

Brighton Students' Union Support

Complaints (2021/22)

University of Brighton & UoB Accredited
Courses taught at other institutions.

Contents

[What is a Complaint & What Can I Complain About?](#)

[I'm Worried About What Happens if I Complain.](#)

[Complaints Procedures](#)

[Before Commencing a Complaint...](#)

[Preparing Your Complaint](#)

[How Can BSU Support Help?](#)

[Getting Advice](#)

[Tips on What to Write](#)

[I've Made a Complaint, But I'm Still Not Satisfied. What Can I Do?](#)

[UoB Complaints Resolution Procedure](#)

[Early Resolution \(Stage 1 – School based resolution\)](#)

[Formal Stage \(Stage 2 - submitting a Complaints Form\)](#)

[Review Stage \(Stage 3 - Institutional level review\)](#)

[Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#)

Further Guidance

Complaints

What is a Complaint & What Can I Complain About?

In the higher education context, student complaints can be divided into two types:

- **Academic-related complaints:** matters relating to course delivery and your ability to study effectively.
- **Non-academic complaints:** matters that relate to your life at university that fall outside the academic context.

You can complain about any aspect of university life; teaching or supervision, the quality of facilities or learning resources, incorrect information being provided or the failure by the university to provide a satisfactory service. Be prepared though, you will need to be specific about the problems and provide evidence of the issues you have faced.

I'm Worried About What Happens if I Complain.

If you're concerned about how you'll be viewed or treated by your tutors or others when you make a complaint, don't be! The University of Brighton says;

"Students will not be disadvantaged as a result of bringing a complaint"

This means you should not be put off or worried because you are thinking of making a complaint. You can be confident you will be dealt with fairly and you can expect to have your issues resolved confidentially and in a timely manner.

If something isn't right it probably needs fixing. That's why we suggest you try not to think of a complaint as a personal attack on an individual or on the university, instead it is your opportunity to express your concern that your experience is unsatisfactory. Also, there may be several different ways to address your concerns, not just through making a complaint.

Complaints Procedures

As you would expect, each university or college has its own complaints procedure. If you are a University of Brighton (UoB) Student studying at the University of Brighton premises, you can use this [Complaints Resolution Procedure](#). It is a three-stage process to address informal and formal concerns or complaints.

For partner institutions, please refer to the college's own website for details of their complaint procedures.

Students studying a **University of Brighton accredited course at another institution or partner college**, must address their complaints to their college or institution and use the partner institutions complaints procedure. These are likely to be different from UoB processes, but the information should be easily accessible. If you don't know where to find this information, ask your tutors or look at your institution's website.

Any students attending their studies at the **University of Brighton** must lodge their complaint as soon as they become aware of a problem and normally no later than 28 days of the issues or concerns arising. The university may exceptionally consider complaints outside of these time limits, at the discretion of the University.

Students studying at **partner institutions** should refer to their college's complaints policy or procedure for deadlines for lodging a complaint.

Before Commencing a Complaint...

...take a bit of time to identify and assess the substance of your complaint and what you would like the outcome to be.

Both these things are important, not least because you will need to make these matters clear in your complaint.

UoB students - Lodge your complaint within 28 days or as soon as you become aware of the problem.

Students at partner colleges – please refer to your college's own complaints procedure for the deadline.

Preparing Your Complaint

Wherever you study, before making your complaint, take care to ensure that you take notice of any time limits the complaints procedure might include.

In addition, take some time to consider what you should include in the complaint and how you present it. Take care to provide a clear account of what did or did not happen and why those facts have led to your complaint.

Bear in mind that the person(s) dealing with your complaint may not have the level of background information that you have. Therefore, take care to ensure that the information you provide is comprehensive (while also being as concise as reasonably possible).

Ordinarily, it is a complainant's responsibility to provide the information and evidence relevant to the issue so you should not expect the person dealing with it to seek this on your behalf.

See below for: [Tips on What to Write](#).

How Can BSU Support Help?

We're here to help you make an informed decision about what might be the best way to resolve your concerns. We can also support you through the complaint procedure offering help to understand the various steps and support you by accompanying you to meetings. We can also advise you on gathering the right evidence to support your case.

Getting Advice

All our advisers are experienced in dealing with the various procedures of the University. If you are not sure what to do in relation to your student experience – or if you want to use a particular procedure but are not sure how to go about it or maximise your chances of success, we're here to help. You can book an appointment with one of our advisers [here](#). Alternatively, email your enquiry to bsusupport@brighton.ac.uk

I've Made a Complaint, But I'm Still Not Satisfied.

What Can I Do?

You may be able to move onto the next stage of the process. If you've been through all the stages of your institutions complaints process, you may be able to complain further to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#), but you can only do this once you've been issued a Completion of Procedures Letter (CoP).

Tips on What to Write

You need to be as clear as possible, as the person who reads your complaint will know nothing about your circumstances. Once you have written your complaint, you need to read it back and consider whether someone with no prior knowledge of your complaint would understand what you have written.

It is important to show how you have been affected and to what extent.

Writing a chronology of events may be helpful. Be as specific as you can with the dates that the events occurred.

Give examples to support the points you raise and include evidence where possible.

We advise that you keep a short note of each time your studies have been affected. This could be on a piece of paper, in your phone, or a spreadsheet.

You should record:

- The date
- The nature of the problem (e.g. timetable alterations at short notice or teaching cancelled)
- What was affected (e.g. seminar, lecture, revision session, supervision session, personal tutoring, placement, etc.)
- A short note of any concerns you have about how this could affect your studies (e.g. material might arise on an exam, or in coursework, tutoring needed for professional placement, etc.)

- If you are complaining about a specific person, you should include their name otherwise your complaint cannot be followed up. If you know what their job title is, or which course they are studying, you should include this as well.
- If you want to use a witness, only mention them by name, if they have given you their permission to do so. We recommend you get this in writing.
- A clear outline of how you would like the issue to be resolved and what the University could do to put things right.
- If there is a financial loss then keep evidence of this. This could be wasted travel costs when the lecture is cancelled at short notice, for example.

You do not need to write your statement like an essay. It is fine to write it as a list of bullet points.

UoB Complaints

The university's [Complaints Resolution Procedure](#) is a three-stage process to address informal and formal concerns or complaints. In brief this consists of:

- **Early Resolution**
- **Formal Stage**
- **Review Stage**

Early Resolution (Stage 1 – School based resolution)

It is hoped, the majority of concerns can be resolved informally within your school. In most cases this approach provides a quick solution.

You are encouraged to raise issues with your School Complaints Officer (SCO) - the person nominated to listen to your concerns and help find a resolution with you.

You must contact an SCO and raise your complaint within 28 days of becoming aware of the problem, or a concern arising.

When you contact your School Complaint's Officer, try to:

- be as specific as possible about what your concerns are
- think about what might help put the problem right

We recommend you email your concerns or write them in a word-processed document to attach it to an email. Send this to your SCO. Let them know you want to raise an **'early resolution'** or **Stage 1** complaint.

If your stage 1 complaint cannot clearly be dealt with by the School Complaints Officer within 14 days, you will be advised in writing to complete the Stage 2 Formal Student Complaint Form.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the 'early resolution' you can take your complaint to the next level; the 'formal' stage.

If you have left the university or been withdrawn you must send your stage 2 formal complaint within 60 days of your last date of attendance or your withdrawal, whichever is earlier.

Formal Stage (Stage 2 - submitting a Stage 2 Complaints Form)

If you are not satisfied with the response to the early resolution stage or the matter is too serious to be dealt with informally, you can submit a Stage 2 complaint using a [Stage 2 form](#).

You need to send the form, with as much evidence as you can, to the university's [complaint email address](#). You must do this within 14 days of receiving a response at Stage 1 of the procedure.

You should receive confirmation of the receipt of your complaint within 3 days. A University Complaints Officer (UCO), who has not had any prior involvement in your complaint, will be appointed and will then consider your complaint carefully and complete a written report. In their report, they may also make any recommendation of remedial action, if appropriate.

Once completed the Complaints Office will share this report with you via email.

Your complaint may be 'upheld', 'partially upheld', or 'rejected'.

If you believe that the outcome of your Stage 2 complaint is unreasonable or unfair, you can request a review of the previous stages.

Review Stage (Stage 3 - Institutional level review)

As this is a review of what has taken place at the earlier stages. You are not permitted to raise new concerns at this stage. If you have new concerns, you should use one of the earlier stages and make it clear this is a new complaint.

You must raise a request for a review (Stage 3) within 14 calendar days of receiving the written outcome of the Stage 2 by completing a [Stage 3 Review Form](#) and sent via email to complaints@brighton.ac.uk

Your form should specify the reasons why you believe your complaint should be reviewed, which must fall within one or more of the following categories.

- i) proper procedures were not followed
- ii) the outcome was unreasonable.
- iii) new material evidence has come to light which you were unable for valid reason to provide earlier in the process.

If the Review Stage is upheld, then the complaint will be returned either to the original complaints officer to consider the further material or to a complaints officer not previously involved in the matter.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

Once all university processes are completed, if you remain unsatisfied with the outcome you should be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter (CoP), meaning you can contact the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#) - an independent body set up to review student complaints.

Free to students, the OIA deals with individual complaints against Higher Education Providers in England and Wales. The OIA will consider how your complaint was handled and is interested in whether the university has acted fairly, reasonably and within its own

procedures. You can contact them to speak about your case before you submit a complaint, and we recommend you do this.

You have twelve months from the point that your CoP is issued to bring your complaint to the OIA.

Brighton SU Support service can discuss your concerns with you, help you clarify your issues and help you formulate your complaint. We can guide you through the process, check your statements and attend meetings with you (subject to availability).

Further Guidance

You can find further information and helpful guides in our webpages on these issues below:

- [Academic Misconduct](#)
- **Additional Consideration (new for 2021/22)**
- [Appeals](#)
- [Disciplinary](#)
- [Fitness to Practise](#)
- [Student Disciplinary Matters](#)