

SECTION K — MAKING A COMPLAINT, INCLUDING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

We make every effort to provide appropriate facilities and services to our students, and to act responsibly where our work might affect the wider community of Norwich. But we also understand that there might be times when students or members of the public may wish to make a complaint to the University. This section explains how you can make a complaint to us, and how students can take forward concerns if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint after the University has made its final decision on the matter.

The Academic Support Office in the Academic Registry manages complaint handling for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students and can offer advice if you are thinking of making a complaint: email aso@norwichuni.ac.uk for more information. The Academic Support Office can also offer advice to staff and members of the public about the complaint handling process – please use the same email address for details. University staff who are considering making a complaint may need to discuss the matter first of all with the University’s Human Resources department: email humanresources@norwichuni.ac.uk for more information.

If you are a research degree student and you are thinking about making a complaint, ask us for advice about whether your concerns would be best dealt with by the University, or – as the University of the Arts (UAL) awards research degrees – by UAL. For more information, contact our Research Office in the first instance: research@norwichuni.ac.uk.

If you are a current student at the University and you decide to make a complaint, the Students’ Union can support you through the process. Email su.advice@norwichuni.ac.uk for more information.

If you are a student on a course at a partner institution validated by Norwich University of the Arts, you will be subject to that institution’s regulations on complaints. When you have exhausted the appeals process at the partner institution, if you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may be eligible to submit a further complaint to Norwich University of the Arts complaints process, subject to the University’s partnership agreement, the details of which follow in this section.

- **We won’t treat you differently or negatively if you make a complaint.** We look at complaints on their merits and University staff are committed to addressing any issues raised in a complaint. You may not receive the outcome you would like from a complaint, but you can be reassured that we will have considered the matter fairly and consistently with any other complaints we receive.
- If you need to make a complaint to us, **it’s always better if you do so as soon as you can** after the problem or issue has arisen. It’s better for you because you’ll receive an outcome more quickly, and it’s better for us because we have the opportunity to investigate the matter in a timely way and to put things right promptly if we need to.

- If you make a complaint, **we will try and deal with it efficiently and within the timescales set out below**. Please remember though that to do this, we also need you to present information to us when we need it or ask for it. So if we ask you for more details or evidence to support your complaint, make sure that you return the information to us as soon as you are able. If we think we need more time to consider a complaint – for example, because you have made the complaint during student vacation time and we need to discuss the issue with a member of staff who is on leave – then we will keep you up-to-date with progress on your complaint.
- **These regulations don't apply to concerns about student conduct**. See sections L and M for more about how we manage conduct issues at the University.
- The previous section of these regulations, **section J**, explains **how you can make an appeal** to the University. We define complaints and appeals differently, and sometimes we receive a complaint that we decide would be better considered as an appeal, or vice versa. We may also receive a complaint that contains elements of an appeal. In all these cases, the member of staff considering the complaint and the Academic Support Office will decide jointly on the most appropriate process to use. The Academic Support Office will write to you to confirm any decision we take about this.
- The **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)** runs an independent scheme to review student complaints, and the University is a member of this scheme. If you're unhappy with the outcome of your complaint you may be able to ask the OIA to review your case. You can find more information about taking your case to the OIA, what it can and can't look at, and what it can do to put things right, here:

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>

You normally need to have completed our complaint procedures before you can complain to the OIA. We'll send you a letter called a **Completion of Procedures letter** when you have reached the end of our processes and there are no more steps you can take with your complaint within the University. If we don't uphold your complaint, we'll issue you with a Completion of Procedures letter automatically. If we uphold or partially uphold your complaint, you can ask for a Completion of Procedures letter if you'd like one. You can find more information about Completion of Procedures letters, and when you can expect to receive one, here:

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers/completion-of-procedures-letters/>

You can also find more about Completion of Procedures letters in the regulations that follow.

- For more information about **how we keep original copies of complaint documentation in the long-term**, please see **section N**. Any paper copies of

individual complaints we make for the purposes of discussing them formally within the University are destroyed confidentially at the first opportunity.

- We **keep notes and records** of all stages of these complaint processes, and we report annually on the operation of the complaint process at the University – including summarising the outcomes of all Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints – to our **Audit Committee and to Academic Board**.

1 What is a complaint?

- 1.1 We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about the University's services or actions which requires a response.
- 1.2 We manage complaints in three stages at the University:
- **initial resolution**, which is how we describe any attempts University staff make to resolve a complaint in the first instance. These usually involve the people directly involved in the issue raised;
 - **a Stage 1 complaint**, which is the first stage of our formal complaint resolution process. This is for matters where initial resolution has not been successful, or where we decide the issue is evidently more serious and needs addressing formally; and
 - **a Stage 2 complaint**, which is the second and final stage of our formal complaint resolution process. You can make a Stage 2 complaint – for example, because you have new evidence which you want us to take into consideration – only after you have received our decision on your Stage 1 complaint.

2 Who can make a complaint?

- 2.1 All students with an active registration at the University can use these regulations to make a complaint.
- 2.2 You can also use these regulations to make a complaint if:
- you were a student at the University; and
 - you left no more than six months ago; and
 - you want to complain to us about something in connection with your studies here.
- 2.3 If you are a student registered with the London School of Design and Marketing (LSDM) on a course validated by Norwich University of the Arts you can use these regulations to make a complaint. Your complaint will only be considered by the University after you have exhausted the complaints process at LSDM and remain dissatisfied with the outcome. Your complaint will be considered under

these regulations as a Stage 2 complaint. Please refer to paragraph 9 and below for information on making a Stage 2 complaint.

- 2.4 If you are a member of the public and you want to complain to us about something else, you can address your complaint to the Academic Support Office in the first instance (aso@norwichuni.ac.uk). The Academic Support Office will then take advice about who would be most appropriate to consider and respond to your complaint.
- 2.5 If you are not sure who to contact about your concerns – or if you don't feel you can raise your concerns with the person at the University who might otherwise be able to help – email aso@norwichuni.ac.uk and the Academic Support Office will advise you.
- 2.6 We would usually expect a complaint to be made by one person only. If several people make a complaint jointly, they will need to name one person in the group making the complaint as the point of contact for all communications about the matter. We call this person the **group representative**.
- 2.7 We would expect the group representative to:
- ensure that all individuals named in the group complaint wish to be a part of that complaint;
 - collect and submit information and evidence as appropriate from all the students contributing to the complaint, ensuring that all their views are represented;
 - update the students making the complaint about progress with our response;
 - attend meetings in relation to the complaint;
 - present to the group the response to and outcome of the complaint; and
 - if appropriate, accept or reject on behalf of the group any solutions we offer.

Where we receive a group complaint, we'll decide on the best way to address the matter according to the details and circumstances.

- 2.8 If you make a complaint anonymously, the Academic Registrar will decide whether or not the University can respond to it. We don't encourage anonymous complaints because we believe the person making the complaint will get a more helpful and detailed response if they engage directly with the individuals involved. If the Academic Registrar decides we cannot look at your anonymised complaint, the Academic Support Office will write and tell you this.

3 How we can help with complaints through initial resolution

- 3.1 A complaint could be about any one – or more than one – aspect of the University and its work. To try and resolve such matters promptly, relevant

University staff may try and resolve the issue with you directly and without asking you to start a formal process. We call this **initial resolution**.

- 3.2 If you have already tried to resolve your complaint directly with the person responsible and haven't succeeded – or if you or they need more help to resolve the matter – the Academic Support Office may be able to help as part of initial resolution. Academic Support Office staff can speak to you, preferably in person, to discuss your concerns. You can bring a friend or supporter to this meeting, but as this is a 'light-touch' process aimed at early resolution, we would ask you not to bring a legal representative to this meeting. If you insist on bringing a legal representative, the Academic Support Office will take forward the matter as a Stage 1 complaint.

See below for more about Stage 1 complaints.

- 3.3 Once the Academic Support Office understands your concerns, they will investigate the matter and try to help resolve the issue for you within about 20 working days (four weeks).

- 3.4 We may also decide to consider your concerns as a Stage 1 complaint if:

- the Academic Support Office can't resolve the matter through initial resolution; or
- you are unhappy with the outcome you have received after trying initial resolution; or
- if you or we feel that your concerns are so serious that the University should make a formal response at the first opportunity.

See below for more about Stage 1 complaints.

4 How to make a Stage 1 complaint

- 4.1 To make a Stage 1 complaint, **you must put your concerns to us in writing** using our online form, or as an email, or in a letter. Submit the complaint online, email it to aso@norwichuni.ac.uk, or post it to the following address:

Academic Support Office (Ref: COM)
Norwich University of the Arts
Francis House
3-7 Redwell Street
NORWICH
NR2 4SN

[Click here for the link to the online complaint form](#), or search the website for 'Resolving a complaint'.

When you contact us, include the following:

- what your concerns are;
- what outcome you are seeking;
- any evidence you have to support your case;
- whether you or we have already tried to resolve the matter through initial resolution; and
- your email and postal address so that we can contact you.

The type of evidence you may want to submit will depend on why you are making a complaint. Only staff dealing with your complaint will see the evidence you send to us.

Please remember:

- it's your responsibility to obtain evidence to support your complaint – staff at the University won't do this for you. This also means that if there's a charge to obtain the evidence, you will need to pay for it; and
- don't provide personal evidence about a third party as part of your evidence unless you have their permission to give this to us. We can give you advice on this when you make a complaint.

5 How we process Stage 1 complaints

5.1 When we receive your Stage 1 complaint and any supporting evidence, the Academic Support Office will acknowledge receipt of the complaint to you. The Academic Support Office will also contact you at this point if we believe that we need additional information from you to help us assess your Stage 1 complaint.

5.2 The Academic Support Office will then investigate the complaint. Depending on the content of the complaint, this process may include asking for comments from members of University staff as appropriate. The Academic Support Office will then pass the full details of the case to one of the following members of staff to make a decision on your Stage 1 complaint:

- a Pro Vice-Chancellor; or
- the Quality Manager.

To ensure that there's no conflict of interest, the Academic Support Office will pass your Stage 1 complaint to a member of staff who has not had any previous involvement in the circumstances or content of your complaint.

5.3 Where the person considering your complaint believes that the documentation provided by the Academic Support Office is sufficient, they will make a decision on your Stage 1 complaint. This means they will not invite you to attend a complaint hearing in person to discuss the case. Where they can consider your Stage 1 complaint on the basis solely of the documentation, they will write to you with the outcome within 20 working days (four weeks). The 20-day period for the

member of staff to make a response normally begins when we have received your Stage 1 complaint and your evidence.

See below for more about the possible outcomes of a Stage 1 complaint.

- 5.4 If the member of staff considers that the matter requires a face-to-face meeting with you, they can request that the complaint is considered at a hearing. We will convene the hearing as soon as it is practical, and will keep you updated as to how the scheduling of the hearing may affect the timescale within which we can respond to your complaint.

See below for more about complaint hearings.

6 Arrangements for a hearing to consider a Stage 1 complaint

- 6.1 As a complaint may be about a number of different matters at the University, we may invite one or more staff members to a hearing for a Stage 1 complaint to discuss the concerns raised. In all cases, the member of staff responsible for responding to the complaint will chair the hearing and decides who to invite. A member of the Academic Support Office attends all complaint hearings to provide advice on regulatory and other matters. The Administrator to the Academic Registrar organises the hearings and takes the minutes.

- 6.2 If we organise a hearing to discuss your Stage 1 complaint, the Administrator to the Academic Registrar will:

- write to you asking you to attend the hearing in person, giving you at least five working days' (one week's) notice of the time and place; and
- tell you who else will be attending the hearing.

It's up to you whether you wish to attend the hearing, but our advice is that it's always in your interests to give staff the opportunity to discuss your complaint with you. Please be aware too that, whether you attend or not, the hearing will take place and the member of staff responsible for responding to the complaint will then make a decision on your Stage 1 complaint.

If we decide that it would be appropriate for you to attend the meeting by video or conference call, we'll confirm this with you in advance.

- 6.3 If we invite one or more members of staff to the hearing but they are unable to attend, the Administrator to the Academic Registrar will ask them to make a written statement for the hearing instead. This means the hearing can take place in their absence if necessary.

6.4 You can bring a friend or supporter to the complaint hearing if you'd like to. The role of the supporter is to:

- see that the meeting is carried out fairly; and
- if they wish to, to address the hearing or ask questions.

You can also bring one or more witnesses to the meeting to support what you have told us in your complaint, but it's your responsibility to organise their attendance.

If you want to bring a formally trained legal representative to the hearing – either instead of, or as well as a friend or supporter – you must write to the Chair of the complaint hearing at least two working days before the meeting. The Chair will decide whether or not to allow the legal representative to attend. The Chair can also postpone the hearing so that the University can make its own legal representations at the hearing when it is rescheduled.

A witness, friend, supporter or legal representative can't act on your behalf at the complaint hearing if you cannot or choose not to attend. If we decide that it would be appropriate for your witness, friend, supporter or legal representative to attend the meeting by video or conference call, we'll confirm this with you in advance.

6.5 Once you have decided if you are going to attend the complaint hearing, please email aro@norwichuni.ac.uk at least two working days before the hearing to confirm your decision. In the same email, please also let us know if anyone else will be attending with you and in what capacity they are attending – for example, as a supporter or as a witness.

6.6 After you have told us if you are attending the hearing, the Administrator to the Academic Registrar will send copies of documentation about the complaint to everyone due to attend. The Administrator will do this in advance of the hearing and as soon as it is practical, and everyone attending the hearing will receive the same information. This includes you, whether or not you choose to attend the hearing, and anyone else due to attend. Typically, this documentation includes:

- a copy of your Stage 1 complaint and any evidence you have provided to support your case;
- copies of the relevant regulations – for example, a copy of this section of the *Student Regulations and Procedures*; and
- any other relevant information. This might be information about any attempts we have made to address your complaint through initial resolution; information from the University's own records about you; and information from your course area.

7 What happens at a complaint hearing?

7.1 The hearing will consider a Stage 1 complaint as follows:

- the Chair of the hearing discusses the Stage 1 complaint in private with the members of staff in attendance;
- the Chair of the hearing invites the individual making the complaint into the meeting, together with any witnesses, friends, supporters or legal representatives as appropriate;
- the Chair of the hearing discusses the complaint with the individual making the complaint and others present as appropriate, either separately or together depending on the circumstances;
- the Chair of the hearing asks the student and any witnesses, friends, supporters or legal representatives present to leave the meeting;
- the Chair of the hearing makes a decision on the complaint.

7.2 Within five working days (one week) of the hearing, the Administrator to the Academic Registrar will write to you with the outcome of your Stage 1 complaint. We may be able to let you know the outcome of your Stage 1 complaint verbally – in other words, after the hearing and before confirming the outcome in writing – but we can't guarantee this.

8 The possible outcomes of a Stage 1 complaint

8.1 The person who has considered your Stage 1 complaint will always give you a full written response to the issues you have raised, but there are three principal outcomes:

- to **not uphold** the complaint; or
- to **partially uphold** the complaint; or
- to **uphold** the complaint.

These outcomes are the same whether we have considered the complaint on the basis of the documentation only or at a hearing. What these outcomes mean is detailed below. If you choose to, you can make a Stage 2 complaint against any of these outcomes.

See below for more about making a Stage 2 complaint.

8.2 We can decide to **not uphold** your Stage 1 complaint. This means that we have investigated your concerns, but we have not found reason to agree with them – for example, because there is no evidence or not enough to support what you have told us.

8.3 We can decide to uphold, or **partially uphold** your Stage 1 complaint. This means that we have investigated your concerns, and agree with some or all of what you have told us. What happens next depends on the content of your complaint and the outcome you are seeking by making it. If we uphold or partially uphold your Stage 1 complaint, we may make an apology to you and we will always explain how, if we are able to, we propose to put things right. We will confirm all the details of our decision when we write to you with the outcome.

9 General information about Stage 2 complaints

- 9.1 If you have made a Stage 1 complaint and you are unhappy with the outcome, you can make a Stage 2 complaint. This applies to all Stage 1 complaints, whatever the content of your complaint and regardless of the outcome of your Stage 1 complaint. The Stage 2 complaint is the University's chance to review the decision it has made on your Stage 1 complaint, and the way in which it made that decision.

10 How to make a Stage 2 complaint

- 10.1 You have 20 working days (four weeks) – starting from the date of our letter to you confirming the outcome of your Stage 1 complaint – to make a Stage 2 complaint. We would only extend this 20-day period if we think there are exceptional reasons to do so.

If you are a student at LSDM, you will need to submit your complaint to Norwich University of the Arts within 20 working days (four weeks) of the date of confirmation from LSDM that you have reached the end of the LSDM complaints process.

- 10.2 As with Stage 1 complaints, to make a Stage 2 complaint, **you must put your concerns to us in writing** using our online form, or as an email, or in a letter. Submit the complaint online, email it to aso@norwichuni.ac.uk, or post it to the address on the next page.

If you are a student registered with a partner institution you should submit your complaint by email or letter.

Academic Support Office (Ref: COM)
Norwich University of the Arts
Francis House
3-7 Redwell Street
NORWICH
NR2 4SN

For students registered at the University, [click here for the link to the online complaint form](#), or search the website for 'Resolving a complaint'.

When you contact us, include the following:

- why you are unhappy with part or all of the outcome of your Stage 1 complaint;
- what outcome you are seeking;

- any new evidence you have to support your case which was not part of your Stage 1 complaint; and
- your email and postal address so that we can contact you.

As with a Stage 1 complaint, the type of evidence you may want to submit will depend on why you are making a complaint. Only staff dealing with your complaint will see the evidence you send to us.

Please remember:

- it's your responsibility to obtain evidence to support your complaint – staff at the University won't do this for you. This also means that if there's a charge to obtain the evidence, you will need to pay for it; and
- don't provide personal evidence about a third party as part of your evidence unless you have their permission to give this to us. We can give you advice on this when you make a complaint.

11 How we process Stage 2 complaints

11.1 When we receive your Stage 2 complaint and any supporting evidence, the Academic Support Office will contact you if we believe that we need additional evidence from you to help assess your Stage 2 complaint.

11.2 The Academic Support Office will then investigate the complaint. Depending on the content of the complaint, this process may include asking for comments from members of University (or partner institution) staff as appropriate. The Academic Support Office will then pass the full details of the case to one of the following members of staff to make a decision on your Stage 1 complaint:

- the Vice-Chancellor; or
- the Deputy Vice-Chancellor; or
- a Pro Vice-Chancellor.

To ensure that there's no conflict of interest, the Academic Support Office will pass your Stage 2 complaint to a member of staff who has not had any previous involvement with your complaint at Stage 1.

11.3 The person considering your complaint will write to you with the outcome of your Stage 2 complaint within 20 working days (four weeks). The 20-day period for the member of staff to make a response normally begins when we have received your Stage 2 complaint and your evidence.

12 The possible outcomes of a Stage 2 complaint

12.1 The person considering your appeal is able to make any decision as appropriate on your Stage 2 complaint and will give you a full written response to the issues

you have raised. But as with Stage 1 complaints, there are three principal outcomes to a Stage 2 complaint:

- to **not uphold** the complaint; or
- to **partially uphold** the complaint; or
- to **uphold** the complaint.

Stage 2 is the final stage in the University's complaints process.

- 12.2 We can decide to not uphold your Stage 2 complaint. This means that we have decided not to change the outcome of your Stage 1 complaint.
- 12.3 We can decide to **uphold**, or **partially uphold** your Stage 2 complaint. This means that we have decided to change, or partly change, the decision we took about your Stage 1 complaint. This may include making an apology to you.
- 12.4 The decision on a Stage 2 complaint is final. If you wish to challenge our decision on a Stage 2 complaint and you are or were a student at the University, you may be able to take the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

See below for more about taking your complaint to the OIA.

13 Taking your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

- 13.1 When we write to you to confirm the outcome of your Stage 2 complaint, we will include information if appropriate on taking your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The OIA is the independent organisation which reviews complaints for students in higher education in the UK.
- 13.2 The OIA will normally only look at complaints which have been processed through all the stages of a university's complaints processes. In our case, this means after you have submitted – and we have responded to – both a Stage 1 and a Stage 2 complaint.
- 13.3 To take your complaint to the OIA, the Academic Support Office will need to issue you with a **Completion of Procedures letter**. The Completion of Procedures letter, sometimes called a CoP letter, contains the following information:
- a summary of how the University has responded to your complaint; and
 - the deadline by which you would need to take your complaint to the OIA for consideration, should you choose to. The deadline is a year from the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

You will need to send a copy of your Completion of Procedures letter to the OIA if you decide that you want them to review how we have responded to your complaint and the outcome we have given you.

13.4 The Academic Support Office will send you a Completion of Procedures letter automatically in the following case:

- if we decided to not uphold your Stage 2 complaint.

13.5 In the following case, you will have to ask the Academic Support Office to send you a Completion of Procedures letter:

- if we decided to uphold, or partially uphold your Stage 2 complaint.

Email aso@norwichuni.ac.uk if you need the Academic Support Office to issue a Completion of Procedures letter for you. If you are thinking of taking your complaint to the OIA, we recommend that you contact us promptly for your Completion of Procedures letter once you have received the outcome of your Stage 2 complaint.

13.6 Where the Academic Support Office sends you a Completion of Procedures letter automatically, they will do so within 10 working days (two weeks) of the date we wrote to you with the outcome of your Stage 2 complaint.

Where you have requested a Completion of Procedures letter, the Academic Support Office will send it to you within 10 working days (two weeks) of receiving your request.

Go to www.oiahe.org.uk for more about the work of the OIA.

14 How we deal with frivolous or vexatious complaints

14.1 The University may decide not to consider a complaint if the content is frivolous or vexatious. Examples of complaints that we might consider as either frivolous or vexatious are:

- complaints which are obsessive, harassing or repetitive in nature;
- complaints where the outcome you are seeking is unreasonable or unrealistic; or
- complaints which we think have been made solely to cause trouble or to waste the University's time.

If we decide not to consider your complaint for any of these reasons, the Academic Support Office will write to you to confirm this and to explain the next step in the process.

15 How we deal with unacceptable behaviour in the complaints process

15.1 The OIA publishes a policy about types of behaviour on the part of someone who uses their services which might affect the OIA's staff and how they work. The University acts in the spirit of this policy and may decide not to consider your complaint if we believe that your actions or behaviour towards university staff, or those of someone representing or supporting you, are:

- aggressive, offensive or abusive; and/or
- if you or they are unreasonably demanding or persistent.

If we decide not to consider your complaint because of this, the Academic Support Office will write to you to confirm this.

If you are becoming unreasonably demanding or persistent in your behaviour about a complaint you have made, the Academic Support Office, in conjunction with senior managers at the University, can also decide that we will not respond to further communications from you while considering your complaint. In this case, the Academic Support Office will write to you to confirm this.

You can read the OIA's policy on behaviour here:

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/about-us/our-organisation/our-service/behaviour-policy/>