to the complaint in question. Any final decision will usually be taken by the relevant Director of Service in consultation with the Student Casework Team.

Frivolous or unreasonably persistent complaints will not be accepted. The University reserves the right to take appropriate disciplinary and/or legal action against anyone considered to have made such a complaint.

13.2 Malicious Complaints

A malicious complaint is a complaint made with the deliberate intent to cause harm, distress, or disadvantage to another person or the institution, without any genuine basis or evidence to support the claims.

These complaints may involve knowingly false statements or fabricated evidence and may be driven by motives such as retaliation, personal vendettas, or attempts to manipulate university processes.

A complaint may be considered malicious if it demonstrates one or more of the following behaviours:

- **False Allegations:** Knowingly making untrue claims against another student, staff member, or the institution.
- **Fabrication of Evidence:** Presenting falsified or manipulated evidence to support the complaint.
- **Intent to Harm:** The primary motivation for the complaint is to cause distress, damage reputations, or disrupt another person's academic or professional standing.
- **Vindictive Behaviour:** The complaint arises from personal grudges or retaliation against individuals or groups.
- **Manipulation of Processes:** Using the complaints procedure to gain an unfair advantage or derail legitimate casework processes.

Malicious complaints will not be accepted, and The University reserves the right to take appropriate disciplinary and/or legal action against anyone considered to have made such a complaint.

14. Anonymous complaints

Complaints require investigation to enable resolution. Where a complaint is made anonymously, it will not be possible to undertake such an investigation. For practical reasons therefore, no action will normally be taken in the event of a complaint made anonymously. However relevant data will be collected and kept as a record of issues arising to help inform broader university responses and improve services.

15. Criminal behaviour and legal proceedings

Complaints that allege or involve potential criminal behaviour will be taken seriously and with all due consideration of any relevant external processes.

15.1 Allegations of criminal behaviour

If your complaint involves allegations of criminal behaviour, please know that these will be taken seriously. Where appropriate, we will refer you to on-campus support services and, if necessary, to the Police (Avon & Somerset Constabulary). Our priority is to ensure your safety and wellbeing while handling the matter appropriately.

15.2 If you are subject to allegations or legal proceedings

If you are the subject of allegations of criminal behaviour or legal proceedings related to the matters raised in your complaint, we will continue to treat you fairly and with respect. In most cases, we will pause our internal complaints process until the outcome of those proceedings is known. This is to avoid any conflict between our process and the legal process and to ensure that decisions are based on the full facts.

During this time:

- We will keep you informed about the status of your complaint.
- Once the legal process concludes, we will review your complaint promptly and fairly.

15.3 Complaints and legal proceedings against the University

If court or tribunal proceedings are started against the University and these relate to your complaint, we will normally pause our internal process until the legal case is resolved. This ensures that the outcome of the legal process is respected and does not conflict with our own procedures. We will keep you informed and provide support during this time.

16. If your complaint relates to a partner institution of UWE

If your complaint relates to a partner institution, we expect you to use the complaints procedure of that institution in the first instance.

17. If the complaint relates to a student in a work placement

If your complaint relates to a student on placement, you should use the complaints procedure for the placement provider/employer.

If however, you consider that there is relevance to UWE Bristol in relation to your concerns, you can also pursue a complaint through this procedure but please note that the concern must be one which UWE has authority for and the relevant operational influence under which any proposed resolution can be achieved. UWE Bristol may choose to share details of your complaint with the placement provider where relevant or signpost the complainant to the provider if the issue is not one that UWE Bristol can investigate.

Please note that UWE Bristol may be advised of any complaint which is raised with a provider unless it is of a confidential nature. Records of such data are maintained in line with UWE's Data Protection standards.

18. Ownership and oversight

Document name:	Complaints Policy and Procedure for Non Students
Version number:	V24.11.01
Equality Analysis:	[Date submitted and outcome]
First approved by:	Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee
This version approved by:	
Effective from:	01 August 2026
Next review date:	June 2028
Senior Policy Owner:	Director of Educational Enhancement and Assurance
Policy Author:	Head of Student Casework and Insight
Overseeing committee:	Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee
Compliance measures:	Annual Casework Report; Annual Quality Report
Related policies, procedures, and codes of practice:	Complaints Policy and Procedure for Students
Related legislative and/or regulatory requirements	Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

19. Version history

Version	Date	Summary of changes	Author
V24.11.01	24/11/25	New	Head of Student Casework and Insight

Appendix 1 – Key related policies

- A complete list of the University's policies is available on the University's website at <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/about/structure-and-governance/policies>

Appendix 2: Key contacts

- Information Points - <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/life/campus-and-facilities/information-points>
- Office for Students - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/quality-and-standards/freedom-of-speech/raising-concerns-about-free-speech/>
- People and Organisational Development - <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/about/services/people-organisation-development/contact-us>
- Student Casework Team – <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/about/contact-us/complaints/advice-and-support>