GUIDE FOR STUDENTS
YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

This document is a walk-through process to assist you in understanding the University's Student Complaints Policy & Procedure ('the Procedure'). **You are strongly encouraged to read this guide, together with the Procedure, prior to completing your Student Complaint Form.**

A copy of the Procedure can be located at **www.tees.ac.uk/studentregulations**, and further information on submitting your Student Complaint Form to the Student Casework Office can be found in this guide.

1. What is a Complaint?

The University broadly defines a complaint as *"an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about something a provider has done or not done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider".*

Please note that if you are directly enrolled with the University studying a programme delivered by a Partner Institution you should, in the first instance, use the Partner Institution's Complaints Procedure.

If you are directly enrolled with a Partner Institution and studying a course for which the University is the awarding body, the use of this Procedure is limited to issues which the University has direct control over, for example, academic standards, course delivery, teaching, feedback, and learning resources. In these circumstances, only where you have exhausted the Partner Institution's Complaints Procedure, may you refer your Complaint to the Student Casework Office, under Stage 2 of the Procedure.

If your Complaint relates to a service-related issue which is under the control of the Partner Institution, for example, issues with the facilities, the Partner Institution, if they are a member of the OIA, will deal with all aspects of your Complaint and, on conclusion of its internal complaints process, will issue you with a 'Completion of Procedures' letter. In cases where the Partner Institution is not a member of the OIA the conclusion of Partner Institution's Complaints Procedure concludes your case.

If you are an Apprentice, enrolled on an Apprenticeship with the University, you may also ask the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to consider your complaint.

2. Where can I get advice?

The Student Casework Office can assist you with the process:
Email: sco@tees.ac.uk

The **Students' Union** can provide you with free, independent advice and guidance on your individual circumstances. If you are enrolled on a course which is validated by Teesside University and delivered by a Partner Institution, please contact your own Students' Union or equivalent. You are advised to contact the Students' Union prior to completing and submitting your application form.
Email: suss@tees-su.org.uk

For additional support you can contact the University's **Student and Library Services** who offer a wide range of services, including welfare advice, counselling and disability services:
Email: studentlife@tees.ac.uk

3. What can I complain about?

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The quality and standards of service provided by the University, its staff or a third party acting on behalf of the University (subject to paragraph 5.2.4 below);
- Failure by the University or its staff to provide a service, or other lack of action by the University or its staff (subject to paragraph 5.2.4 below);
- Misleading or incorrect information in promotional material and other information provided by the University;
- Concerns about the delivery of a course, teaching or administration including, where applicable, those delivered by a Partner Institution;
- The quality of facilities, services or learning resources;
- Events causing significant disruption to the normal delivery of a course, service or aspect of the student experience, such as industrial action, or a public health emergency;
- Inappropriate behaviour or treatment by a staff member, for example, disorderly, abusive, threating, intimidating, indecent, slanderous, libellous, or any form of bullying and harassment, victimisation, discrimination against any person on the grounds of age, disability, race, ethnic, or national origin, religion, or beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, marriage or civil partnership or socio-economic background;
- Failure of the University to follow a policy or procedure, for example relating to financial support, immigration process or welfare support;

- A complaint relating to the Students' Union, which remains unresolved at the conclusion of the Students' Union's own procedure;
- Unfair disadvantage attributable to opting out of Students' Union membership;
- Complaints about a service delivered by another organisation or contractor on behalf of the University that has affected the student's learning experience;
- Complaints relating to freedom of speech or academic freedom matters.

4. What can the procedure not be used for?

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A concern or comment, which is informal and the University believes does not require any further action;
- A concern about a decision made by an Assessment Board regarding an assessment decision, progression or award, which would normally be considered under the University's Academic Appeal Regulations;
- A concern raised by a student against another student. Such matters should first be brought to the attention of the University under the University's Student Disciplinary Regulations. However, a reporting student may submit a complaint under this process if they have concerns regarding the fairness followed, or new evidence that could make a difference to the outcome which the student could not have reasonably provided earlier;
- A concern about a decision made under another process, for example (but not limited to) the:
  - Fitness to Practise Regulations.
  - Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure.
  - Extenuating Circumstances Regulations (Taught Provision) or Extenuating Circumstances Regulations (Research Degree Programmes).
  - Student Disciplinary Regulations.
  - Student Attendance and Engagement Policy and Procedure.
  - Academic Misconduct Regulations (Taught Provision).
  - Framework and Code of Practise for Ensuring Research Integrity.
- A routine, first-time request for a service;
- A request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000;
- A request under the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018;
- A request for information on University policy, procedure or regulation;
- A response to an invitation to provide feedback or when feedback is given through the general web;
- Forms or surveys seeking feedback;

- An insurance claim;
- An attempt to have a complaint reconsidered when the matter complained of has already exhausted the University's procedures and a 'Completion of Procedures' letter has been issued;
- A grievance by a student who is also a member of staff; such cases are to be handled through the appropriate Human Resources procedures;
- Complaints relating to the Student Loans Company, which has its own Complaints Procedures.
- A complaint relating to a service issue which by its nature is not in the control of the University.
- Complaints relating to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.
- Complaints made by applicants regarding admission decisions which are dealt with under the University's Admissions Policy Appeals Process.

5. What if I am unsure whether my issue(s) fall under the Procedure?

You should contact an Adviser from the Students' Union who will be able to assist you.

6. What are the timescales for submitting a Complaint?

In order to ensure that your Complaint is dealt with quickly, the University expects that you initially attempt to resolve it by early resolution as soon as possible after the event. However, a formal complaint must be raised **30 days** after the matters complained about have occurred, or within 30 days from the date of the most recent event.

If your Complaint cannot be resolved by early resolution, then you should submit a formal Complaint (Stage 1 - Formal Resolution Stage).

You should complete and submit a Stage 1 Student Complaint Form, available from the Student Casework Office or **www.tees.ac.uk/studentregulations**, and submit this to the Student Casework Office.

If you still remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your Stage 1 Complaint, you have the opportunity to submit a Stage 2 (Review Stage) Complaint. A Stage 2 Student Complaint Form is available from the Student Casework Office or **www.tees.ac.uk/studentregulations**, and must be submitted to the Student Casework Office within **7 days** of the written outcome of Stage 1.

The Procedure is also available to former students at the University who submit a written Complaint no longer than **30 days** from the notification of awards related to their relevant course

of study. In cases where public notification of awards is not given, a formal complaint (Stage 1) may be made no later than 30 days of the Record of Progress being issued to the student, or within 30 days of the termination of a student's contract (for example, a withdrawal date) whichever is the latter.

If a late Complaint is submitted, you must include a separate written statement for the late submission, supported by evidence (if applicable) which will be considered by the University's nominee. If the decision is not to accept a late complaint, the student's complaint will be closed, and the student may request a 'Completion of Procedures' letter from the Student Casework Office within 28 days from the issue date of the University's nominee's decision.

7. Can I make an anonymous Complaint?

A Complaint will not normally be dealt with by the University if submitted anonymously. However, the University may need to take action if evidence is presented that a risk to the public exists.

8. What if I would like somebody else to act on my behalf?

It is not permissible for the University to communicate with external third parties regarding your Complaint without your written consent. This includes a representative from your Students' Union, legal representative, parent, guardian or spouse. Therefore, if you wish the University to be able to discuss your case with a third party, you will need to confirm this on your Student Complaint Form.

9. Can I bring a friend to meetings?

Where a meeting has been arranged with you to discuss your Complaint you may bring one friend. A friend for the purpose of this process is a person who, at your request, may come with you and speak on your behalf. This person may be a representative from the Students' Union and cannot be a person who act as a representative or attends in any legal capacity. Please notify the Student Casework Office if you intend to bring a friend with you to a meeting.

10. Will my Complaint remain confidential?

Your Complaint will be handled with discretion, and access will only be provided to those who have a legitimate reason to access the information for the purposes of investigating your Complaint. With your agreement, a copy of your Complaint will be circulated to the relevant individual(s) who may be the subject of the Complaint. To assist in the investigation of your Complaint the University may need to gather information held by its staff or third parties. Please

note that if you do not provide agreement to your Complaint being disclosed, it may not be possible for the University to undertake a full investigation or resolve your issues.

11. What information must I include?

It is also important that you include with your Student Complaint Form any relevant documentation to support your case and list the documentation you are including on your Student Complaint Form.

You are strongly advised to keep a copy of your Student Complaint Form and any supporting documentation. Documents supplied as part of your Complaint will not normally be returned. Where photocopies of documents are submitted, you may be required to provide the Student Casework Office with sight of the original documents in order to verify their authenticity. If evidence is provided in a language other than English, it is your responsibility to have it independently translated.

12. How do I complete the Student Complaint Form?

Before completing your Application Form, we recommend that you seek advice from an Adviser in your Students' Union.

A copy of the Application Form can be located at **www.tees.ac.uk/studentregulations**. Your completed application form should be submitted to the Student Casework Office via email.

The Student Complaint Form is divided into sections, and it is important that you complete all relevant sections, as any omissions may result in a delay with your Complaint being processed. The sections identified below **must** be completed:

Section 1: Personal details and Course information

Section 2: Early Resolution

Section 3: Your Complaint
Whilst we appreciate that the issues giving rise to your complaint may be complex, please ensure that your complaint application is clear, concise and focused on the specific concerns you wish the University to consider. Clearly explain what has happened, why you are dissatisfied and the outcome or resolution you are seeking.

Where possible, set out the key events in chronological order and avoid lengthy background information or repetition that is not directly relevant to your complaint. Please refer to any supporting evidence that you consider relevant and submit this with your completed application.

A clear and well-structured complaint will help the University identify the key issues and ensure that your concerns can be considered effectively.

Section 4: Category of Complaint

Section 5: Outcome sought

Section 6: The involvement of an Adviser
As mentioned above, you are encouraged to seek advice from your Students' Union on completing your Student Complaint Form.

It is important that you understand that by ticking the box you are giving your consent for the Student Casework Office to discuss your case with your Adviser.

Section 7: Privacy Notice and Declaration
It is important you understand that by signing the Student Complaint Form or emailing it to sco@tees.ac.uk, you are verifying that the information contained therein, together with any accompanying documentation is true. You are also thereby agreeing to the Student Casework Office processing your personal data for the purposes of logging, coordinating, progressing and facilitating resolution of the matter(s). The Student Casework Office will only process your personal data (which may include requesting or sharing personal data with staff and or Panels within Schools/Departments/Partner Institutions) for these express purposes. The Student Casework Office will obtain your express consent to process any special category data which includes e.g. health records. Any personal data, including special category data, will only be processed to the extent necessary in order to properly administer your case, and appropriate safeguards are in place to ensure security of your personal data.

- **Third Party Data:**
  Please note that third party data will normally only be accepted with the written consent of the person concerned. If you plan to submit third party data without the consent of the individual, please ensure that it is anonymised (for example, names and any other personal data is redacted). Anonymising personal data may detract from the use or purpose of the information provided and consent is therefore preferable to ensure that the matter is properly considered. The University may refuse to accept documents, which include third party data without consent, and which have not been anonymised and you may be asked

to resubmit such evidence once consent is obtained or anonymisation has taken place. Where non-anonymised third-party personal data has been accepted in error, the University reserves the right to redact the personal data. Processing of personal data in this way will be under the lawful basis of legitimate interest and in the public interest.

- **Disability or Specific Learning Disability:**
  Please ensure that you have identified on your Student Complaint Form whether you have a disability or specific learning difficulty and require any adjustments in order that the University can provide you with appropriate support to access this process. If you have difficulty submitting your Application Form via email, wish for it in a different format, or you wish to discuss your requirements please contact the Student Casework Office.

14. What should I check before submitting my Student Complaint Form?

- you have read and understood the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure;
- you have completed all relevant fields on this Application Form;
- you have fully and clearly stated what would be a satisfactory outcome;
- you have identified whether you have any specific requirements relating to a disability or specific learning difficulty (should you wish to discuss your requirements please contact the Student Casework Office);
- you have clearly labelled any accompanying sheets;
- you have included all relevant documentary evidence to support your Complaint;
- where you have submitted Personal Data regarding a third party you have obtained written consent from that individual to share their Personal Data and have provided this with your Application, or you have anonymised the Personal Data;
- you have taken a copy of your Application Form for your own records.

15. How do I submit my completed Student Complaint Form?

Email it to: sco@tees.ac.uk

16. How will I know when the process is complete?

At the conclusion of the University's internal procedures, you will normally be issued with a 'Completion of Procedures' letter in the manner prescribed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

17. What is the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)?

The OIA operates an independent student complaints scheme. It will only consider cases that have completed the University's internal procedures. More information on its rules can be found at **www.oiahe.org.uk**.

Student Casework Office

Student Complaints Policy and Procedure

Early Resolution	Stage 1 The Formal Stage	Stage 2 Formal Institutional Review and Final Resolution	External Escalation (Office of Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education)
▪ Straightforward concern ▪ Student contacts the School/Department directly to resolve matter(s) ▪ No form required	▪ Requires investigation ▪ Stage 1 Complaint submitted to the Student Casework Office together with evidence and will be forwarded to the relevant School/ Department	▪ Eligibility on specific grounds only ▪ Stage 2 Complaint submitted to the Student Casework Office and will be forwarded to a University's nominee for consideration	▪ Student submits a Complaint directly to the OIA

Resolution Tools including Medication/Conciliation (where deemed appropriate)

Outcome Expected	Normally within 30 days	Consideration by University's nominee	Student has 12 months from the issue of a "Completion of Procedures" letter