Student Complaints: Guidance to Students

1. The following information is intended as a general guide if you are considering making a complaint and should be read in conjunction with the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints by Students (Ordinance E3).

2. If you are considering making a complaint you should read and consider the following information carefully before proceeding. Particularly for academic and departmental complaints, students are encouraged to contact their student representative for advocacy and assistance in the first instance.

3. It is the intention of the College that no student should be discriminated against or in any way penalised for raising a complaint.

4. The Complaints Process

4.1 The following sections explain what this means, and what to do if a complaint is not resolved satisfactorily.

4.2 There are 3 stages in the College’s Complaints Procedure:

4.2.1 Stage 1: Local Level - The complaint is raised initially with the individual responsible

4.2.2 Stage 2: Section Level - If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1, the complaint may be taken to the next level of responsible authority.

   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 & Registrar.

4.2.3 If the complaint is against one of the individuals named above either the College Secretary & Registrar (or the Provost, if there is a conflict of interest), will nominate the next responsible authority. In the case of a complaint against the Head of Department, or where the complaint feels it would not be beneficial for an attempt to resolve the complaint within the department, the next responsibly authority will usually be the College Tutor.

4.2.4 Stage 3: College Level - If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved at Stage 2, the complaint may be taken to the Director of Student Support (or College Tutor, if there is a conflict of interests) who will investigate the
complaint in consultation with the Academic Registrar and Vice Provost (Education) and reach a conclusion.

4.3 After the College’s internal processes have been exhausted, complainants have the opportunity to have their complaint independently reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) – see below for further details.

4.4 To make a complaint you must start at Stage 1.

4.5 An informal resolution to a complaint is possible at any stage.

5. **Expected Time Limits**

5.1 Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the following time limits for making a complaint and receiving an initial response apply. You will be kept informed of the progress of your complaint and any unforeseen delay in the proceedings will be communicated to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Student Complaint</th>
<th>Staff/Service Response</th>
<th>Investigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>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. The College reserves the right to reject a complaint when it is issued more than three</td>
<td>Within 20 working days</td>
<td>It is expected that every reasonable attempt will be made to resolve the complaint at this level. Where a complaint is made regarding a member of staff, HR will be notified.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1, you may take your complaint to the next level of responsible authority. Within 20 days and normally 10 working days. This may or may not be the final response by the responsible authority, depending on the level of investigation required. It is expected that every reasonable attempt will be made to resolve the complaint at this level. Where a complaint is made regarding a member of staff, HR will be notified.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The complainant is required to provide written details of their complaint in the form of a letter to the Director of Student Support (or College Tutor if conflict of interest). Within 20 days and normally 10 working days. This may or may not be the final response by the responsible authority, depending on the level of investigation required. The Director of Student Support (or College Tutor) may choose to meet with the complainant, the responsible individual and the responsible authority before concluding the matter. The Director of Student Support's (or College Tutor's) response is the College's final response to the complaint and the College will issue the student with a Completion of Procedures Letter.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OIA</td>
<td>Complaint should be raised within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter. Variable</td>
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5.2 At all stages of the process, when a complaint is not upheld, the reasons will be given to you. Where a complaint is upheld as valid, any remedial action will be taken, and you will be informed. If appropriate, any incidental expenses incurred by you will be reimbursed.
6. How to Make Complaint

6.1 Please explain clearly what the problem is and what outcome you are seeking. It is suggested your complaint covers:

- Full details of the complaint;
- What the supporting evidence is;
- What outcome you seek.

6.2 Should staff make notes of any meetings with you at this stage, these should be shared with you.

6.3 The College expects most complaints to be resolved early on however, should you not be satisfied with the response at this stage, you may refer your complaint to the next level of authority where you should also explain:

- Why informal resolution was unsuccessful/unsatisfactory

6.4 Should you not be satisfied with the response at Stage 2 of your complaint, you may refer your complaint to the Director of Student Support (or College Tutor). To do this you will need to provide written details of your complaint in the form of a letter: This should include:

- Full details of the complaint;
- What the supporting evidence is;
- What outcome you seek;
- Why informal resolution was unsuccessful/unsatisfactory;
- Why resolution at Stage 2 was unsuccessful/unsatisfactory

6.5 The Director of Student Support’s (or College Tutor’s) response is the College’s final response to the complaint and the College will issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter.

6.6 Once the internal complaints procedure has been exhausted, if you are still not happy with the outcome, you may take your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The OIA operates externally to the University. It will not normally look at a complaint until all relevant internal complaints procedures have been completed. Further information is available from the OIA website http://www.oiahe.org.uk/

7. Collective Complaints

7.1 Collective complaints should follow the procedure above; although students should note that in the first instance it may be more appropriate to raise your complaint via the Staff-Student Committee for resolution. Students should therefore contact the Academic Representation Network (i.e. Year or
Programme Reps, Departmental Reps, Academic Affairs or Academic Affairs & Welfare Officer, etc.) in the first instance.

8. Complaints from Third Parties

8.1 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.

9. Anonymous Complaints

9.2 Depending on the subject of the complaint an informal or formal investigation may be carried out but, due to their nature, it is not possible to make a response to an anonymous complaint.

10. Need Help Making a Complaint?

10.1 Advocacy and Support

10.1.1 Students are encouraged to contact their student representative for advocacy and assistance.

10.1.2 Imperial College Union has an Advice Centre which is open weekdays between 10:00 - 17:00. It is located on floor 2M of the Union Building, South Kensington Campus, SW7 2BB. The ICU Student Adviser can be contacted by email on advice@imperial.ac.uk or by telephone on +44 20 7594 8067 / IC: 48067.

10.1.3 See also: https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/welfare-and-advice

10.1.4 Where any meeting is held at which the complainant will be present, he or she is entitled to be accompanied by a "friend" or advocate who is a member of the College (either a fellow student, or a personal tutor, warden or other member of the academic staff).

10.2 Procedural Advice

10.2.1 Students seeking authoritative guidance concerning the applicability and operation of the Procedure should apply to the Head of the Central Secretariat, Mr Jon Hancock: jonathan.hancock@imperial.ac.uk

10.2.2 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.
Approved by Academic Registrar, Vice Provost (Education) and Deputy President (Education)
October 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document title:</th>
<th>Student Complaints: Guidance to Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Version:</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>July 2015 (revised to change OIA deadline from 3 to 12 months)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approved:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective from:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Originator:</td>
<td>Registry Quality Assurance &amp; Enhancement Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact:</td>
<td>Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance &amp; Enhancement)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cross References:</td>
<td>Procedure for Dealing with Complaints by Students (Ordinance E3). Chapter B9 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Academic appeals and student complaints</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes:</td>
<td>See QAEC October 2013 Formatting and terminology updates made on 07.04.16</td>
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