



STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. ABOUT THE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- 1.1 The University is committed to providing all Students with a high-quality educational experience and welcomes feedback from Students. We recognise that from time-to-time problems do arise and that Students may occasionally wish to express concern or dissatisfaction with aspects of the services provided by the University. If any Student is dissatisfied, we will make reasonable attempts to resolve the issue informally. Should any Student wish to explore a more formal means of resolving their issue, the University operates this Procedure (which outlines the process for raising Student Complaints and the roles and responsibilities of all parties within the process). The University aims to use the feedback gathered from this Procedure positively to help the University improve the services which we offer and enhance the student experience.
- 1.2 Complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially. More information about this is set out in Appendix 4. If a Complaint investigated under this Procedure raises concerns for the welfare of an individual, University staff may refer their concerns to the University's Counselling and Wellbeing Team and/or any other appropriate professionals. To ensure a fair process, individuals named in a Complaint will be made aware of the allegations to ensure that they have a proper opportunity to respond.
- 1.3 This Procedure is intended to be clear, transparent, and fair to all parties. All Complaints which are made in good faith will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated. Students who raise Complaints in good faith will never be disadvantaged or treated less favourably, regardless of the outcome.
- 1.4 Anyone accessing this Procedure and all Staff involved in investigating and responding to a Complaint should always act reasonably and fairly towards each other and in line with the requirements of this Procedure and the University's codes of conduct.
- 1.5 Informal resolution will be encouraged where this is possible. It is generally in the interests of all parties to resolve any concerns or Complaints quickly and without the need to escalate matters formally.
- 1.6 The University will try to process Complaints within its published deadlines. If this is not possible the University will notify the Student and a revised timescale will be provided. This Procedure will normally be completed within 90 days of Stage 2 of this Procedure being initiated.
- 1.7 The University will be accountable and will apologise if mistakes have been made or the University has fallen short of reasonable expectations. Where necessary action will be taken to ensure such mistakes do not happen again. Complaints will be monitored and where problems are identified, changes to practice will be made.
- 1.8 This Procedure will be applied consistently throughout all the University's Schools and Functions.
- 1.9 This Procedure is based on both the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and the best practice outlined by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (known as the "OIA").
- 1.10 The University provides Students with access to support when using this Procedure through Reading University Student Union ("RUSU") and will make appropriate adjustments to ensure that Students who have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are not treated less favourably. More information about this is set out at Appendix 3 of this Procedure.

1.11 If the University decides that a Complaint is vexatious or frivolous, it may terminate consideration of that Complaint. Please see Appendix 2 of this Procedure for full information.

1.12 This Procedure has been implemented following consultation with RUSU (Reading University Students' Union).

1.13 Terms used in this Procedure are set out in more detail in the Glossary in Appendix 1.

2. **HOW TO RAISE A COMPLAINT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE**

2.1 Where early and informal resolution of your concern has not been possible, as set out in paragraph 3, you can make a Complaint under this Procedure.

2.2 This Procedure comprises three stages:

2.2.1 Stage 1: an initial consideration of your Complaint, with an emphasis on conciliation and local resolution. This stage will not be appropriate for all Complaints.

2.2.2 Stage 2: a more formal procedure, requiring detailed investigation, which may include mediation.

2.2.3 Stage 3: a request for a review of Stage 2.

2.3 This Procedure is for all Students registered with the University. If you wish to make a Complaint you must invoke Stage 1 within 3 calendar months of any alleged incident which is the cause of your Complaint.

2.4 If you have left the University either through completion of studies or because you have withdrawn for any other reason, you may also raise a Complaint under this Procedure within 3 calendar months of the alleged incident. This means that your Complaint may be raised after the end of your studies, provided it is within the 3 month time limit.

2.5 You may raise issues which may also be covered by different University procedures – for example a related appeal against an academic misconduct decision when pursuing a Complaint under this Procedure. In these circumstances the University has discretion to decide how to progress matters in the best interests of all parties involved. This may involve deciding which matter should take precedence or whether interlinked matters can be considered together under one procedure.

2.6 You are encouraged to seek independent and confidential advice and support as set out at Appendix 3 of this Procedure, particularly where you wish to raise a complaint at Stage 2 or beyond of this process.

2.7 Complaints can be wide-ranging and might include, but not be limited to:

2.7.1 teaching and supervision;

2.7.2 general unfair treatment or inappropriate or poor delivery of University services by a Staff member;

2.7.3 misleading or incorrect information provided by the University;

2.7.4 the quality and standard of any service that the University provides or its failure to provide such a service; or

2.7.5 dissatisfaction with the application of the University's policies and or procedures.

2.8 There are issues that cannot be considered through this Procedure. These include:

- 2.8.1 Complaints about a Student's behaviour are dealt with under the [University's Student Disciplinary Procedures](#) which can also be found on the University's student Policies and Procedures webpage.
- 2.8.2 Complaints about academic decisions made regarding progress or awards including appeals against academic decisions are dealt with under the Assessment Handbook which makes up part of the University's Academic Regulations which can be found on the University's student Policies and Procedures webpage.
- 2.8.3 Those matters which are currently being considered by the OIA, a court or tribunal.
- 2.8.4 Routine first time requests for information.
- 2.8.5 A request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 2.8.6 A request for an explanation of a policy, procedure, or practice.
- 2.8.7 Complaints made by applicants regarding admissions decisions which are dealt with under the [Admissions Policy and Procedure](#) which can be found on the University's admissions webpage.
- 2.8.8 Complaints about bullying, harassment, and victimisation which will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- 2.8.9 An attempt to have a Complaint reconsidered where the University has already completed its procedures, or the complainant has entered another of the University's procedures regarding the same or similar matter.
- 2.8.10 Complaints against Staff (of a disciplinary nature) are dealt with via the University's Human Resources procedures.
- 2.8.11 Complaints about any services provided by RUSU or the conduct of officers or staff employed by RUSU. These matters are dealt with under RUSU's own procedures found on the [RUSU Policies webpage](#).
- 2.8.12 Complaints relating to commercial or business decisions of the University.

2.9 The above lists are not exhaustive.

3. EARLY RESOLUTION

3.1 The University is committed to resolving matters raised to it quickly and in the interests of all parties.

3.2 Where the University identifies a Complaint or Complaints that require early resolution it may decide to expedite that Complaint under this Procedure, which means it will do all it can to investigate and consider the Complaint quickly, including where it is appropriate to do so moving directly to Stage 2. Complaints which may be expedited include Complaints which involve serious harm, potential adverse impact to wellbeing or health or those which involve serious or highly sensitive issues. In deciding whether to expedite a Complaint the University must balance the fairness to all parties of a full and fair investigation against the need for swift resolution.

4. WHAT TO DO BEFORE MAKING A COMPLAINT

4.1.1 You must take reasonable steps to raise matters locally and informally, where it is appropriate to do so, before submitting a Complaint under this Procedure. This could include discussing your concerns directly with the Staff member responsible for the service, or with the Student Support Coordinator, or asking your course representative to raise the issue with the Student Staff Partnership Group (if the matter relates to your academic experience).

- 4.1.2 If you are unsure about what to do, you should contact the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team.

5. WHAT IS THE FORMAL PROCESS FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT?

5.1 Stage 1 – Local Early Resolution

- 5.1.1 The University expects that most Complaints can be resolved locally in Schools or Functions through open and straightforward discussion and negotiation between the Student and Staff at the point closest to where the matter originated.
- 5.1.2 If informal resolution under paragraph 4 has not been successful or was not appropriate, you should raise a Stage 1 Complaint by emailing the relevant member(s) of Staff from your University email account. If you are unsure who to contact, email studentcomplaints@reading.ac.uk. When reporting, you should:
- (a) Be specific about your Complaint and describe it succinctly;
 - (b) Provide supporting documentary evidence where available and appropriate; and
 - (c) State the outcome you are requesting, being clear and realistic.
- 5.1.3 If you request a meeting the relevant Staff member(s) will arrange this promptly and discuss your Complaint with you.
- 5.1.4 Stage 1 will normally result in one or more of the following outcomes:
- (a) A solution to your Complaint;
 - (b) An explanation where your desired outcome cannot be achieved;
 - (c) An apology, where it is appropriate to do so;
- 5.1.5 The University may decide that it is not appropriate to consider your Complaint locally and ask you to submit a Stage 2 Complaint within 10 working days. Examples of reasons why the University may consider that the Complaint is not suitable for local consideration include, but are not limited to where:
- (a) a detailed investigation is required;
 - (b) you are seeking a financial outcome; or
 - (c) the Complaint is of a sufficiently serious nature.
- 5.1.6 Where it is reasonable to do so, or at your request, the Staff member(s) should issue a written outcome of this stage of the Procedure within 5 working days.
- 5.1.7 If you are dissatisfied with the Stage 1 outcome and you wish to pursue the matter more formally as Stage 2 Complaint, or if the University has deemed that it is not appropriate to consider the issue Under Stage 1, you should submit a Stage 2 Complaint in accordance with paragraph 5.2 of this Procedure.

5.2 Stage 2 Complaint

- 5.2.1 If, after having tried to resolve the matter through Stage 1 you remain dissatisfied or you have been told to do so by the University, you should initiate a Stage 2 Complaint by using the Student Complaint Form within 10 working days of the completion of Stage 1 of this Procedure or the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team advising you to do so. You should email the completed Student Complaint Form and any supporting

evidence to the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team at studentcomplaints@reading.ac.uk.

- 5.2.2 Within 3 working days a member of the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team will respond to you to acknowledge receipt of your Complaint.
- 5.2.3 If you have not taken steps to address the issue locally under Stage 1, a member of the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team may advise this as a first course of action and offer a referral into Stage 1 of this Procedure or support in facilitating mediation where appropriate. This will not apply where the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team have already determined that the matter should be escalated to Stage 2 as set out at paragraph 5.1.5 of this Procedure.
- 5.2.4 For your Complaint to be considered under Stage 2, a member of the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team will appoint a member of the University staff, who is independent of the matters raised in your Complaint, to investigate your Complaint. Where your Complaint spans different areas of the University, a single appropriate person will be appointed to consider all of your Complaint.
- 5.2.5 The member of staff appointed to consider your Complaint will:
- (a) gather and consider the evidence, written or otherwise, that relates to your Complaint. You will be asked to provide any documents or other evidence that you have;
 - (b) offer to meet you to discuss your Complaint; and
 - (c) meet with other Staff and Students to gather their evidence or ask them to provide a written statement of matters relevant to your Complaint.
- 5.2.6 Students and Staff will be given at least 5 working days' notice in which to provide evidence or before any meeting to which they may be invited. An earlier meeting may be arranged with the agreement of all parties.
- 5.2.7 Following their investigation, the member of Staff will make a decision about your Complaint and report their findings to the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team, alongside a recommendation as to an appropriate remedy or redress if required. The Student Appeals Complaints and Discipline Team will write to you within 30 working days of you having initiated Stage 2 of this Procedure, to inform you:
- (a) whether your Complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld;
 - (b) the reasoning behind this decision;
 - (c) the action that will be taken because of the decision; and
 - (d) that you can seek a review under Stage 3 of this Procedure if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.
- 5.2.8 The University reserves its rights to make reasonable extensions to this timetable including to take account of Staff availability and vacation periods and you will be notified.

5.3 **Stage 3 – Request for A Review of a Stage 2 Complaint Decision**

- 5.3.1 If you do not consider that your Complaint has been resolved by the outcome of Stage 2 of this Procedure, then you may request that the Stage 2 decision is reviewed under Stage 3 of this Procedure.
- 5.3.2 You must make any request for review at Stage 3 within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 decision. The request must be made in writing to the Student Appeals,

Complaints and Discipline team and should set out why the outcome of Stage 2 does not resolve the Complaint. No new evidence can be introduced at this point unless it falls within paragraph 5.3.3(d) below.

- 5.3.3 The grounds for seeking a review at Stage 3 are:
- (a) The relevant procedures were not followed during the Stage 2 process; and/or
 - (b) There is evidence of bias or apparent bias in the decision making at Stage 2 of the process; and/or
 - (c) The outcome at Stage 2 was unreasonable considering the evidence submitted; and/or
 - (d) New evidence has been provided which would have had a material impact on the Stage 2 decision which was unavailable at an earlier stage or which you have given good reasons for not supplying earlier.
- 5.3.4 The Head of Governance (or their nominee) will consider your grounds for seeking a review and evidence provided and decide whether they meet the stated grounds set at paragraph 5.3.3 of this Procedure and whether the request for review has been received within the time limits set at paragraph 5.3.2 of this Procedure.
- 5.3.5 If the Head of Governance decides that the request for review has not been received within the required time limits set by this Procedure or that the grounds for review submitted do not meet the grounds required under this Procedure then a member of the Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline Team will write to you within 5 working days of receipt to advise that the request for review has been rejected, setting out the reasons for that decision and notifying you that the original decision appealed against will stand.
- 5.3.6 There is no right of appeal against the decision made by the Head of Governance and Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline Team will issue a Completion of Procedures letter within 28 working days of coming to this decision. This letter will state the decision not to uphold the review, and the reasoning.
- 5.3.7 If the request for a review is accepted by the Head of Governance, then it will be acknowledged within 5 working days and you will be notified of its referral to the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) for review. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) will conduct a review of the Stage 2 decision and advise you in writing of the outcome of the Stage 3 review within 20 working days of the request to initiate Stage 3. The Stage 3 decision of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) will be final.
- 5.3.8 A review by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) at Stage 3 of this Procedure will be a review and not a re-hearing.
- 5.3.9 The outcome of the Stage 3 review could include the original Stage 2 decision being upheld, partially upheld, or overturned. Where the Stage 2 outcome is overturned the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) may provide an outcome or, exceptionally, may remit it back to Stage 2 for a fresh reconsideration by a new panel.
- 5.3.10 The University reserves its rights to make reasonable extensions to this timetable including to take account of Staff availability and vacation periods and you will be notified.

6. WHAT HAPPENS AT THE OUTCOME OF THE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE?

- 6.1 Where a Complaint refers to a member of Staff, the outcome of the Complaint and reasoning will be shared with all parties concerned and the relevant Head of School or Function of the member of Staff referred to.

6.2 Following a Complaint, a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued by the University within 28 working days of the completion of all internal processes relating to a Complaint.

6.3 Should you still be dissatisfied following the issue of the Completion of Procedures letter, you may raise your complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator ("OIA"). Any request for review must be received by the OIA within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

7. **HOW DOES THE UNIVERSITY DEAL WITH COMPLAINTS AGAINST STAFF?**

7.1 Investigations into Complaints by Students about Staff must be handled by an individual independent of the complaint, to avoid a conflict of interest. The Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team must consider any conflicts of interest and arrange for an alternative Staff member to lead the investigation.

7.2 It is also the University's duty to ensure that all Staff are treated fairly throughout this Procedure. Therefore, any Staff member has the right to be supported through this Procedure, and to be advised of any Complaint made against them at the outset and to have access to any evidence presented in support of any Complaint as well as the right to reply to that Complaint at any stage of this Procedure.

7.3 If a Complaint made against a Staff member under this Procedure is of a disciplinary nature or raises allegation which are better suited to a disciplinary investigation, then the University may decide that this Procedure is suspended until the disciplinary matter has been concluded. If a case is considered sufficiently serious or is proven against a member of Staff, this will be referred to the University's Human Resources team to decide whether further investigation should take place under relevant staff procedures.

8. **HOW DOES THE UNIVERSITY DEAL WITH COMPLAINTS THAT INVOLVE REFERRALS TO THE POLICE OR THE COURTS?**

8.1 If at any stage in the handling of a Complaint under this Procedure the University is informed that any of the matters that are the subject of any Complaint have been referred to the police or are the subject of police investigation or are the subject of criminal or other court proceedings, then the University may decide to stay any further action under this Procedure pending the outcome of those processes or otherwise with the agreement of the police. On being notified of the conclusion of any police investigation or criminal or other court proceedings the University will then decide whether it is appropriate to continue with any action under this Procedure.

9. **DOES THE UNIVERSITY ACCEPT GROUP COMPLAINTS?**

9.1 If a number of Students wish to submit a group complaint, they will be required to nominate one Student to act as a spokesperson and to lead any communication with the University under this Procedure. The Student Complaint Form must be completed and signed by that nominated Student and a document attached containing the names, details and signatures of the other Students who wish to be parties to the Complaint. The evidence submitted to support the Complaint must be agreed by the group of Students and provided with the Student Complaint Form. No additional evidence will be accepted after submission of the Student Complaint Form unless there are exceptional grounds.

9.2 In circumstances where the University receives multiple Complaints from Students affected by the same issue(s) and where there are common characteristics or similarities in the subject matter of

the Complaints then the University has the discretion to combine these Complaints and deal with them as a group complaint.

- 9.3 The University will not accept an individual Complaint from a Student about any linked matter where they are already a party to a group complaint.

10. COMPLAINTS MADE BY A THIRD PARTY ON BEHALF OF A STUDENT

- 10.1 The University would always encourage Students who wish to make a Complaint to deal with the University directly. The University cannot accept Complaints made by a third party on behalf of a Student unless a signed statement by the Student is sent to the University as part of that Complaint. This includes Complaints made by a parent, spouse, guardian, or partner of a Student.

- 10.2 The University will not accept a Complaint made by a third party on behalf of a Student where the Student has already made a Complaint on the same subject matter.

11. DOES THE UNIVERSITY ACCEPT ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS?

- 11.1 The University has discretion to consider Complaints received anonymously. The University encourages any Student to raise a concern openly without fear of suffering any disadvantage as a Complaint made anonymously could impede any investigation and communication of the outcome. The University will only exercise its discretion to accept anonymous Complaints in exceptional circumstances. In exercising that discretion, the following factors will be considered:

- 11.1.1 the seriousness of the Complaint;
- 11.1.2 the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources;
- 11.1.3 whether enough information has been provided to enable any further action;
- 11.1.4 whether a fair investigation can be undertaken;
- 11.1.5 whether anonymity can reasonably be maintained; and
- 11.1.6 whether resolution can be found through an informal process.

12. CAN A COMPLAINT BE ESCALATED TO THE UNIVERSITY VICE-CHANCELLOR OR CHANCELLOR?

- 12.1 Complaints will only be considered in the manner set out in this Procedure. The Vice-Chancellor and Chancellor of the University do not consider, investigate, or decide Complaint outcomes. In the event that a Student or third party contact any University officer or officers who are not responsible for handling a Complaint they will be referred back to this Procedure and no further action will be taken unless they agree to their Complaint being handled through the proper channels.

13. HOW DOES THE UNIVERSITY MONITOR COMPLAINTS?

- 13.1 The University keeps a record of all formal Complaints raised by Students and responds proactively where appropriate.
- 13.2 The Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team will report on the outcomes of this procedure annually to the Sub-Committee for Delivery and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (DELT) and they will decide what if any wider corrective action or policy changes should be recommended. These recommendations will be reported to the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience and Senate annually.
- 13.3 Overall responsibility for this Procedure sits with the Head of Governance.

APPENDIX 1

GLOSSARY

In this Procedure all references to a post-holder at the University includes any person (including external parties) to whom the roles and responsibilities of that post-holder have been delegated.

In this Procedure the following terms are used:

Complaint - a complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of a service or facility, provided by or on behalf of the University or any action or lack of action by the University, by a Student. A Complaint must be made in writing, following the process set out in this Procedure.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) - the OIA is an independent body set up to review individual student complaints against colleges and universities in England and Wales. Current or former Students may only take their complaint to the OIA once the University's internal complaints procedures have been exhausted and a Completion of Procedures letter has been issued. The OIA must receive a completed Scheme Application form within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

Procedure - means this Student Complaints Procedure.

Representative – means a person who is supporting a Student in bringing their Complaint under this Procedure. A Representative can include an adviser from RUSU Advice Service Team, a member of Staff of the University (where this does not raise any conflict of interest), a member of the Chaplaincy team, another Student or an RUSU Student Officer. The University has discretion to agree that a Student can be supported and accompanied by a person who does not fall within these categories. If a Student wishes to be accompanied by a person outside of the categories listed above then they must notify the University's Student Appeals, Complaints and Discipline team of the details of the person requested and their reasons for the request at least 5 working days before any meeting or hearing under this Procedure.

Service – means any service provided by the University to its Students including the delivery of its academic programmes, the library and suitable learning resources, IT infrastructure, pastoral support and careers, employability and placement advice and support.

Staff – means an employee or worker including adjunct faculty or external subcontractors providing services to Students of the University.

Student – unless it is expressly explained in this Procedure any reference to a Student or Students means any person who falls within the University's definition of a student at Ordinance C1 which can be found in the [Ordinances \(docx\)](#) or on the University's website in the Governance Zone - www.reading.ac.uk/about/governance/governance-zone.

University – means the University of Reading.

APPENDIX 2

HOW DOES THE UNIVERSITY DEAL WITH UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR AND VEXATIOUS OR FRIVOLOUS COMPLAINTS?

1. The University expects all participants in this Procedure to act with respect towards any other party(ies) and in a way that is consistent with the University's applicable codes of conduct.

Unreasonable Behaviour

2. Where the behaviour of a Student or their Representative becomes unreasonable and adversely affects the ability of Staff to carry out their duties, the University reserves the right to restrict contact with the Student or their Representative and if appropriate, invoke its Disciplinary Procedure. Wherever possible the University strives to allow the Complaint to progress to completion.
3. Examples of unacceptable behaviour might include:
 - 3.1.1 Aggressive or abusive behaviour. This could include the threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse, or harassment towards Staff. This is likely to result in the ending of all direct contact with the complainant and could result in a report being submitted to the police.
 - 3.1.2 Unreasonable demands. This includes instances where a complainant: continues to demand responses being provided within an unreasonable timescale; insists on seeing or speaking to a particular member of Staff; makes continual contact; contacts multiple members of Staff not involved in dealing with the Complaint; or repeatedly changes the substance of the Complaint.
 - 3.1.3 Unreasonable persistence. This could include a persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a Complaint; persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what can or cannot be done about the Complaint and continuing to pursue a Complaint without presenting any new information.

Vexatious/Frivolous Complaints

4. The University regards Complaints to be vexatious or frivolous where:
 - 4.1.1 the Complaint does not have any serious purpose or value or is not serious or sensible in attitude;
 - 4.1.2 is designed to cause disruption or annoyance or gives rise to disproportionate inconvenience or expense;
 - 4.1.3 has the effect of harassing any of the University's Staff, or can be fairly characterised as obsessive or unreasonable;
 - 4.1.4 it is reasonable to assume that there is no intention for the Complaint to be seen as serious or sensible but not to the extent that it can be considered vexatious or malicious.
5. If the investigation of a Complaint reveals the Complaint to be vexatious or frivolous in nature, the University reserves the right to dismiss the Complaint and to take disciplinary action against the Student. A Student will be notified of this decision in writing and will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter.

APPENDIX 3

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS WHEN BRINGING A COMPLAINT?

1. Any Student using this Procedure is entitled to seek advice and support on raising a Complaint from the RUSU Advice Service and the University strongly encourages all Students to access this service before initiating this Procedure. RUSU Advisers are professional staff with knowledge and experience of the University's procedures who can offer confidential and independent advice on the process, support Students in the preparation of their Complaint and attend meetings under this Procedure as a Representative. Details of the RUSU Advice Service can be found at [Academic Advice | RUSU](#).
2. During all stages of this Procedure, a Student may be accompanied to meetings by a Representative, as defined in this Procedure. Please note that only in exceptional circumstances and by prior agreement may a Student be accompanied by someone who is external to the University (see definition above for further details).
3. Where a Student has protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 the University can make appropriate adjustments in order to prevent the Student being treated less favourably. This may include holding meetings by MS Teams, video conferencing, telephone conferencing, or other appropriate means. Any Student who may require assistance in making their Complaint should discuss their needs with the University and it will then seek to refer the Student to appropriate support.
4. The University acknowledges that its procedures can cause additional worry and stress to Students. Students are encouraged to seek support from any of the University's support services, particularly the [Student Welfare Team](#) who can provide immediate support and further signposting for any personal difficulties Students may be facing and who also have a drop-in service where Students can go when feeling distressed and needing direction or guidance. There are also a number of other [online](#) support functions, [leaflets](#) and [workbooks](#) designed for Students which they are encouraged to view.
5. Any requests for support will be treated sensitively and confidentially by the University.

APPENDIX 4

IS THE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE CONFIDENTIAL?

1. The University will process all personal information in accordance with its Data Protection Policy.
2. Any Complaint raised by a Student and any response should be treated with appropriate confidentiality by all parties at all stages of this Procedure. This includes witnesses to the procedure as well as the Student raising the Complaint, those the Complaint is about and the individuals considering the Complaint, However, it may be necessary to discuss a Complaint with Staff or other Students to properly investigate that Complaint or implement the outcomes of this Procedure.
3. The University does not normally allow any party to record meetings or hearings unless there are exceptional reasons why this should be considered and all parties agree. If the University allows a meeting or hearing to be recorded then the University will be responsible for the recording and the preparation of any minutes. The University will provide a copy to all parties.
4. There should be no normal expectation that the identity of witnesses will be kept confidential and witnesses should understand that evidence provided by them will, other than in exceptional circumstances, be provided to the Student raising the Complaint. Exceptionally, the person considering the Complaint may keep a witness's identity confidential where it is reasonable and necessary to do so.
5. The University reserves the right to refer any breach of the confidentiality of this Procedure by any member of Staff or Student for consideration under its Disciplinary Procedures.