



Public Complaints Procedure

Approving Body: University Executive

Date of Approval: 19 September 2018

Policy owner: University Secretary

Policy contact: Geraint Pugh, secretary@aber.ac.uk / 01970 62 2114

Policy status: Revised

Version: 2.0

Review date: September 2020

Public Complaints Procedure

PLEASE NOTE

Students have recourse to a bespoke Complaints Policy. All such complaints should be lodged in accordance with this Policy, which is outlined at: www.aber.ac.uk/en/agro/handbook/complaints/.

Introduction

Aberystwyth University (AU) is committed to providing a high-quality service and experience to staff, students and members of the public.

However, there may be rare occasions where a mistake occurs and / or where individuals feel that their expectations have not been met by AU. In such circumstances, individuals are encouraged to submit feedback to AU, and are equally entitled to lodge a complaint. We need to know when things go wrong in order to put things right and, where appropriate, make improvements for the future.

These Procedures outlines how individuals can submit a complaint, and how AU in turn will respond.

Contents

Who can complain?	Page 3
Which complaints can / cannot be considered?	Page 5
Procedure for dealing with complaints	Page 6
External consideration of complaints	Page 9

Who can complain?

Members of staff, students, and the public are encouraged to submit feedback to AU, and are entitled submit a complaint. However, the process to be followed depends on any existing relationship between the University and that individual.

Staff¹

As employees of the University, staff have recourse to a number of bespoke policies and procedures, and it may be more appropriate to consider any complaint in accordance with those processes.

These policies and procedures include:

- Staff Disciplinary Procedure (Ordinance 32)
- Staff Grievance Procedure (Ordinance 33)
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures relating to the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Pro Vice-Chancellors (Ordinance 31)
- Whistleblowing (Public Interest Disclosure)
- Dignity & Respect at Work Policy
- Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research

Copies of these policies and procedures can be found at: www.aber.ac.uk/en/about-us/policies/.

Complaints with respect to the Commercial Services department should be submitted in accordance with that department's Complaints Procedure, which is available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/visitors/terms&conditions/>.

Complaints with respect to the Information Services department should be submitted in accordance with that department's Complaints Procedure, which is available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/regulations/complaints/>.

Suspensions that Aberystwyth University has breached the terms of its Welsh Language Standards should be submitted via the form available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/cgg/bilingual-policy/complaints-procedure/>.

Complaints relating to other matters should be lodged in accordance with the Procedure outlined on pages 6 and 7.

Registered Students

Students can submit their feedback to AU via the Your Voice Matters / Tell Us Now portal at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student/your-voice-matters/>.

Students have recourse to a bespoke Complaints Policy. All such complaints should be lodged in accordance with this Policy, which is outlined at: www.aber.ac.uk/en/agro/handbook/complaints/.

¹ This also applies to students who are employed by AU, where the complaint is directly related to that employment.

Suspensions that Aberystwyth University has breached the terms of its Welsh Language Standards should be submitted via the form available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/cgg/bilingual-policy/complaints-procedure/>.

Applicants

Applicants wishing to make a formal complaint in regard to an aspect of the undergraduate or postgraduate admissions service should follow the guidance available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/aqro/handbook/ug-admissions/> (for undergraduate admissions) or <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/aqro/handbook/pg-admissions/> (for postgraduate admission).

Suspensions that Aberystwyth University has breached the terms of its Welsh Language Standards should be submitted via the form available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/cgg/bilingual-policy/complaints-procedure/>.

Any complaints regarding other matters shall be dealt with in accordance with complaints submitted by the General Public.

General Public

Complaints with respect to the Commercial Services department should be submitted in accordance with that department's Complaints Procedure, which is available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/visitors/terms&conditions/>.

Complaints with respect to the Information Services department should be submitted in accordance with that department's Complaints Procedure, which is available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/regulations/complaints/>.

Suspensions that Aberystwyth University has breached the terms of its Welsh Language Standards should be submitted via the form available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/cgg/bilingual-policy/complaints-procedure/>.

Complaints relating to other matters should be lodged in accordance with the procedure outlined on pages 6 and 7.

Which complaints can / cannot be considered?

Complaints which can be considered

Unless there is another, more appropriate Complaints Procedure to which a Complainant has recourse, this Procedure can normally deal with most types of complaints, including those in relation to:

- suspicions of unlawful and unethical employment practices, including in supply chains; and
- a perceived failure to follow the University's own processes, including in relation to decision-making.

Complaints which cannot be considered

Unfortunately, there are occasions when it would not be appropriate for the University to consider a complaint in accordance with this Procedure. Such occasions include where:

- there is another, more appropriate Procedure to which a Complainant has recourse;
- the complaint is in relation to the Students' Union, which as an independent organisation has its own, separate Complaints Procedure (available at www.abersu.co.uk);
- the complaint is submitted anonymously, and the University cannot therefore issue a response to the Complainant;
- the Complainant disagrees with a decision taken by a democratic body within the University in accordance with the institution's processes; and
- a complaint is not made within 30 University working days of an issue arising.

Procedure for dealing with complaints

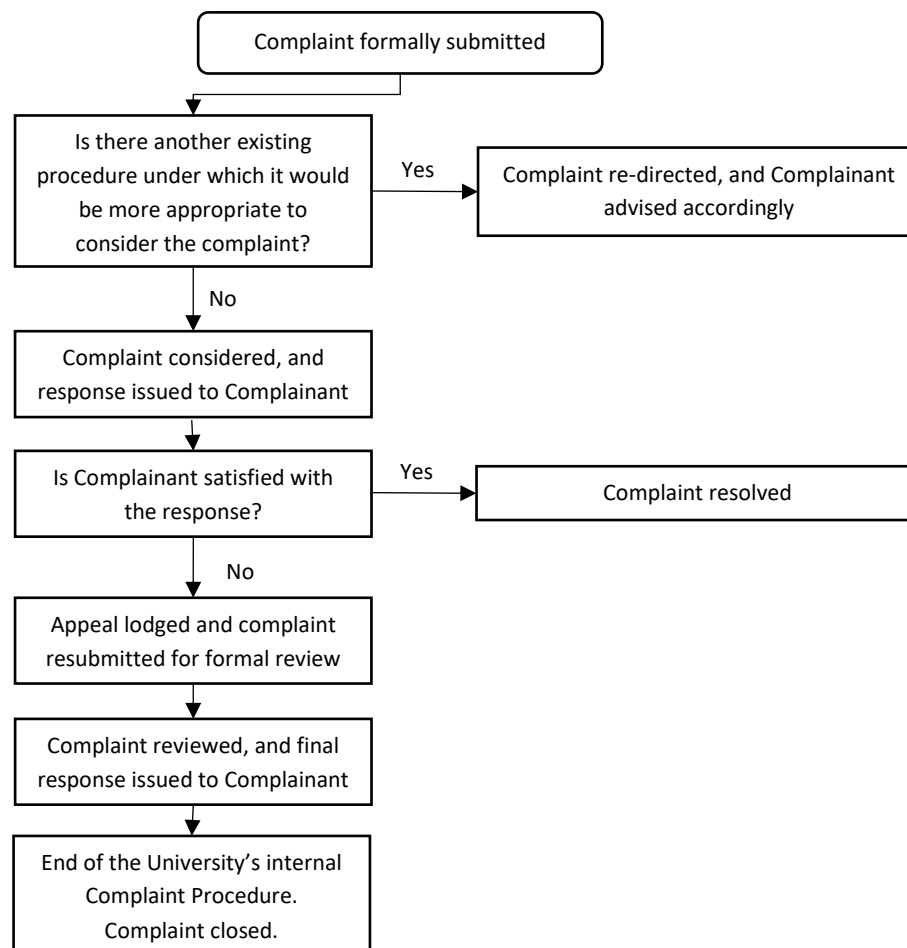
Informal Resolution

Every effort should be made in the first instance to resolve a complaint informally with the University department(s) concerned.

Should it be necessary to escalate the matter to a Formal Procedure, this should be undertaken within 10 University working days of the conclusion of the Informal Resolution stage.

Formal Procedure

The chart and text below sets out the key stages which will be followed when considering and responding to a formal complaint.



Submission of complaint

Complaints to be considered via this Formal Procedure should be submitted via:

- the online complaints form (available at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/about-us/complaints/>);
- e-mail to vice-chancellor@aber.ac.uk; or

- post to the Vice-Chancellor's Office, Aberystwyth University, Visualisation Centre, Penglais, Aberystwyth, SY23 3BF.

Complaints may be submitted in either Welsh or English, and your choice of language will not lead to a delay in receiving a response in the language of your original complaint.

All complaints received shall be subjected to a preliminary review by the Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office to ensure that it is appropriate for the complaint to be considered via this Formal Procedure. Where it would be appropriate to consider the complaint under another existing procedure, the Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office shall re-direct the complaint and advise the Complainant accordingly, enclosing a copy of the applicable procedure for information.

Consideration of the complaint

A complaint shall be forwarded to the appropriate member of the University Executive for consideration in consultation with the department(s) involved. The member of the University Executive shall normally be charged with considering and responding to a complaint on the basis of their areas of responsibility. At times, this may be the Vice-Chancellor where a complaint involves many different parts of the University.

A response shall normally be issued by the member of the University Executive to the Complainant within 10 University working days.

Sometimes, complaints can be complex and require a response to be coordinated across many departments. In such cases, and where additional time is required to issue a substantive response, the member of the University Executive charged with responding shall write to the Complainant to advise accordingly and provide an indication of the amount of time required before issuing a substantive response.

Appeal

Where a Complainant is not content with the substantive response received following the previous stage of the process, they may appeal and request that the response is reviewed at a higher level within the University.

In such circumstances, the Complainant should formally request a review of the response received via:

- e-mail to vice-chancellor@aber.ac.uk; or
- post to the Vice-Chancellor's Office, Aberystwyth University, Visualisation Centre, Penglais, Aberystwyth, SY23 3BF.

All requests that a review is undertaken should be submitted within 10 University working days of receiving the substantive response.

The individual or body undertaking a review will not have been involved in issuing the previous response to the formal complaint, and would typically be one of the following, depending on who issued the previous response and the nature of the complaint: Vice-Chancellor, Chair or Deputy Chair of the Council, the Council or any of its sub-committees.

A review shall be conducted, and a further response normally issued to the Complainant within 10 University working days. The outcome of this review shall be final, with all stages within this Formal Procedure exhausted.

External consideration of complaints

It may be possible for complaints considered by the University in accordance with the Formal Procedure outlined in this document to be escalated to an external individual or organisation.

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)

HEFCW can consider some complaints against the University once the institution's own internal processes have been exhausted. Further information on the types of complaints which can be considered by HEFCW can be found at www.hefcw.ac.uk.

The Visitor

AU's governing documents include provision for complaints made by members of the University's academic staff. The Visitor's jurisdiction is limited to adjudicating on petitions from such members of staff on the interpretation and application of the institution's Charter, Statutes, Ordinances, Regulations and Policies, provided the point at issue is not an employment dispute.

The Visitor is normally concerned with such matters as procedural propriety, fairness, prejudice and irregularity and he or she will only intervene if he or she considers that there is a risk of impropriety by the University either in terms of failing to observe its own rules and/ or procedures, or although having followed proper procedures, it has reached a decision that no reasonable body could have arrived at.

The Visitor does not have jurisdiction to consider any complaints made by members of non-academic staff.

The Visitor does not have jurisdiction to consider any complaints made by students or former students or complaints in respect of an application for admission to the University.

Further information on submitting a petition to the University's Visitor can be found within the applicable Ordinance (available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/governance/about-governance/ordinances/>).