

T&L ESSENTIALS: STUDENT SUPPORT & ENGAGEMENT 2 POLICIES

March 2019

OVERVIEW

1. student academic engagement and fitness to study: **Claire Hall (Student Appeals and Academic Misconduct Officer)**
2. fitness to practice: **Jack Paulley (Student Complaints and Discipline Officer)**
3. extenuating circumstances: **Susanna McFeely (Support Centre Manager)**
4. withdrawals: **Susanna**
5. suspensions: **Susanna**
6. appeals: **Claire**
7. student complaints: **Jack**

STUDENT ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT AND FITNESS TO STUDY

PURPOSE

- To maintain standards of scholarship and personal integrity
- To support students when it might not be in their best interest to continue studying and might be beneficial for them to suspend or be withdrawn from studies
- If the student is undertaking a course leading to a professional qualification in one of the regulated health or social professions, the University's Fitness to Practise procedures apply

WHEN TO INVOKE

- Non-engagement – not studying in compliance with the academic requirements stated in the University's Statement of learner responsibilities
- Not being fit to study – impaired due to substance misuse, mental or physical health issues, failure to meet conditions placed on their fitness to return for example
- Concerns raised by any third party

THE PROCESS

STAGE 1: SCHOOL REVIEW

- a. When initial concerns are raised or identified the student will be asked to meet their Academic Tutor about their circumstances or conduct to discuss needs, options, support and an action plan will be agreed with timescales for review.
- b. If there are continuing concerns, the student will be invited to attend a meeting with the School Director of Teaching and Learning or School Director of Academic Tutoring to discuss these concerns and possible solutions. An action plan will be agreed with timescales for review

THE PROCESS

STAGE 2: CASE REVIEW

- Stage 2: Case Review - Where the student has failed to achieve the agreed actions from Stage 1, the Teaching & Learning Dean (TLD) will review the case
- The TLD, in consultation with the relevant parties, will discuss the steps taken so far and consider whether an enhanced action plan is likely to be of benefit to the student or whether the case should be referred to the Standing Committee on Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study

THE PROCESS

STAGE 3: SCAEFS

- Stage 3: Standing Committee on Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study (SCAEFS) – If the TLD refers the case to SCAEFS the Committee will determine whether the student is fit to study
- It is possible for urgent and extreme cases to progress from Stage 1 straight to Stage 3 without having to meet with the student

OUTCOMES

- a) Fit to study not impaired and there is a sufficient level of academic engagement – School responsible for ensuring that all reasonable efforts are made to enable to student to continue their programme and monitor ongoing fitness and engagement as normal
- b) Fitness to study is impaired or student has not demonstrated sufficient levels of academic engagement – The Committee will determine an appropriate and proportionate action

ACTIONS

- In the case of b) outcome the Committee can recommend one or more of the following actions:
 - Close supervision
 - Engagement with an appropriate medical or mental health professional
 - Engagement with a University Study Advisor
 - Suspension for a period of time
 - Requirement to re-sit or retake parts of the programme
 - Termination of current programme retaining eligibility to a lesser award
 - Transfer to an alternative programme
 - Removal from membership of the University

COMPLIANCE

- The School is responsible for monitoring compliance with the conditions set by SCAEFS
- Failure to comply results in automatic referral back to SCAEFS who will again consider the appropriate course of action
- Should SCAEFS terminate a student's membership the student will retain the right to consult Counselling and Wellbeing for six months after the date of termination

FITNESS TO PRACTISE

PURPOSE

- Applies to students undertaking programmes which lead to a professional qualification in one of the health or social professions. Under the terms of accreditation of these programmes the university has a responsibility to assess:
 - The fitness to practise of students
 - The suitability for a demanding and responsible profession

WHEN TO INVOKE

- Cause for concern as to student's fitness to practise can relate to a wide range of behaviours:
 - Criminal conviction, caution, reprimand
 - Substance misuse
 - Academic misconduct
 - Putting client, staff or student safety at risk
 - Health concerns and lack of insight or management of these concerns
 - Persistent inappropriate behaviour or attitude

THE PROCESS

- Initial investigation – When concerns have been raised or identified the SDTL will determine whether there is a *prima facie* case to answer as to whether the fitness to practise of the student is impaired
- The SDTL will consider:
 - The seriousness of the behaviour
 - Whether it is part of a pattern
 - Students experience in HE and professional practise
 - Risk factors such as how likely the behaviour will continue or be repeated and how well the student might respond to support

- If there are grounds the case will be referred to the Standing Committee on Fitness to Practise (SCFtP)

OUTCOMES

- a) Fitness to practise not impaired and student can resume studies - School responsible for ensuring that all reasonable efforts are made to enable to student to continue their programme and monitor ongoing fitness as normal
- b) Concerns raised are not so serious that the student's fitness to practise is impaired to a point of requiring action
- c) Fitness to practise is impaired and requires sanction – The Committee will determine an appropriate and proportionate sanction

ACTIONS

- In the case of c) outcome the Committee can put in place one or more of the following actions:
 - Suspension for a period of time
 - Requirement to re-sit or retake parts of the programme
 - Termination of current programme retaining eligibility to a lesser award
 - Transfer to an alternative programme
 - Removal from membership of the University. The University will also consider if the student should be referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

- Extenuating circumstance (EC) requests are considered in line with the **Policy on and procedures relating to extenuating circumstances**
- Purpose of the policy and procedures
 - a) ensure that students are **appropriately supported** by their Schools when extenuating circumstances are brought to the attention of Schools in a timely manner;
 - b) ensure that all students are **treated fairly and equitably** in the light of extenuating circumstances;
 - c) outline the **responsibilities of students** in informing the University of circumstances which are affecting their performance; and
 - d) protect the **academic integrity of programmes** for all students.

WHAT IS AN EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCE?

The University deems that an extenuating circumstance is a circumstance which is outside the control of the student which negatively affects performance and which can be supported by appropriate evidence. Students must describe the impact their circumstances have had on their studies.

REASONS WHY A STUDENT MAY SUBMIT AN EC REQUEST INCLUDE:

- Bereavement
- Serious short term illness or an accident
- A recurrence or worsening of a long-term physical or mental health condition
- Health problems of a close family member or friend which involves the student caring at home or substantial time visiting the hospital
- Court attendance
- A crime which has had a substantial impact on the student's ability to undertake their academic work
- The above is not exhaustive

WHAT ARE NOT CONSIDERED TO BE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES?

- Circumstances stated to be unforeseen that a reasonable person would view as foreseeable or preventable
- A claimed medical condition or medical circumstances without:
 - any supporting medical evidence; or,
 - contemporaneous evidence; or,
 - evidence which confirms the same duration & illness
- A self-certified illness or medical circumstances
- Any claimed circumstances for which appropriate adjustments have already been made by the University and where there is no evidence of a worsening of the condition which requires further consideration
- Assessment-related stress which is not diagnosed as an illness or documented in the Individual Learning Plan

WHAT ARE NOT CONSIDERED TO BE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES CONT?

- A minor illness
- Pregnancy (normally, see policy for exceptions)
- Assessments and examinations scheduled within a short period
- Poor working practices
- Problems with IT, except University IT specifically to support students
- Financial matters
- For FT students, employment (unless programme work placements)
- House moves, renovations or other routine accommodation difficulties
- Holiday
- Death or illness of a pet
- The above is not exhaustive

PROCESS

- Students with circumstances are advised to seek advice prior to submission of an Extenuating Circumstances request from one or more of the following:
 - the relevant Student Support Coordinator or the Teaching and Learning Officer and relevant Programme Administrator in HBS or the Programme Administrator in ISLI;
 - the Advice Service at RUSU;
 - the School Director of Academic Tutoring (SDAT); their Academic Tutor, or the School/Department Director of Teaching and Learning.

PROCESS CONT ...

- Students with circumstances are advised to:
 - Submit extenuating circumstances (EC) request, with supporting evidence, to Student Support Coordinator (SSC) in Support Centre / HBS School Office / ISLI by published deadlines
- Students must provide appropriate supporting evidence:
 - Medical Practice can provide certification; currently the cost for this service is £10
 - EC request can be referred, with the student's permission, by the Support Centre or equivalent, to Counselling and/or Disability Advisory Service for a comment on the likely impact of the student's circumstances if the student is a client

- Support Centre or equivalent
 - SSC or equivalent reviews the request and evidence and advises the student if either is incomplete or inappropriate
 - and enters into tracking log
 - Liaises with SDAT for decision or recommendation for University Standing Committee on Special Cases (USCSC)
 - If request requires escalation to USCSC, SSC will arrange on behalf of SDAT
 - Student Advice and Support Managers & HBS Teaching and Learning Officer coordinate USCSC meetings and can provide advice on complex cases
- The School SDAT may nominate a deputy in case of absence

DECISIONS

- SDATs **normally make decisions** for:
 - **coursework** (subject to limits)
 - **in-class tests** (subject to limits)
 - **absence from classes where participation contributes to assessment**
 - **Retrospective allowance** for students diagnosed with a disability during their programme of study (subject to limits)Conditional decisions subject to evidence by set deadline (normally 5 days) are permissible.
- SDATs **make recommendations to University Standing Committee on Special Cases (USCSC)** which makes the decision for:
 - **coursework** (beyond SDAT limits)
 - **in-class tests** (beyond SDAT limits)
 - **Retrospective allowance** for students diagnosed with a disability during their programme of study (beyond SDAT limits)
 - **examinations**

EXTERNAL EXAMINER CONSULTATION

- **External Examiners** may be consulted for:
 - Substantial or complex **assessment method variation**
 - **Exemption from coursework/in-class tests contributing more than 10% of the module**
- **External Examiners** must be consulted for:
 - External Examiner, SDTL & TLD must be consulted if **Aegrotat** is recommended

SDAT RECOMMENDATIONS TO USCSC

1. **Coursework extensions beyond the student's normal period of registration**
2. **Assessment method variation for coursework/in-class tests contributing more than 20% of a module.**
3. **Exemption from coursework/in-class tests contributing more than 10% of the module**
4. Where other provisions are not applicable for in-class tests and coursework, recommend to the USCSC that the student be **Deemed Not to have Sat** in relevant assessments
5. **An exemption and an alternative assessment** which together represent **more than 20%** of the module assessment
6. Extenuating circumstances cases which relate to **examinations**

DECISIONS FOLLOWING DIAGNOSIS OF DISABILITY DURING A STUDENT'S PROGRAMME OF STUDY

- The SDAT is responsible for applying the [policy on retrospective consideration of disability](#)
- Categories for making **retrospective adjustment** where a student has been diagnosed with a disability:
 - where detailed **marking recommendations have been made, and marks have yet to be approved by the Examiners. Action:** School review of existing marks
 - where **detailed marking recommendations do not apply, and marks have yet to be approved by the Examiners. Action:** School recommendation to USCSC
 - where **marks for a Part or Parts have already been approved. Action:** School recommendation to USCSC
- The policy provides detail about how to apply these adjustments.

ON DECISIONS - USCSC

- USCSC make decisions for:
 - examinations
 - eligibility for remedies not within the power of SDATs

ON DECISIONS - USCSC

- **Deemed Not to have Sat** in relevant assessment(s) and thereby in relevant modules (max two occasions per Part of study)
- Recommend award of **Aegrotat** to the Programme Examiners
- **Exemptions** (beyond SDAT limits)
- **Extensions** (beyond SDAT limits)
- Permit the Examiners to **vary the weighting of the Parts** in the calculation of the degree classification
- Make decisions where the student has requested that **a decision be made without the circumstances being disclosed to the School SDAT**
- **Repeat Part or Year**

COMMUNICATION OF OUTCOMES

- SSCs or equivalent will communicate decisions to students and monitor responses
- SDATs can review outcomes to students through RISIS
- The Programme Administrator has access to RISIS reports for outcomes to students where action is required.
Programme Administrators will communicate as appropriate to relevant academics, for example, module convenors for extensions (without disclosing student name where marking is anonymous)
- SSC & Programme Administrator work together to notify Programme Examiners' Meeting of relevant EC outcomes
- An EC request may lead to a Notification of Student Concern being raised

STUDENT RESPONSE

- Students are assumed to have accepted the extenuating circumstances outcome offered, with the exception of DNS and repeat year where we request a student response.

STUDENT RESPONSE – DNS OFFERS

- **Accept**

- Undergraduates offered DNS can wait to find out their underlying result before making a decision. The ESRG Office will set deadline for response

- **Decline**

- Normally, result achieved stands
- Exceptionally , normally after August exams, if declines DNS, student may request the USCSC to consider an alternative remedy to a DNS if:
 - student can progress or be awarded a classified Honours degree; and
 - there are exceptional circumstances and acceptance of a DNS may have a potentially serious impact on the student's health or may jeopardise their completion of the programme

STUDENT RESPONSE CONT

- **No response to the offer of DNS:**
 - undergraduates who have passed the Part or Final Examination will be deemed to have declined the offer of a DNS;
 - undergraduates with a fail or not qualified overall for the Part or Final Examination will be deemed to have accepted the offer of a DNS.
 - postgraduate taught students will be deemed to have accepted the offer of a DNS.

ECF APPEALS

- A student has the right to appeal the outcome within five working days of the outcome being issued to them;
- Appeal on three grounds: New evidence, the outcome was not fair and reasonable and/or there had been a procedural irregularity;
- The decision maker is required to provide a response to the appeal prior to the Extenuating Circumstances Appeal Board considering the appeal;
- The student will receive a Completion of Procedures (CoP) and may refer their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA);
- If the appeal is upheld and based on new evidence the case is referred back to the original decision maker for reconsideration.

WITHDRAWALS

- Managed by
 - For UG & PGT students: the Support Centre/Henley Business School Office/ISLI; or,
 - For PGR students: the Graduate Schoolwho can provide advice on options and financial implications of withdrawing
- Students must formally withdraw from their degree programme
- **Notice of Intention to Withdraw** form can be requested from Support Centre or equivalent or is available on the [Essentials website](#)
- Students may be withdrawn by the University in some circumstances (eg discipline, fitness, non-engagement or debt)

ADVICE ON WITHDRAWING

- Students should talk to their Academic Tutor/ School Director of Academic Tutoring (SDAT) / Programme Director about their decision
- SSCs advise students considering withdrawal on:
 - Alternative options (suspension; programme transfer)
 - Financial implications (eg in relation to SLC or sponsors)

ADVICE ON WITHDRAWING CONT

- Students are advised to contact other support teams as appropriate to their circumstances:
 - Accommodation Team if in Halls;
 - Immigration Advice Service if Tier 4
 - Counselling and Wellbeing Service and/or Disability Advisory Service

IMPACT IF STUDENTS DO NOT FORMALLY WITHDRAW

- RISIS status is 'Current' – HESA, Examinations Office etc
- Financial implications - Student Finance, Sponsors, Council Tax, Tuition Fees
- Continued access to University facilities and resources
- Residency in Halls
- Visa implications
- Risk limiting future opportunities for study

SUSPENSIONS

- Currently managed by the Support Centre/Henley Business School Office/ISLI for UG & PGT students; Graduate School for PGR who can provide advice on options and/or financial implications of suspension
- Suspensions are considered in line with the **Policy on and procedures for suspensions**
- Suspension is not a student's inherent right.

REASONS WHY A STUDENT MAY WISH TO SUSPEND INCLUDE:

- Health issues
- Parental leave
- Jury service or compulsory military service
- Compassionate reasons (including serious domestic difficulties)
- Financial reasons
- Undertaking a placement or employment opportunity

WHY A STUDENT MAY BE UNABLE TO SUSPEND

- Any student who suspends should normally be in good academic standing.
- The grounds for suspension must be appropriate with evidence.
- Students cannot normally suspend before or during the examination periods; these dates are on the suspension request form.
- Maximum suspension over the course of the programme is normally 24 months (UG/PGT) or 12 months (PGR).
- The programme must be available to the student on their requested date of return.

REASONS WHY THE UNIVERSITY MAY WISH TO SUSPEND A STUDENT

- Non-payment of tuition fees
- Disciplinary reasons - Standing Disciplinary Committee, SCAEFS, Fitness to Practise
- Non-engagement with the requirements for annual re-enrolment
- Pending re-assessment – 'Suspended Exam only'

SUSPENSION PROCESS

- **Programme Suspension Request Form** is available from the Support Centre or equivalent or on the [Essentials website](#)
- Students need to provide supporting evidence
- The form requires the School Director of Academic Tutoring's (SDAT) approval
- SDAT confirms if there are any academic or fitness to study/practise conditions for return

TEACHING & LEARNING DEAN APPROVAL

- Suspensions require additional approval by a TLD in the following circumstances:
 - a. Suspensions beyond the cumulative maximum
 - b. Academic conditions which must be fulfilled during the suspension and are conditions of return
 - c. Retroactive suspension
 - d. Any requests for suspension supported by the School which fall outside the normal accepted grounds for suspension.

- Students should continue with their studies until they have received a **confirmation letter** from the Support Centre or equivalent who will check that the approved request complies with the policy
- Suspended students do have access to some University facilities including their email
- Library access requires the Schools to sponsor the student's registration – Visitor Status
- Financial (fees and funding), Visa and Residency (Halls) implications

RETURNING

- The confirmation letter has a date when students are to notify the University that they are returning – date set two months (three months for IoE & Tier 4) before return date
- If there are medical (confirmation of fitness to study) or other conditions these must be met prior to return
- There is a process for students who do not engage with their expected return which results in either suspension or withdrawal.

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

- If students have missed more than three months of teaching – then IoE is required to complete additional checks – assessment for health and physical capacity to teach and a DBS check.

APPEALS

SUMMARY

- A student may appeal their result in a part of their programme, including the results of programme fail and not qualified, or their final degree classification. Appeals are heard by the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results. (SSCER)

MEMBERSHIP OF SSCER:

- Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Vincenzo Raimo, Chair)
- Three members of academic staff from SSCER's membership
- RUSU Officer

GROUNDS FOR APPEAL

- If there has been a procedural irregularity;
- If there has been procedural bias;
- If there has been a material defect in the delivery of teaching and learning which has had a significant impact on the result;

The following two only if in conjunction with one of the above:

- If the student has an insurmountable reason for not having submitted an Extenuating Circumstances Form before the relevant deadline. Examples of this include hospitalization, incarceration, mental health issues supported by appropriate medical evidence, or an equivalent incapacity;
- If the student wishes to appeal against the outcome of their Extenuating Circumstances Form submitted to the Programme Examiners Meeting or the Faculty Special Cases Sub-Committee.

NOT GROUNDS FOR APPEAL

- Questions of academic judgment
- Extenuating circumstances on its own and with no independent supporting evidence
- NOTE: Acceptable evidence would be dated medical letters (on headed paper) which covers the period in question, birth/death certificates, counselling letters, etc. Letters from family members are not normally considered.

THE PROCESS

- Stage 1 – The appeal is reviewed by a Teaching and Learning Dean to ascertain whether there are *prima facie* grounds for appeal. If there are, the appeal will be heard at Stage 2
- Stage 1 Review – The decision of the Teaching and Learning Dean is reviewed by the Chair, Deputy Chair and RUSU Officer

- Stage 2 – This is a full Committee hearing. The student can attend with a 'friend' and a representative of the School will also be present
- Stage 2 Review – The decision of SSCER is reviewed by a Pro Vice-Chancellor unrelated to the case

LINK WITH SCHOOLS

- At stage 2 a response from the School (in relation to the individual case) will be required.
- At each hearing a representative from the School would be expected to attend.
- NOTE: The timings can be quite tight, particularly in the summer resit period, so cooperation is greatly appreciated.

SSCER OUTCOMES

- Change of degree classification
- Deemed Not to have Sat
- Re-submission of coursework/dissertation
- Variant of way classification is determined
- Repeat year

ENDORSEMENT BY THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER

- The final stage of the process is to receive approval from the External Examiner. If the External Examiner does not approve of SSCER's recommendation, the final decision is taken by Senate.

COMPLAINTS

- What is a complaint?

“an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a university’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the university.” (OIA)

- When can the student complaints process be used?

Where a student has a complaint against the University relating to the delivery of teaching, support services, administration, facilities or aspects of the student’s relationship with the University.

EXAMPLES

Lecture was
cancelled...

Given the wrong
pasty in the shop....

Lecturer was late...

Incorrectly charged
fees...

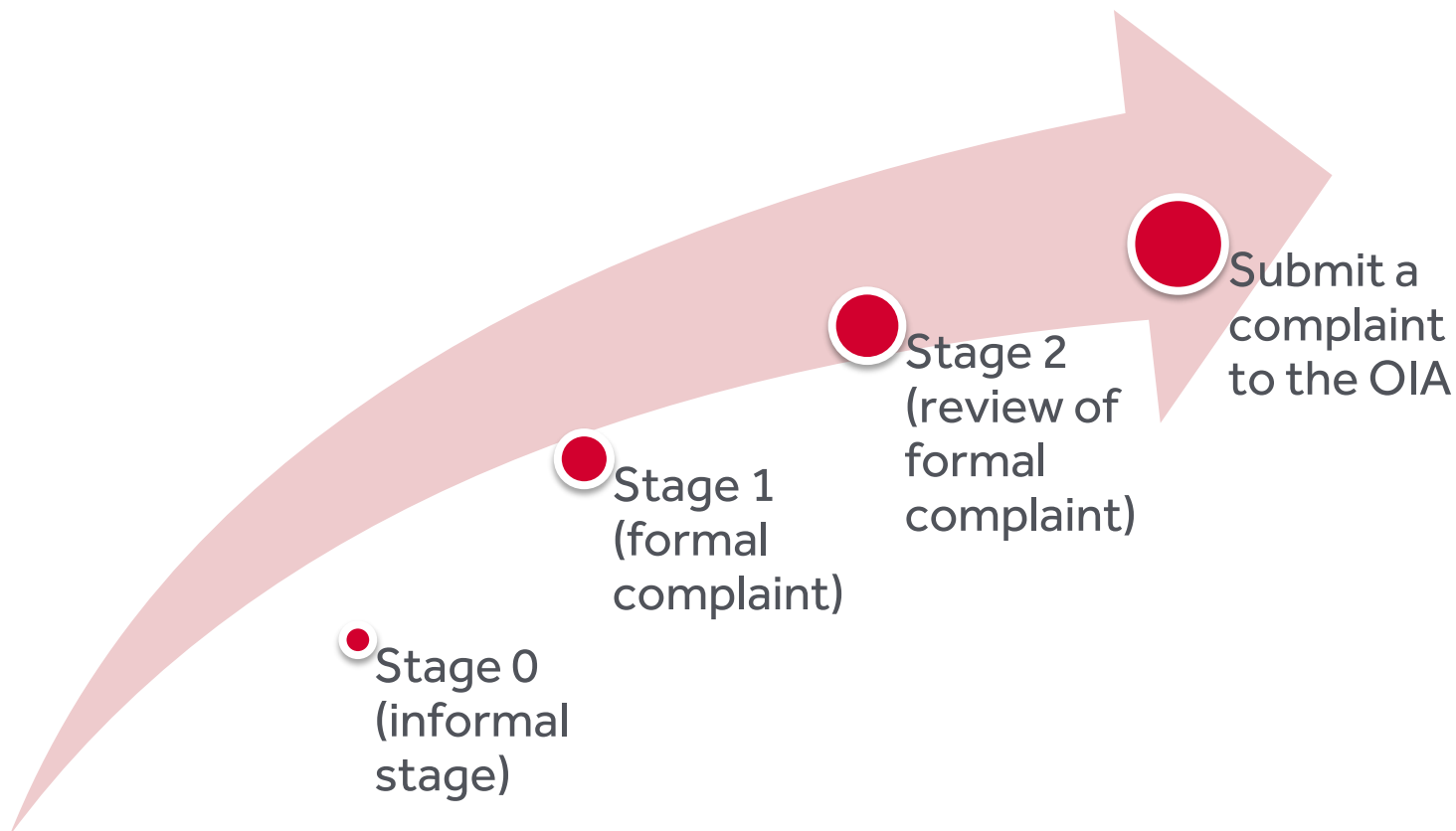
Wrong date provided
in an email...

Misspelt surname on
degree certificate...

Light sensor in halls
stopped working....

Wrong size portion
of chips...

THE PROCESS



THE PROCESS

- A formal Stage 1 complaint will be submitted to the University's Complaints Officer who will assess and issue it to a relevant member of staff to investigate.
- This will normally be the Head of School for academic matters and the Head of Function for all other matters.
- The investigation will always be carried out by a member of staff who is impartial to the situation with no previous involvement.

PRINCIPLES

- Process should be fair and timely
- Aims to resolve issue at the least formal and 'lowest' possible level
- Appropriate level of confidentiality must be maintained
- Not a disciplinary procedure
- Student should not be adversely affected by the fact of a complaint made in good faith (whether upheld or not)

EXPECTATIONS

- The investigating staff member will normally interview the student (in person or by phone) and any other relevant persons.
- The investigating staff must issue an outcome letter and a full report which includes all meeting minutes, evidence and correspondence relating to the complaint.
- The response must be sent to the Complaints Officer within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint.
- Any financial remedy must have approval from a PVC (via Complaints Officer)

STAGE 2 REVIEW

- If the student remains dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response, they may request a review of the decision at Stage 2.
- The University Secretary will review the outcome, report and evidence from Stage 1 to determine the following:

GROUNDS

- Whether the Stage 1 outcome was reasonable in the circumstances;
- Whether the relevant procedure(s) were followed;
- Whether the student has been provided with clear reasons for the outcome of the complaint at Stage 1;
- Consider any new information which the student was unable to provide for valid reasons earlier in the process;
- Consult as appropriate with a view to determining a suitable resolution of the complaint.

STAGE 2 REVIEW

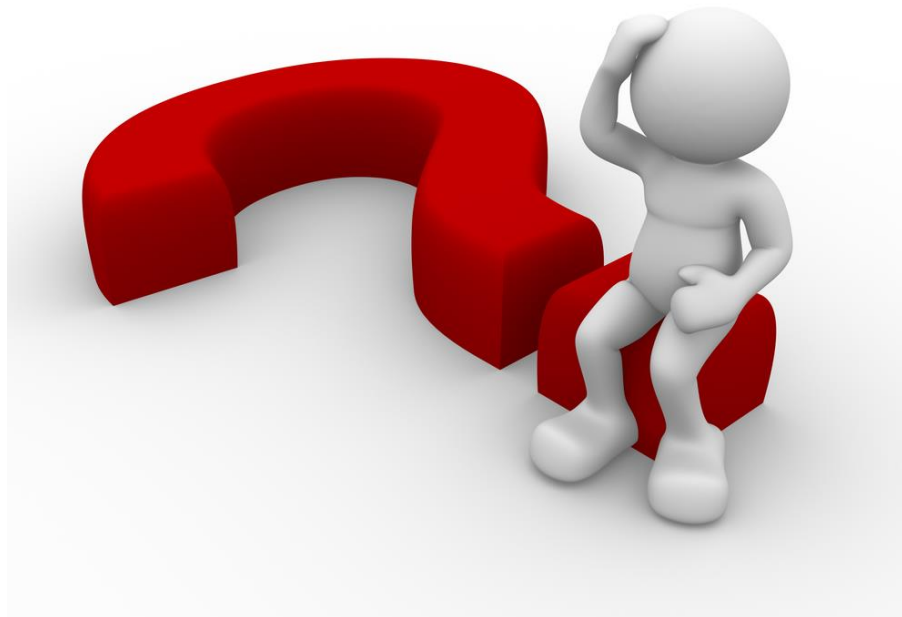
- The Stage 2 report will then be sent to a PVC (usually Gavin Brooks) for approval and the final outcome issued from them on behalf of the University.
- This is the final stage of the internal procedures and a Completion of Procedures Letter will be issued.
- NOTE: a CoP should never be issued by the School/Function, only by those who run the final stages of the procedures.

FAIRNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

- The relevant policy should be followed and made available to the student
- All stages of each process should be recorded
- Students should be communicated with in a timely manner
- Minutes should be approved and sent to all parties shortly after each meeting

- Students should be strongly advised to seek support and guidance from a RUSU Advisor
- Students are allowed to be accompanied by a 'friend'
- Students have the right to appeal the decision of the relevant Committee
- Students have the right to refer their case to the national Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

QUESTIONS?



UOR WEBLINKS

- Extenuating Circumstances -
http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/_the-important-stuff/rules-and-regulations/extenuating-circumstances.aspx
- Student complaints -
https://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/stdserv/Master_copy_-_Student_Complaints_Procedure.pdf
- Academic Appeal of results -
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-appeal.aspx>
- Student academic engagement and fitness to study -
http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/academicengagement_fitness_to_study.pdf
- Fitness to practise -
http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/Fitness_to_Practise.pdf
- Suspension - http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/_the-important-stuff/rules-and-regulations/suspensions.aspx
- Withdrawal - http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/_the-important-stuff/rules-and-regulations/withdrawing-from-study.aspx