

QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT QA 48 – STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

1. This procedure applies to:
 - Complaints arising from a student’s educational experience, other than disputes relating to assessment and examinations (see below);
 - Complaints in respect of academic and/or administrative support or other services provided by Arden University or at an Arden University study centre;
 - Complaints relating to facilities or learning resources;
 - Complaints regarding alleged harassment by staff of Arden University or an Arden University study centre;
 - Complaints arising from alleged discrimination by staff of Arden University or an Arden University study centre in relation to gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or otherwise.

2. This list is not exhaustive. Complaints falling outside those listed above will be considered and investigated at the discretion of the University.

3. This procedure does not apply to:
 - Candidates wishing to appeal against an academic decision; separate procedures exist for such appeals. Candidates should also note that appeals against the academic judgement of examiners cannot be accepted.
 - Disciplinary matters; these will be dealt with in accordance with separate procedures in place within Arden University.

STAGE ONE: EARLY RESOLUTION AT LOCAL STAGE

4. Wherever possible, the University would wish to see any complaint resolved as close as possible to its point of origin, and without formality. If a student is not satisfied with the conclusion of the informal resolution or where informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, s/he should refer to Stage Two: Formal Complaint (point 5 below).

STAGE TWO: FORMAL COMPLAINT

5. A Stage One Complaint will be referred to the Stage Two Formal Complaint stage when initial resolution has been attempted but the student remains dissatisfied.
6. A Stage Two Formal Complaint should be submitted in writing. Receipt of Stage Two Formal Complaints will be acknowledged within two working days.
7. The Student Support Team will allocate the Stage Two Formal complaint to the appropriate senior staff member responsible for the area in which the complaint relates to. If a complaint relates to more than one department, the Student Support Team will consult with the relevant senior staff members to decide who will take a lead on investigation and resolution.
8. On investigation of the complaint, additional information or evidence may be requested from the student. In such cases, the student will be notified in writing and given at least five working days to respond.
9. A response to the complaint will be provided within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. In some cases, where complaints are complex and require detailed investigation, it may not be possible to meet these timescales. In such cases, the student will be notified in writing of the reason for the delay and a revised timeframe for a response will be provided.
10. If there is a genuine need for a response to be provided in a shorter timescale than this, the student must make this clear, including the reason, at the point of submitting the formal complaint.
11. The outcomes available are as follows:
 - That the complaint be upheld in whole or in part;
 - That the complaint be rejected
12. The student will be issued with a formal response confirming the outcome of the investigation into the student complaint.

13. If the complaint is upheld, the formal response will include details of the action that will be taken to address the complaint.
14. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, s/he should refer to Stage Three: Review of Outcome (point 13 below).

STAGE THREE: REVIEW OF OUTCOME

15. If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage Two investigation of the complaint, s/he may request a review of the outcome within 10 working days of the written confirmation received following Stage Two: Formal Complaint.
16. A request for review may only be considered on the following grounds:
 - There is evidence of procedural irregularity at Stage Two: Formal Complaint
 - There is new material information available which, for valid reasons, was not provided earlier in the process.
17. A Stage Three Complaints Review form should be completed and submitted to quality@arden.ac.uk within ten working days of dispatch of the formal response to the Stage Two: Formal Complaint.
18. Students should provide full details of the grounds on which the review is being requested and indicate within their correspondence why the outcome of the Stage Two: Formal Complaint was not satisfactory.
19. The Head of Quality or nominee will acknowledge receipt of the request within five working days.
20. The Head of Quality or nominee will undertake an initial evaluation to check that the request has been submitted within the appropriate timescales, meets the criteria and is in the required format with supporting evidence where applicable.
21. The Head of Quality or nominee will nominate a reviewer. This will be a senior staff member that was not involved in the original consideration of the complaint to review the concerns raised. This will normally be the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

22. The reviewer may request additional information or evidence from the student, in which case the student will be notified in writing and given at least five working days to respond.
23. The outcomes available are as follows:
 - That the complaint be upheld in whole or in part and a resolution offered;
 - That the complaint be rejected
24. The student will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review within 20 working days of receipt of the original review request. The decision of Stage 3 Review outcome is final and a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued including details of the students right to appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) (see section 22).
25. In the event of a complaint being upheld whole or in part, recommendations should be made in respect of remedial action required. A report on the matter and any actions arising will be referred to the next meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee.

INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATION

26. Students who have been issued with a Completion of Procedures letter may complain to the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) if they remain dissatisfied with the University's final decision, providing the complaint is eligible under the OIA's rules of the complaints scheme as detailed on their website <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>. Complaints must be made within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.
27. Students studying for a degree apprenticeship may submit a request to the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to review whether the University has handled the complaint in line with its procedures. Complaints about providers should be sent by email to complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk or by post to Complaints team, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT.