INTRODUCTION

1. Imperial College London aims to give the highest specialised instruction and to provide the fullest equipment for the most advanced training and research; furthermore the College strives to achieve a standard of overall administrative performance, in terms of service quality and operating efficiency, which complements and reinforces the excellence of its teaching and research. The College recognises, however, that, if students consider they have grounds for complaint about either academic or administrative services, a clear, consistent procedure should be available through which these complaints can be investigated and considered.

2. This Ordinance does not cover appeals and other matters which are dealt with under the following procedures:

   a. Student Withdrawals and Appeals - Procedure for dealing with cases of unsatisfactory academic progress.

   b. Procedure for Consideration of Representations concerning decisions of Boards of Examiners.

   c. Procedure for Consideration of Representations by Candidates for Research Degree Examinations.

   d. Procedures for dealing with appeals by research students to the Transfer Appeal Committee against a decision by their Department or Division not to transfer their registration from MPhil to PhD.

   e. Appeals against disciplinary decisions (appeals against summary punishment; appeals against the decisions of the Imperial College Union Disciplinary Committee, the Residence Tribunal and the College Discipline Committee).

   f. Examination Offences Policy and Procedures.

   g. The Investigation of Allegations of Scientific Misconduct. (Ordinance D17).

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1. The definition of students that are eligible to make a complaint under this procedure includes those students that are currently registered as students with the College, or those students who have been registered at some point within the last three years.

2. Advice about dealing with sexual and racial harassment is given in the Student Handbook, and will be pursued under the College’s procedure for dealing with student disciplinary offences, or under the appropriate staff disciplinary procedure (obtainable from the Human Resources Division).
h. Public Interest Disclosure (Ordinance D18).

i. Complaints about the admissions process (dealt with under the Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure),

3. The Council has approved this Procedure for dealing with those student complaints which are not covered by the above procedures.

4. A copy of it is published in the Student Handbook which is provided to all students on their registration at the College. Copies are also available from the Imperial College Union office and the Registry. An online version can be found at: www.imperial.ac.uk/studenthandbook.

STAGES OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

5. There are three stages in the Complaints Procedure:

a. **Stage 1.** The complaint is raised initially with the individual responsible.

b. **Stage 2.** The complaint is referred to the relevant responsible authority, as specified in Paragraph 12.

c. **Stage 3.** The complaint is referred to the Director of Student Support who, having investigated and having consulted with the Academic Registrar and/ or the Vice Provost (Education), where necessary, will reach a conclusion on the complaint and determine a course of action. If the student is from the same Department as the Director of Student Support, a College Tutor will carry out the investigation and consult with the Academic Registrar and/ or the Vice Provost (Education) at this stage, in place of the Director of Student Support.

6. It is envisaged that most complaints will be satisfactorily resolved at one of the early stages in the Procedure, but the three sequential stages are provided where this proves not to be possible.

7. Students are invited, when making their complaint, to indicate what, if any, resolution they are seeking, without prejudice to any final remedy which may be determined. Students are reminded that an informal resolution to their complaint is possible at any stage.

8. It is expected that complaints will be raised as quickly as possible. Where a complaint relates to a specific event, it should be raised with the individual concerned within 10 College working days of that event. Where the complaint relates to an ongoing aspect of academic provision, it is expected that this will be raised as soon as the dissatisfaction becomes apparent and no later than three weeks before an examination or assessment is to be undertaken which the complainant considers may be adversely affected. (Complaints regarding the conduct of examinations are dealt with under the Procedure for Consideration of Representations
concerning decisions of Boards of Examiners, or the Procedure for Consideration of Representations by Candidates for Research Degree Examinations).

9. Where a complaint is made regarding a member of staff, HR will be notified as early on in the process as possible by the person with whom the complaint has been raised.

10. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, a response will be given at each stage within 20 working days. Where extenuating circumstances exist, these will be communicated to the complainant.

STAGE 1

11. It is expected that every reasonable attempt will be made by the complainant to raise the complaint with the responsible individual, and that the responsible individual will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the complaint at this level. It is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances in which the complainant considers they cannot approach the individual concerned. In such cases, the complainant may go to the Head of his or her Department as in Stage 2.

STAGE 2

12. If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1, the complaint may be taken to the next level of responsible authority. The responsible authority is determined by the subject of the complaint.

   a. Academic matters: the Head of Department (for undergraduate medicine students this is the Head of Undergraduate Medicine).
   b. Students' Union matters: the President of Imperial College Union.
   c. College-managed Residential Accommodation: the Head of Residences.
   d. Catering: the Head of Catering.
   e. All other administrative matters: the College Secretary.

Where the complaint is against one of the people named in a-d above, the College Secretary will nominate a responsible authority for dealing with the complaint. If the complaint is regarding the College Secretary, the Provost will nominate a responsible authority for dealing with the complaint.

13. In academic matters, if the responsible individual is a Head of Department, or the complainant feels that it would not be beneficial for an attempt to resolve the complaint within the Department/Division to be made, their complaint may be taken, in the second Stage, to a College Tutor.
14. The responsible authority will investigate the complaint, and respond in an appropriate manner. Normally students can expect a response within 10 working days of the complaint being raised at the second Stage. This may or may not be the final response by the responsible authority, depending on the level of investigation required.

STAGE 3

15. Where the complaint is not resolved at the second Stage, the Director of Student Support will investigate the complaint and reach a conclusion. At this stage, the complainant is required to provide written details of their complaint in the form of a letter to the Director of Student Support. Normally, students can expect a written reply within 10 College working days of the complaint being raised at the third Stage. This may or may not be the final response from the Director of Student Support, depending on the level of investigation required. The Director of Student Support may choose to meet with the complainant, the responsible individual and the responsible authority before concluding the matter. The student’s letter of complaint and the Director of Student Support’s response will be filed in the Registry.

16. The Director of Student Support’s response as mentioned in paragraph 15 is the College’s final response to the complaint.

THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR

17. Once a student has completed the College’s internal complaints procedures, the College will issue the student with a Completion of Procedures Letter. If the student is still dissatisfied, he or she may direct his or her complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator within twelve months of the date on which the Completion of Procedures Letter was issued. Information on the complaints covered by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and the review procedures is available at: http://www.oiahe.org.uk/docs/OIA_New_Rules.pdf.

18. The College reserves the right to reject a complaint when it is issued more than three years after the substantive event(s) to which it relates.

PRINCIPLES OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

19. It is the intention of the College that no student should be discriminated against or in any way penalised for raising a complaint at any level of the Complaints Procedure.

20. The student will be kept informed of the progress of his or her complaint and any unforeseen delay in the proceedings will be communicated to the student.

21. At all stages of the process, when a complaint is not upheld, reasons shall be given to the student.
22. Where a complaint is upheld as valid, any remedial action will be taken, and the complainant will be informed by the Director of Student Support. If appropriate, any incidental expenses incurred by the complainant will be reimbursed.

23. In keeping with the Human Rights Act 1998, should the student wish, details of the final outcome of a complaint will be posted on the relevant departmental/divisional notice board.

24. The Director of Student Support shall prepare each year a report on the complaints brought to Stage 3 of the Procedure, using the information arising from complaints which will be filed within the Registry. In doing so, the confidentiality of individuals will be preserved. The report shall be presented to the Senate by the Vice Provost (Education).

25. The College recognises the rights of individuals who may be wrongly accused in the circumstances of a complaint. Where it is found that a student has raised a frivolous or vexatious complaint or used false information, the College may use its Disciplinary Procedure in respect of the student’s conduct.

26. Usually a complaint cannot be raised by a third party on behalf of another. In exceptional circumstances, applications by a third party to raise a complaint on behalf of another student may be considered at the discretion of the Director of Student Support.

**CONDUCT OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

27. Students seeking authoritative guidance concerning the applicability and operation of the Procedure should apply to the Head of the Central Secretariat. Where appropriate, members of the College will facilitate access to information and documents material to a complaint, whilst having due regard for privacy, confidentiality and the reasonable interests of any third parties. Where any meeting is held at which the complainant will be present, he or she is entitled to be accompanied by a ‘friend’ who is a member of the College (either a fellow student, or a personal tutor, warden or other member of the academic staff).

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