

London School of Economics and Political Science

Student Complaint Procedure

Section One

How to Raise a Complaint

Introduction

1. This Student Complaint Procedure (“this Procedure”) sets out how the London School of Economics & Political Science (hereinafter “the School”, “we”, “us”, “our”) will deal with complaints that a student of the School (“you”) may wish to pursue. Our aim is to make this Procedure accessible and understandable, as well as to encourage the early resolution of complaints in a way that is fair and reasonable. It should be read in conjunction with alphabetical guidance in Section Two. Comments or suggestions on how to improve this Procedure or the guidance should be sent to the School Secretary.

2. For the purpose of this Procedure, we consider you to be a student of the School if you hold either registered or non-registered status with us; as defined below:

2.1. You are a registered student if you are pursuing an undergraduate or postgraduate programme of study for which you are receiving teaching and/or supervision, or from which you are on an authorised temporary absence that does not require interruption or an extension to the length of your programme of study;

2.2. You are an un-registered student if you are on a period of interruption or have been suspended from your programme of study, or you are awaiting only to sit an exam to either progress, or complete your programme of study; and

2.3. This Procedure is not available to you if you have been expelled or withdrawn from the School or have completed your programme of study (whether successfully or unsuccessfully) and the deadline for submitting a formal complaint has passed.

3. We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about an academic or administrative service or facility that we provide from your acceptance of our offer of a place at the School up to the end of your programme of study with us.

4. This Procedure aims to enable you to understand how we would normally handle complaints and other similar issues. Please get in touch with any of the people mentioned in this Procedure if you have any suggestions about how we may improve our complaint handling.

Departmental Level

5. If you wish to raise a complaint, you should first raise it at a departmental level, or undertake mediation, normally with **Twenty (20) working days** from the date of the incident/s. This will provide us with an opportunity to attempt to resolve the issue/s as efficiently and as amicably as possible.

6. You can present your complaint to the following people:

6.1. If your complaint concerns an academic matter: your Academic Adviser, Personal Tutor, Supervisor, Programme Director or Head of your Academic Department, or either the Senior Adviser to Students, or if relevant, Dean of our General Course or; or

6.2. If your complaint concerns an administrative matter: the person with whom you have been dealing, their line manager or the Service Leader of the relevant Division.

7. Unless there is good reason for not having raised your complaint at a departmental level, we will not normally investigate it as a formal complaint.

Formal Complaint

8. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a departmental resolution or mediation, or consider these stages to be inappropriate, then you can pursue a formal Complaint by submitting the Complaint Form (Appendix A) to the School Secretary ("the Secretary").

9. You must send your Complaint Form to the Secretary by no later than:

9.1. **Twenty (20) working days** from the end of an attempt at departmental resolution or mediation; or

9.2. **Twenty (20) working days** from the date of the incident/s, with an explanation of why you have not attempted a departmental resolution.

10. The Secretary will write to you within **five (5) working days** of receipt of your formal complaint to confirm:

10.1. Whether they consider your complaint to be eligible under this Procedure, and:

10.1.1. if it is eligible, how they intend to deal with it; or

10.1.2. if it is not eligible, explain why it is not and how you can appeal against his/her decision under section 13 below;

10.2. Whether they intend to put in place any alternative study or work arrangements while your complaint is investigated, which you and/or an affected party can appeal against under section 13 below; and

10.3. If they have delegated the matter, the individual who will be responsible for investigating and/or making a decision on your complaint. They can delegate decision-making powers on your complaint only to another member of the School Management Committee (hereafter "the Secretary" includes a person that conducts an investigation and/or holds delegated decision-making powers).

11. The Secretary will conduct an investigation into your complaint and will take account of any evidence that you have presented to us. Any investigation may involve separate meetings with you and any other relevant parties. You and other parties have the right to be accompanied to any meetings and to comment on a written record of it. Please note that anyone who accompanies you or another party to a meeting, such as an adviser from the Students' Union, should do as a silent observer, unless a reason to do otherwise is presented to, and agreed by, the person who has requested the meeting.

12. Once the investigation into your complaint is complete, you will receive the **Secretary's Decision** in writing. It will:

- Set out the reasons behind their decision;
- Explain any actions that they may have decided to take; and
- Inform you of whom you should contact if you wish to appeal.

Appeal

13. If you are dissatisfied with the Secretary's Decision, you may submit an **Appeal** to a Pro-Director within **five (5) working days** of receipt of the Secretary's Decision.

14. An Appeal is not an opportunity to re-submit your complaint for a second opinion. It is normally an assessment of whether the Secretary's handling of your complaint, including their final decision, was fair, reasonable, proportionate and timely in the circumstances. With these factors in mind, your Appeal should:

14.1. Set out the grounds on which you are appealing;

14.2. Attach any new evidence, along with an explanation as to why this evidence is being submitted at this late stage if the Procedure; and

14.3. Be submitted to the Pro-Director within five (5) working days of your reading the Secretary's decision.

15. The Pro-Director will convey their decision on your Appeal to you in writing in a **Completion of Procedures Letter** within **ten (10) working** days of reading your Appeal. It will:

- Set out the reasons behind their decision;
- Explain any actions that they may have decided to take; and
- Inform you of your right, and how, to approach the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education

16. If after receiving the Completion of Procedures Letter from a Pro-Director, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of, or the way that we have handled, your complaint, you may approach the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). This organisation provides an independent scheme for the review of student complaints. The OIA normally require you to have completed our internal Procedure and received a Completion of Procedures Letter from us before you approach it by completing a Scheme Application Form. You can find more information on its website at www.oiahe.org.uk.

End.

Approved by Council on 16 June 2015.

Section Two

General Guidance

1. Advice and Alternative Procedures

It is impractical for our Complaints Procedure ('this Procedure'), or any other procedures, to cover every kind of issue that a student wishes to raise with us. We therefore have a number of different procedures to deal with specific types of circumstances, issues or events. You should note that you cannot use this Procedure to:

- Question the academic judgement of one or more members of staff;
- Appeal against examination marks;
- Appeal against an admissions decision;
- Complain about the behaviour of another student;
- Raise issues concerning a position of employment;
- Question the actions or policies of the LSE Students' Union; or
- Appeal against a decision reached under a different Procedure.

You can obtain advice on the way we might handle the issue/s that you wish to bring to our attention by approaching any of the following people:

- Your Academic Adviser or Head of Department.
- The Head of the relevant administrative department.
- The Senior Adviser to Students, or if relevant, Dean of the General Course.
- The LSE Students' Union Advice Centre.
- The Adviser to Male or Adviser to Female Students.
- The Warden or Sub-Warden of your hall of residence.
- The Head of the LSE Legal Team.
- The Ethics Manager.

You can find their contact details on our website (see our 'What to do if you have a problem' page) or by visiting or contacting The Student Services Centre (ssc.advice@lse.ac.uk) in the Old Building.

We will normally refer complaints about a third party to the organisation that is responsible for that party.

2. Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally pursue anonymous complaints where we believe our doing so would compromise the fairness and/or reasonableness of this Procedure.

3. Collaborative Programmes

If your programme of study is provided by us in collaboration with one or more institutions, we will not use this Procedure to consider your complaint if it was agreed between us and the other institution/s that another procedure would apply. We will ensure that you are made aware of, and have access to, the relevant procedure.

4. Confidentiality

It is essential that you feel confident and secure about raising a complaint. We will therefore keep information confidential, unless doing so would compromise the fairness and thoroughness of our investigation, or we are required to disclose information by law, which includes our having to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. This Act requires us to handle and record your and other people's personal information securely and for relevant purposes only. It also gives you and other people the right to access your personal information, which in general terms is any information that could be considered biographical. Our normal approach is to disclose information on a 'need to know' basis.

5. Criminal Investigations

We will not normally look into a matter that is also the subject of an external investigation until that investigation is concluded, but we reserve the right to conduct an internal investigation at any point when we deem it appropriate to do so. Examples of our doing so may include the need to prevent harm being caused to other members or the day-to-day business of the School.

6. Deviations from this Procedure

Deviations from this Procedure will not invalidate any action taken against a student unless the integrity of the process is compromised. The person who is overseeing an investigation, usually the Secretary, a Pro-Director or a Board of Discipline, will decide when and how to deviate from this Procedure, and explain to the affected parties the reason for doing so.

7. Equal Opportunities

When necessary, we will put in place reasonable adjustments and provide you with additional support to help you use this Procedure. Such measures may involve us extending a deadline, providing a translation service or amending this Procedure. You should present any requests to make adjustments to the School Secretary or other person who is overseeing an investigation, either directly or through a person to whom you are comfortable speaking.

8. Frivolous, Vexatious or Misleading Complaints

We will consider taking disciplinary action if your complaint is considered to be frivolous, vexatious or deliberately misleading.

9. Group Complaints

We will consider how to deal with complaints by two or more persons on a case-by-case basis, though, as far as is practically possible, we will follow this Procedure. We will notify you and any other complainants of any procedural changes, which we reserve the right to make, provided our procedure remains fair, reasonable and timely in the circumstances.

10. Legal and Third Party Representation

As one of our students, our contractual relationship is with you. In this regard, we will not consider any complaint that is submitted by a third party unless we are satisfied that you have given them your explicit permission to do so.

This Procedure is subject to the civil law evidential test of the 'balance of probabilities' and the independent complaints service that is run by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). As such, we would normally expect you to approach us, and subsequently the OIA if you are dissatisfied with our response, without legal representation.

We will not normally meet any legal costs that you incur.

11. Mediation

Mediation is an alternative means of external dispute resolution to this Procedure. As such, mediation can be used as an alternative at any point before or after a complaint is submitted. You will not lose your right to submit a formal complaint if mediation is unsuccessful.

12. Procedural Bias

The person/s against whom a complaint is made will not have a role in the decision-making process of our handling of a complaint.

If your complaint concerns someone who is designated as having a role in this Procedure, the School Secretary, or the Deputy Director and Provost if the complaint is about the School Secretary, will nominate another person to perform the role.

13. Procedural Delays

We will give you, and you must give us, notification, and reasons for, any procedural delays or the missing of a deadline, in advance of the set deadline. We reserve the right to decide whether to dismiss or continue with our handling of your complaint if you fail to notify or respond to us by a set deadline.

14. Procedural Deviations

If we believe it to be appropriate, necessary, and practical or are given sufficient grounds to do so, we will amend this Procedure to resolve your complaint. We will not make any amendments that would compromise the fairness, reasonableness and/or timeliness of this Procedure, and we will explain our reasons for any amendments to you and the subject/s of your complaint.

15. Record Keeping

We will not keep a record of your complaint on your student file unless:

- you agree that it is appropriate for us to do so; or
- if we find your complaint to be frivolous, vexatious or deliberately misleading.

16. Protection

We will take appropriate steps, including the possibility of disciplinary action, to protect any parties involved in a complaint case from being victimised or treated unfairly.

End.

London School of Economics and Political Science

Student Complaint Procedure

Appendix A: Complaint Form

Student ID:	
Surname:	
First Name:	
Address/Email:	
Telephone:	
Date of incident :	
Summary of complaint:	[This should include what the incident is that is referred to, where the incident happened, the parties involved, the basis of the complaint and, where appropriate, the outcome sought.]

Signed:

Dated:

London School of Economics and Political Science**Student Complaint Procedure****Appendix B: Complaint Process**

Consider: Are you considered a student of the School? You are not a student of the School if you have been expelled or withdrawn from the course, or where you have completed your course. In such instances, the Student Complaint Procedure does not apply to you.



Consider: Have you missed the deadline for submitting a formal complaint? The School will not normally consider a complaint raised more than 20 working days from the date of the incident.



Raise the complaint at Departmental Level.



If dissatisfied with departmental level resolution or departmental level resolution is not suitable raise a Formal Complaint in writing to the School Secretary within 20 working days of incident or outcome of Departmental Level.



The School Secretary will decide:

1. Whether your complaint is eligible;
2. Whether to put in place any alternative study or work arrangements while your complaint is investigated; and
3. If your complaint is delegated, the individual responsible for investigating and/or making a decision on your complaint.



If dissatisfied with the School Secretary's decision, you can Appeal within five working days of receipt of the School Secretary's decision.



Grounds of Appeal

1. A significant procedural flaw or irregularity that compromised the fairness of the process;
2. New evidence, which must be supported by an explanation of why it is being submitted at this late stage; and
3. An outcome being unreasonable or disproportionate.



Completion of Procedures Letter issued