Student Complaints Procedure

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Quality Management Office

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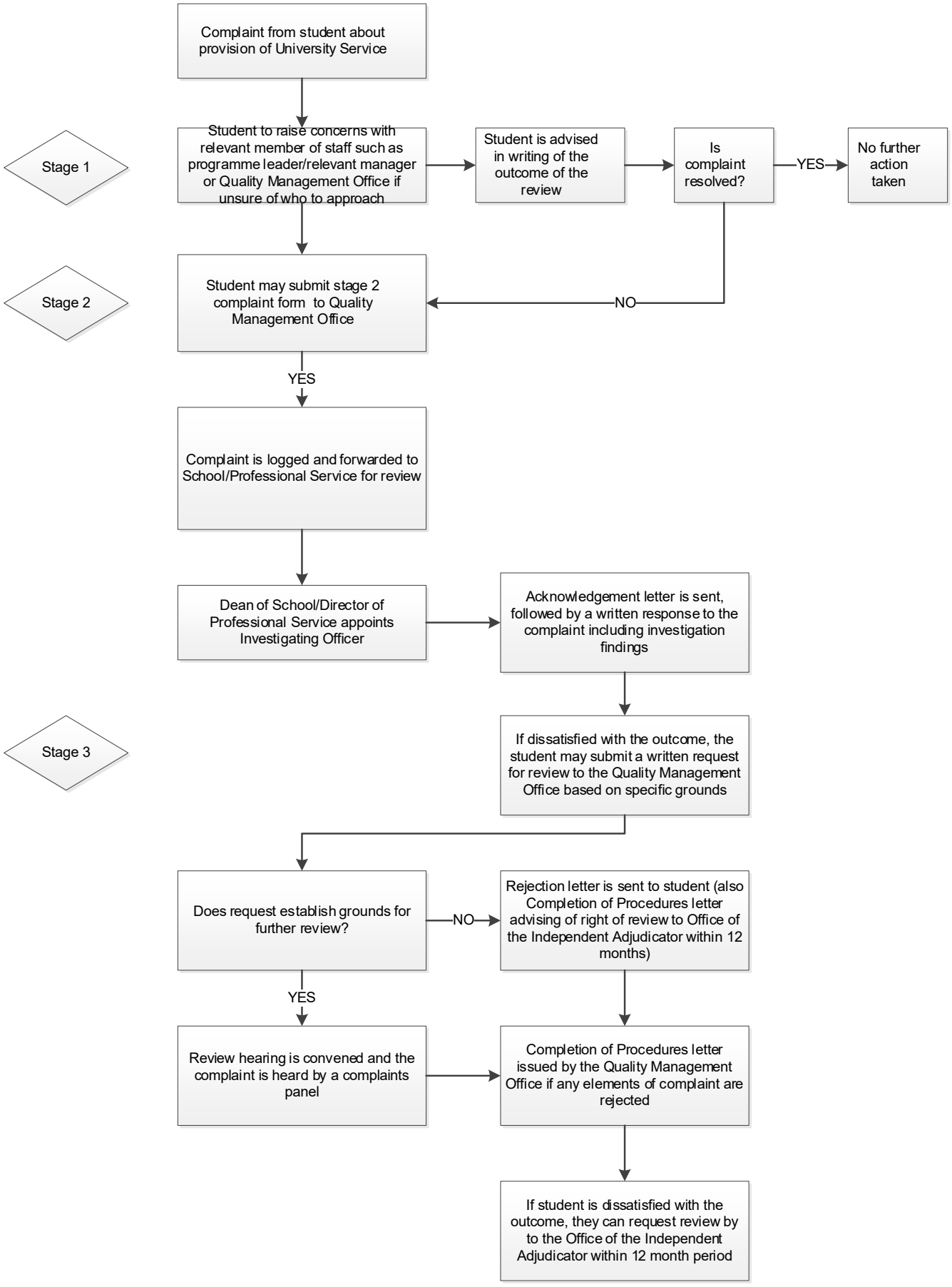
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Flowchart Student Complaints Procedure



1. What is the purpose of this Procedure?

At the University of Salford, we strive to achieve the highest standards in provision of services but recognise that concerns or complaints may arise from time to time. This Procedure outlines the process to follow to raise complaints and the process through which these will be considered.

2. Who does the Procedure apply to?

The Procedure applies to students who are registered with the University of Salford, or to those who have recently finished their studies, as long as complaints are raised within the timeframe specified in the Procedure.

If you are an apprentice, you are an apprentice, then you should follow this Procedure if you wish to raise a complaint relating to your Apprenticeship Programme or the facilities and services provided by the University. In addition, you may, at any time, contact the National Apprenticeship Helpline to escalate your complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) through the apprenticeship helpdesk (on 08000 150400 or email nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk).

If you are an apprentice, then can only use this Procedure to complain about employer verification of behaviours if the issue relates to University processes.

If you are studying at a collaborative partner institution, then you should raise any complaints or concerns through your provider's complaint procedure in the first instance. However, if you remain unsatisfied with the provider's response to your complaint, you have right to complain to the University. You can find further information on how to do this in Appendix A.

3. What is a complaint?

A complaint is 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 the University. Examples of matters that would be considered under this Procedure include:

- The quality and standard of a service provided by the University, including learning and teaching provision, apprenticeship End-Point Assessments (EPAs) provided by the University, advice, resources and facilities;
- Failure to follow a process or procedure;
- Unfair treatment or inappropriate behaviour by a member of staff (including Independent Assessors for apprenticeship End-Point Assessments (EPAs) provided by the University).

Matters which are governed by other Procedures, or where services are governed by different complaints processes, cannot be considered through this Procedure. Further details are provided in Appendix B.

Where your concern is of a general nature, it may be more appropriate for the matter to be taken up through the appropriate School Staff/Student Committee representative or to the relevant member of staff e.g. module or programme leader.

A complaint differs from an academic appeal because an academic appeal is a

request for a review of a decision made by an Assessment Board regarding student progression, assessment and award. The Student Complaints Procedure cannot change a decision made by an Assessment Board or be used to change marks awarded by an Assessment Board. See Appendix B.

4. What information do I need to provide?

The University expects that any student raising a complaint will provide sufficient information and evidence to enable a complaint to be investigated, and where appropriate, to meet with the person appointed to review their complaint or to provide further information where required. Failure to do so may result in the termination of a complaint investigation.

5. What is the process and what timescales apply?

The complaints procedure has three stages:

- Stage 1 (first stage response)
- Stage 2 (formal investigation stage and response)
- Stage 3 (review stage and response)

Informal resolution is possible at any stage of the procedure with the agreement of all parties. A shorter two stage process may be agreed in specific circumstances. Where an alternative process is agreed, information will be provided on the website on the Student Facing Policies and Procedures page.

The University sets timescales for each stage of the Procedure to ensure that appropriate investigations can be undertaken. In exceptional circumstances, extensions to timeframes will be considered through the Quality Management Office, for example complaints relating to sexual misconduct/harassment would normally be accepted without a deadline.

Stage 1 Timescale

A complaint must be raised within 20 working days of the event or circumstances which are its cause. If the complaint relates to a series of connected events, the complaint should normally be notified within 20 working days of the most recent event.

Stage 1 Process

You should make initial contact with the relevant member of staff who is responsible for the matter being complained about. For example, if the complainant refers to an academic matter, the first point of contact would normally be the module or programme leader. If this is not possible, you should contact your School Office or the Quality Management Office for advice about the best point of contact. You will need to provide information about what has happened, including specific examples, the action or outcome you are seeking and provide any relevant evidence or documents to support your complaint.

The Stage 1 review will normally be concluded within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint and you will be informed of the outcome in writing. If there is a delay in the process you will be informed, and a reason provided.

All Schools/Professional Services are required to keep a record of Stage 1

complaints to enable themes and trends to be monitored.

In exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate for complaints to progress directly to Stage 2 of the Procedure without first attempting resolution at Stage 1.
Guidance must be sought from the Quality Management Office in such cases. Examples of when this might be appropriate include complex complaint issues which may require a longer period of investigation.

Stage 2 Timescale

If, having received a response at Stage 1 of the Procedure, you believe there are reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction, you can progress to Stage 2. A Stage 2 complaint must be submitted 10 working days from the date on which the Stage 1 response was provided.

Stage 2 Process

A Stage 2 complaint must be submitted in writing, using the stage 2 complaints form which should be sent, along with any associated evidence, to complaints@salford.ac.uk.

Upon receipt, the Quality Management Office will consider if the matter is appropriate for review through at this Stage. If it is appropriate for the complaint to progress, the Quality Management Office will normally forward the complaint to the relevant Dean of School/Director of Professional Service (or nominee) for investigation. If it is not possible to process the complaint further, you will be advised in writing within 10 working days. The Quality Management Office logs all incoming formal complaints and monitor timescales for review.

The Dean of School/Director of Professional Service (or nominee) may either investigate the matter raised themselves or appoint an independent person to investigate your complaint. The person appointed to investigate your case will be a member of University staff, but will be someone who is independent to your course or your area of study. You will be advised of the name and contact details of the investigator.

The investigator will investigate the complaint and will normally produce a report with evidence for the Dean of School/Director of Professional Service (or nominee) to consider using the Investigator's Report Template. It is anticipated that reviews of most Stage 2 complaints will be completed **within 30 working days** of the appointment of an investigator. If there is any delay in the process (i.e. if the review is not completed within 30 working days), you will be informed, and a reason provided.

On receipt of the investigator's report, the Dean of School/Director of Professional Service (or nominee) will decide whether the complaint should be upheld, partially upheld or rejected and send you an outcome letter which including a rationale for the decision and any actions required. Where an investigator's report is available, you will receive a copy. In some instances, the outcome letter will incorporate details of the investigation findings.

A copy of the complaint outcome will be logged within the School and forwarded to the Quality Management Office.

Stage 3 Timescale

If, having received a response at Stage 2 of the Procedure, you can demonstrate that there are grounds for dissatisfaction, you can progress to

Stage 3. A Stage 3 complaint must be submitted within 10 working days of the date on the response to the Stage 2 complaint.

Stage 3 Process

The request for review should be submitted using the Stage 3 Complaint Form and submitted along with any associated evidence via e-mail to complaints@salford.ac.uk.

A stage 3 review can be requested on one or more of the following grounds:

A. New and relevant evidence is available that could not reasonably have been provided earlier.
B. There was a significant error or defect in the procedure that may have affected the outcome, including the reasonableness of the outcome.

No new issues of complaint may be introduced at Stage 3.

On receipt of a Stage 3 complaint, the Director of Academic Quality (or nominee) will review the document to determine whether the request for review is valid, based on the grounds for review stated above.

If the request is deemed invalid, you will be advised in writing, normally within 15 working days of receipt of the request. The letter will advise that internal University procedures in relation to the complaint have been concluded and details of the scheme of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator provided (see below).

If the request is deemed valid, a Stage 3 Complaint Review Panel will be convened, will normally within 20 working days, to review the matter further. If there are any delays, you will be informed, and a reason provided.

Review Panel

The Panel will consist of:

- A senior manager of the University not party to the complaint (Chair of the Panel);
- A member of academic staff from a School other than that of the student or a member of professional services staff not party to the complaint;
- A representative of the Students' Union.

Panel meetings will be serviced by a member of staff from the Quality Management Office.

You will be invited to attend the meeting along with the relevant Dean of School/Director of Professional Service (or nominee).

Documentation Required for the Review

As a minimum the following documentation will be provided to the Panel meeting:

1. the Stage 3 complaint form and any associated documentation;
2. the Stage 2 complaint, Stage 2 outcome letter, investigator's report.

Documentation will be circulated to all parties at least 5 working days before the Panel meeting.

Procedure Followed at Stage 3 Panel Hearing

The process which will normally be followed during the meeting is available in Appendix C.

You will normally be advised of the outcome after the Panel has considered evidence. It will also be communicated in writing to you, normally within 5 working days. If any aspect of the complaint is upheld or partially upheld, the Panel will consider possible means of redress. Exceptionally the Chair of the Panel may need to undertake further consultation before a final decision can be reached. The written response shall state whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or rejected. If the complaint is not upheld or partially upheld, the outcome letter will constitute a 'completion of procedures' letter.

6. What if I'm dissatisfied with the University's final decision?

The 'completion of procedures' letter will explain that if a student remains dissatisfied at the conclusion of the University's internal complaints procedure, they may ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) to review the complaint outcome. This will require completion of an OIA scheme application form upon receipt of the 'completion of procedures' letter. The scheme application form must be submitted within twelve months of the date that the completion of procedures letter was issued. The OIA website provides further information regarding the scheme and its eligibility criteria.

Independent advice about submitting a complaint for review to the OIA is available through the Students' Union.

In addition, to the OIA, apprentices may also escalate their complaint to the ESFA through the apprenticeship helpdesk (on 08000 150400 or email nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk).

7. Where can I get advice and information?

Independent advice about the Student Complaints Procedure is available from the Students' Union Advice Centre. For further details see http://www.salfordstudents.com/advice.

General information on the operation of the Procedure is available from the Quality Management Office complaints@salford.ac.uk) or askUS.

8. Can I make an anonymous complaint?

Anonymous complaints will normally not be dealt with under this Procedure. Exceptionally, an anonymous complaint may be considered if the University determines that there is a compelling case, supported by evidence, for the matter to be investigated. You should be aware that in most circumstances, raising a concern anonymously may hinder an investigation and communication of any outcome. If you are concerned about protecting your anonymity, you may wish to contact the Students' Union Advice Centre who may be able to make initial enquiries for you.

9. Can someone else make a complaint on my behalf?

Complaints which are made by a third party (including parents, guardians or friends of registered students) can only be dealt with under this Procedure if you have provided permission in writing. You can give authority for a third party to pursue a complaint on your behalf. You will need to complete a third party consent form and return this to the Quality Management Office.

10. Can I submit a complaint directly to the Vice-Chancellor?

If a complaint is made directly to the Vice-Chancellor, or any other senior manager who is not a designated post holder within this Procedure, the complaint will be passed to the Quality Management Office where staff will ensure that the complaint is referred to the most appropriate person in line with this Procedure.

11. What if a group of students wishes to make a complaint?

Complaints by a number of students can be dealt with as one collective group complaint in the following circumstances:

- We are satisfied that all issues raised apply to all students named in the complaint. Issues affecting individuals personally would need to be progressed outside the group complaint.
- The case is conducted through a lead student to facilitate the progress of the complaint identified on a group complaint consent form. We will normally only communicate with the lead complainant but there may be occasions when we need to contact others within the group.
- The names of all students who wish to bring the complaint forward are notified to the University on a group complaint consent form.

12. Who gets to see information about my complaint?

The University adopts the principle of releasing information only to those who need it for the purposes of investigation or responding to the complaint. The University has to balance the respective rights of students and staff. Where a member of staff is named in a complaint, that individual is entitled to know what is being claimed and who is making the complaint. This information is shared with the staff member either through informal communication (typically at stage 1) and/or by providing them with a copy of the complaint (typically at stages 2 and 3). Members of staff named in a complaint have the right to respond through this Procedure. Further information is available the Student Facing Policies and Procedures page.

Whilst you will be notified of the outcome of your complaint, if you have made a complaint about a member of staff, it may not be appropriate to share specific details affecting the staff member, particularly where disciplinary action is being taken.

13. What do I need to know about evidence?

It is important to provide evidence to support the complaint you are raising but be aware that the University will not normally accept the use of covert audio or video recordings (recordings made without the knowledge of another individual) as evidence to support a complaint.

Where evidence related to third parties is submitted in evidence (including GP letters, hospital communications etc) the University reserves the right to seek to confirm the authenticity of the evidence including, but not restricted to, contacting those third parties named.

14. What if I am a disabled student and need reasonable adjustments to enable me to engage with this Procedure?

If you identify individual needs, reasonable adjustments may be made to the

Procedure. Please contact the Quality Management Office via complaints@salford.ac.uk.

15. I'm concerned that I may be treated unfairly if I submit a complaint, what can I expect?

The University will ensure you will not be treated less favourably because you raised a complaint through this Procedure.

16. What standards of behaviour does the University expect from students using the Procedure?

The University expects all students to comply with the standards of behaviour set out in the Student Code of Conduct at all times. During the complaints process, the University expects all parties to act reasonably and fairly towards each other and treat the process with respect**.** Where students (or supporters) demonstrate behaviour deemed to be aggressive, offensive or abusive during this process, consideration of complaints will be terminated.

17. Do I need to attend meetings associated with this Procedure?

All parties (students and staff) are encouraged to attend all meetings convened under this Procedure and to engage with any investigations. Attendance by video link or other technology may be considered if 5 working days' notice is provided.

At stage 3, if you (or a member of staff) does not attend a meeting without providing good reason in advance, the Chair may decide that the meeting can proceed. In this instance, the complaint will be considered on the basis of the evidence available at the time of the hearing (both written information and that provided by those attending the meeting).

If, for good reason, any party (student or staff member) is unable to attend a hearing, then either a request may be made to defer the meeting until a later date. A request to defer the meeting may only be made on one occasion.

You are responsible for paying any costs incurred and those of any supporter to attend meetings.

18. Can someone else attend meetings with me?

All parties (students or members of staff) can be accompanied to meetings and hearings arranged through this Procedure. Additional information about supporters, representatives and witnesses as well as guidance on legal representation is available the Student Facing Policies and Procedures page.

19. Can I record meetings held through this Procedure?

The audio recording of meetings held under this Procedure is not permitted, subject to such reasonable adjustment unless agreed by the University where required under the Equality Act 2010.

20. What if I initiate legal proceedings in relation to a complaint?

If you bring legal proceedings against the University which may be relevant to their complaint, the University will normally suspend consideration of the complaint until written confirmation of these proceedings are received. If the matters complained about are disposed of in those proceedings, then the University will normally terminate consideration of the complaint.

21. What if a post holder specified in this Procedure is unable to take action?

If any post-holder of the University who is specified in this Procedure (the

Specified Post-holder) for any reason declines, fails or is unable to take action that is their responsibility under this Procedure, then the Director of Academic Quality is able approve the appointment of a substitute who will be as close as possible to the specified post holder in terms of their position within the University.

22. What burden of proof is used in decision making through this Procedure?

When a complaint is considered through this Procedure, you are responsible for providing evidence and information to support your complaint. In reaching a decision about a complaint, the University will consider all available evidence and information and reach a decision on the balance of probabilities.

23. Appendices

Appendix A: Information for students who are studying off campus or at a collaborative partner institution

Appendix B Matters which cannot be considered through the Procedure

Appendix C: Process to follow during a Stage 3 Complaint Panel

APPENDIX A: Information for students studying at a collaborative partner institution

Complaints about services provided by collaborative partners or other organisations involved in delivery of a student's programme will need to be pursued with the relevant collaborative partner or organisation through the partner/organisation's complaints procedure.

Students studying with organisations where awards are conferred by the University have an ultimate right of appeal to the University in the case of issues which impact on a student's programme of study.

Therefore, if students are dissatisfied with the outcome once they have exhausted all stages of the complaints procedure at the partner organisation, they have a right to appeal to the University for a review of their complaint at Stage 3 of the University's Student Complaints Procedure.

The University of Salford will only accept requests for review if the complaint relates to academic related complaints e.g. programme delivery, teaching, feedback and learning resources. The University can only review matters which have already been considered at an earlier stage through the partner or organisation's complaints procedure.

In the case of joint awards, students are advised to seek clarification on which complaints procedure they should follow from their Programme Handbook.

APPENDIX B: Matters which cannot be considered through the Student Complaints Procedure

Complaints which

- have already been considered or which are outside the scope of the Procedure;
- are made without providing relevant or appropriate information;
- are malicious, vexatious, frivolous, repetitive or harassing;
- have been disposed of in court or tribunal proceedings;
- are without merit or where outcomes are deemed to be unreasonable;

will not be considered under this Procedure.

In addition, the Procedure cannot be used to consider the following:

- Disagreement with a policy or regulation, rather than its application — *such concerns should be raised through student representation forums.*
- matters relating to assessment performance and academic judgement;
- appeals against Assessment Board decisions (see Academic Appeals Procedure);
- complaints relating to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks;
- complaints against the University of Salford Students' Union (see http://www.salfordstudents.com);
- matters covered by the Whistleblowing Policy;
- Freedom of Information and Data Protection matters;
- matters covered by the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice;
- complaints relating to the admissions process (see Admissions Complaints Process);
- decisions reached through other processes including the Student Misconduct Procedure, Fitness to Practise Procedure, Support to Study Procedure and Student Engagement, Participation and Attendance Policy;
- matters which are the subject of criminal investigation or legal proceedings until such time as those proceedings are concluded;
- complaints about the Student Occupational Health service – contact StudentOH-enquiries@salford.ac.uk;
- complaints about accommodation services provided by Campus Living Villages[1];
- complaints regarding Salford Professional Development services (see https://www.salford.ac.uk/spd);
- complaints about car parking penalty charge notices[2];

Apprentices cannot use this procedure if their employer has not verified their behaviours. If apprentices have concerns, they should raise them with their employer in the first instance. The final route to escalate concerns regarding the employer verification of behaviours is

through the DfE see [Complain about a further education college or apprenticeship](#).

Complaints relating to matters which are already being considered under other procedures will not normally be dealt with until relevant proceedings under those procedures have been concluded.

[1] Students should submit any complaints using the Complaints Procedure for Campus Living Villages

[2] Students should follow the separate Parking Solutions 24 appeals process and subsequent appeal route via POPLA (Parking on Private Land Appeals). POPLA is administered by the Ombudsman Service Limited.

APPENDIX C: Stage 3 complaint panel process

The following process should normally be followed during a stage 3 complaint panel

1. the Chair will ensure that introductions are made and the role of each person present is clear;

2. the Chair will outline the process which will be followed;

3. the Chair will ask the student to declare any factors such as health issues which may affect engagement with the hearing;

4. the Chair will invite the student to outline the reasons for the stage 3 complaint;

5. panel members may ask questions;

6. the Chair will invite the Dean of School/ Director of Professional Service (or nominee) to respond to any of the issues raised by the student;

7. Panel members may ask questions;

8. the student or Dean of School/ Director of Professional Service (or nominee) may call witnesses to present evidence;

9. the student or Dean of School/ Director of Professional Service (or nominee) shall question their witness(es);

10. any questions for the witness(es) shall be addressed through the Chair;

11. witnesses withdraw once their evidence has been heard and there are no more questions;

12. commentary deemed by the Chair to be irrelevant, frivolous or vexatious will not be heard and will not be recorded;

13. both the student and Dean of School/ Director of Professional Service (or nominee) shall have the right to make final submissions to the Panel. The student will speak first, followed by the Dean of School/Director of Professional Service (or nominee);

14. both parties will be asked to withdraw whilst the Panel reaches a decision.

Document Control Information			**Revision History incl. Authorisation:** (most recent first)
Author	**Summary of changes**	**Version**	**Authorised & Date**
Annette Cooke	Clarification for apprentices that concerns regarding employer verification of behaviours may be considered under this procedure where the matter relates to a University of Salford processes.	V2.16	Change approved by the Quality and Standards Committee Sept 2026
Annette Cooke	Changes to grounds at stage 3 to offer greater clarity and accessibility and inclusion. Inclusion of Disagreement with a policy or regulation, rather than its application as a basis on which a complaint cannot be considered.	V2.15	Chair's Action on behalf of the Quality and Standards Committee Approved 2.12.25
Annette Cooke	Additional information included about evidence to support a complaint	V2.14	Editorial amendment June 2025
Helen Sharman	Paragraph 2 (page 4) Text added If you are an apprentice, then you should follow this Procedure if you wish to raise a complaint relating to your Apprenticeship Programme (*including any End-Point Assessment (EPA) delivered by the University*), Paragraph 3 (Page 4) Text added: • The quality and standard of a service provided by the University, including learning and teaching provision, *End-Point Assessments (EPAs) provided by the University for apprentices*, advice, resources and facilities • Unfair treatment or inappropriate behaviour by a member of staff *including Independent Assessors for apprenticeship End-Point Assessments (EPAs) provided by the University.* Information added following July 2024 external review of the University's readiness for an OfS external review of its integrated End-Point Assessments (EPAs)	V2.13	Chair's Action on behalf of the Quality and Standards Committee Approved 19.9.24
Annette Cooke	Updated timescale for review of complaint at stage 3	V2.12	Chair of Quality and Standards Committee
Annette Cooke	Inclusion of a truncated two stage process in specific circumstances.	V2.11	28 July 2023 editorial amendment

Annette Cooke	Change from QEO to QMO and associated role title changes	V2.10	22 July 2022 editorial amendment
Annette Cooke	Additional information included to outline circumstances in which a group complaint can be considered and how a group complaint will be dealt with.	V2.9	21 October 2021 Editorial amendment
Annette Cooke	Change in location of flowchart, update to timescale for responding to stage 1 complaints. Clarification that a stage 2 investigator's report may not always be required.	V2.8	SELTEC 19 May 2021
Annette Cooke	*Change in format to FAQs, student in use 'voice' 'students addressed as you', re-ordering of material, addition of information for apprentices*	V2.7	SELTEC 20 May 2020
Annette Cooke	*Amendment to representation at meetings* *Information about information sharing has been organised into a new section* *Student must include a copy of stage 1 outcome with stage 2 complaint*	V2.6	Chair of SELTEC on behalf of SELTEC 25 November 2019

Policy Management and Responsibilities: Owner:	This Policy is issued by the Quality Management Office, day to day management and communication of the policy is delegated to the Quality Standards Manager.	
Others with responsibilities (please specify):	All subjects of the Policy will be responsible for engaging with and adhering to this policy.	
Author to complete formal assessment with the following advisory teams:		
Equality Analysis (E&D, HR)	May 2021	
Review due:	2025/26	