

Student Complaints Procedure

2026/27

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1 Context and Purpose

1.1 For the purposes of this procedure, a complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about something a provider has done or not done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider.” (Reference OIA Good Practice Framework Dec 2022).

1.2 This procedure is designed to enable students to raise both informal and formal complaints at the appropriate time: a formal complaint should be raised where an informal method has been pursued and exhausted. Students are expected to raise initial concerns through faculty- based feedback systems including Student Voice Forums, the Student Representative System and the Students’ Union online feedback tool. Students may also discuss their concerns informally with their Programme or Module leader or Personal Tutor. The procedure will be implemented fairly, sensitively, and impartially with emphasis on resolving the complaint swiftly and informally whenever possible.

1.3 A student seeking to submit a formal complaint is required to follow the procedure within the specified timeframes set out in Section 6.

1.4 Students should submit a formal complaint in writing using the Student Complaint Form available on the Student Administration page. It is the responsibility of the student to provide sufficient and appropriate evidence to support the matters raised in the complaint. A lack of substantial evidence is likely to prevent full consideration of the complaint.

1.5 Where there is a registered (with the University) inclusivity need, students will be permitted to submit in a different format. Students wishing to request this should contact Complaints@wrexham.ac.uk to discuss their intended mode of submission.

1.6 The Complaints Procedure seeks to treat all students, and staff who are the subject of complaints, fairly and with dignity and respect. Students will not be disadvantaged by submitting a complaint in good faith, and students can expect all complaints to be handled without fear of recrimination. The University also expects that students who wish to raise issues of concern have met their own obligations in terms of academic commitments, and reasonable standards of behaviour.

1.7 The University has established this procedure as part of its commitment to ensuring the standard and quality of its programmes, services, and facilities. Complaint feedback will be used to improve services and facilities where applicable. At all stages of this procedure, if evidence demonstrates an opportunity to resolve the complaint or minimise any negative effect on the students, this will be enacted as soon as possible.

1.8 Every reasonable effort will be made to deal with all complaints promptly, efficiently and at the earliest stage whilst investigating them thoroughly, however, if it is evident from an initial review that the complaint is justified or partially justified an attempt may be made to put things right without a full investigation. The ‘balance of probability’ test will be used to seek to resolve

complaints satisfactorily by considering if, based on the evidence, it was more likely than not that the event occurred.

1.9 This procedure is aligned to the following external benchmarks:

- OIA Good Practice Framework for handling complaints and academic appeals: December 2012.
- OIA Good Practice Framework: Delivering Learning Opportunities with Others; February 2024.
- OIA Good Practice Framework: Supporting Disabled Students.
- QAA UK Quality Code UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Concerns, Complaints and Appeals.

2 Principles and Scope

2.1 The Student Complaints Procedure has three stages: an informal / early resolution stage (Stage 1) at a local level, a formal stage (stage 2), and a review stage (stage 3).

- Informal / Early resolution (Stage 1) is designed to address straightforward concerns swiftly and locally at faculty (or operational department) level before the student escalates them into a formal complaint. Resolution might be achieved through face-to-face discussion with the student to provide an explanation, suggest solutions, providing an apology etc. It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved at the early resolution stage by facilitating conciliatory discussions between the students and staff concerned.
- The Formal stage (Stage 2) process is triggered when a student remains dissatisfied and requests to progress to the formal process; or when the University deems that the issues raised are complex, and will require a more detailed investigation. Any request to progress to the formal stage is subject to meeting the criteria specified in the procedure.
- The complaint may progress to the Review stage (Stage 3) if a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage. A request for a review should meet the grounds specified in the procedure.

2.2 The Student Complaints Procedure has three stages: an informal / early resolution stage (Stage 1) at a local level, a formal stage (stage 2), and a review stage (stage 3).

2.3 This procedure applies to all students, including those studying for research degrees.

2.4 Students studying research degrees with the University of Chester are required to resolve complaints under this Procedure. The University of Chester will be informed of all complaint matters reaching the formal stages of this procedure and is entitled to have a representative on any panel convened under the formal stages of this procedure. Once this Stages 1 & 2 of this procedure have been exhausted, a review (stage 3) can be requested from the University of Chester if the student remains dissatisfied.

2.5 Whenever possible, the time limits stated in this procedure will be followed. There may, however, be occasions particularly during University holiday periods or when complaints raise multiple complex issues, when this may not be possible. If this is the case, all parties will be notified of the reasons for the delay and updated on progress.

3 Partner Colleges and Organisations

3.1 A student studying for a University award at a partner college /organisation, should use the relevant procedures at that college/organisation to resolve the complaint and should complete all stages of that procedure. It may, however, be necessary for the student to refer matters concerning the student's progression, final award or issues impacting on quality and standards, to the University for consideration.

3.2 If the student remains dissatisfied following the conclusion of the partner college /organisation's procedure, the student may either:

- Request a Completion of Procedures letter from the partner college/organisation (which can only be issued once the partner college/organisation has consulted the University) and request a review from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

OR

- Refer the matter to the University for consideration under the Review stage of the University's complaints procedure. The grounds for requesting a review at paragraph 4.4.1 will be considered in the context of the investigations undertaken previously, in accordance with the Partner college /organisation's complaints procedure.

4 Exclusions from the Complaints Procedure

4.1 The following specific matters are dealt with under other university policies and procedures and will not be considered under the Student Complaints Procedure:

- Anonymous complaints will not normally be accepted. Exceptionally, the Director of Student Planning and Administration may decide to accept an anonymous complaint if there is a compelling case supported by appropriate evidence, preferably that can be validated. Students should be made aware that raising a complaint anonymously may impede the investigation and its conclusion as well as communication of the outcome.
- Complaints about academic judgment.
- Academic appeals relating to decisions of assessment boards.
- Allegations of bullying or harassment or misconduct by a student.
- Allegations of sexual misconduct and violence.
- Complaints about the Students' Union.
- Complaints about the Assessment Centre.

- Complaints about the admissions process.

4.2 Complaints relating to the personal behaviour of a student will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary policy.

5 Student Support

5.1 Where students identify individual needs on the student complaint form, the University will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that individual diagnosed needs are accommodated during the implementation of this procedure. This will take into account any accessibility difficulties arising from equality and diversity issues.

5.2 Students are encouraged to seek impartial support and advice from the Students' Union by emailing: suadvice@wrexham.ac.uk or calling: 01978 293371. Details on the Student's Union advice centre can also be found by visiting the Students' Union website: www.wrexhamglyndwrsu.org.uk. Students are able to access general support and assistance in a wide range of areas via the [Student Intranet](#).

5.3 Students who declare mental health issues as part of the complaints process will be advised of internal and, where appropriate, external support services available. If a student appears unable to engage effectively with the complaints procedure, the University may suggest that the student appoints a representative. If deemed appropriate by the Quality and Regulation Manager, consideration of the complaint may be suspended until the student has accessed appropriate support.

6 Deadlines

6.1 Students should normally engage with the procedure within six months of the incident giving rise to the complaint. Where a student claims that a matter has had a long-term or continuing impact, the time limit will be considered as starting from the date the student was first affected by the matter. When students have had their award conferred or have been withdrawn and wish to make complaints, they should engage with the complaints procedure within six months of notification of award or withdrawal.

6.2 Students are encouraged to raise concerns as soon as possible, as it allows for more effective investigation and resolution. Where too much time has elapsed, it may not be possible to fully investigate the circumstances of the complaint.

6.3 Complaints submitted outside of these deadlines will be considered exceptionally if the student provides evidence of good reason for the delay. The Quality and Regulation Manager will determine whether the complaint can be considered outside of the deadline.

6.4 If the student fails to:

- Respond to reasonable requests for information in respect of the complaint, or

- Attend meetings to attempt to investigate / resolve the complaint, or
- Communicate with the University in respect of the complaint, for a period in excess of two weeks (without reasonable explanation provided), it will be deemed that the student no longer wishes to pursue the complaint. No further action will be taken under the procedure and the student will be notified that the matter has been closed as a result of the lack of response.

7 Group Complaints

7.1 The Procedure can be used for both individual and group complaints. Group complaints can be of a general nature so it may be more appropriate for students to raise these matters with their student representatives or in a student voice forum in the first instance. However, if the relevant representation system has failed to provide a satisfactory outcome, group complaints may be made under this procedure and will be dealt with collectively.

7.2 It is recommended that one student should be identified as spokesperson and correspondent for the group and each member of the group must agree to the spokesperson acting on their behalf. All parties to the complaint must be able to demonstrate that they have been personally affected by the matters raised. The complaint form should be submitted and signed by the nominated spokesperson and should be accompanied by a list of the other students who wish to raise the complaint. The evidence provided by the spokesperson with the complaint form should be agreed with the group and acceptance of further evidence from other parties to the complaint will be permitted only at the discretion of the Investigating Officer, following the initial submission.

7.3 If the complaint is found partly or fully justified and an offer of settlement is made by the University, this offer will be communicated to the spokesperson with the expectation that they will share it with other parties to the complaint. Signed acceptance (or rejection) will be required in writing from all parties to the complaint.

7.4 Where students submit a complaint as a group, but the issues may have impacted the students in different ways. the university may decide to split the complaint into sub-groups, The university may also decide it would be better to handle some of the complaints individually, or to look at remedies individually. Students may give the provider information that they would like to be considered but not shared with other students in the group. The university may reach a decision about the group complaint first, and then respond to individual complaints.

7.5 If partial acceptance of the offer is received, the terms of the offer will be applied to those indicating they wish to accept.

7.6 For those students not wishing to accept the offer, the normal criteria and deadlines for progressing complaints to the next stage will apply.

8 Third Party Complaints

8.1 Complaints must normally be made by students themselves and not by others acting on their behalf unless written authorisation and a rationale is provided. Permission for third parties to bring complaints will usually be granted only where this is necessary to make reasonable adjustment for students with individual needs.

8.2 If a complaint is brought by a student under the age of 18, the University will normally notify the parent/guardian in writing and keep them informed of progress, subject to the student's agreement. Where the student is under the age of 18, the University will permit the student's parent/guardian to act on the student's behalf, provided the student has given their agreement in writing.

9 Complaints to the Vice Chancellor

9.1 If a complaint is made directly to the Vice-Chancellor's Office, it will be acknowledged and referred to the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration who will ensure that it enters the Procedure at the appropriate point. If no previous attempt has been made by the student to resolve the complaint, the student will be advised to initially pursue the issues raised with the relevant Academic or Operational Department, if that is deemed to be appropriate.

10 Frivolous, Malicious or Vexatious Complaints

10.1 The University defines frivolous or vexatious complaints as follows:

- Complaints which are obsessive, harassing or repetitive.
- Insistence on pursuing futile or insignificant complaints or unrealistic/unreasonable demands and outcomes as a result of bringing a complaint.
- Unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour when pursuing a complaint.
- Complaints which are driven by malice and designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
- Complaints which are designed to defame the name or character of another person.

10.2 If a student's complaint is considered frivolous, malicious, or vexatious this will be determined by the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration. The student will be notified that their complaint will not be considered, giving reasons for the decision.

10.3 The Head of Quality will have the authority to invoke the Disciplinary Procedure for Students or any other appropriate University procedure that is deemed appropriate. Students whose programme of study leads to a professional registration may be referred to the Suitability for Practice Procedure.

10.4 The student will be advised of the right to request a review of the decision (within ten working days of the notification of the decision) by the Director of Strategic Planning and Student

Administration. The request must be made in writing, giving full reasons, and submitted to the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration to review the decision. The decision of the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration will be final.

10.5 If the appeal is upheld the complaint will be investigated in accordance with the Student Complaints Procedure.

10.6 If the appeal is rejected no action will be taken to investigate the complaint and the student will be notified of the alternative procedure which is being applied, where appropriate.

11 Acceptable Standards of Behaviour

11.1 When bringing a complaint, it is expected that students will behave in a courteous and reasonable manner and engage with the process in a positive and respectful way. It is also expected that contact is reasonable and appropriate and concerns are raised through the appropriate channels.

11.2 If acceptable codes of behaviour are breached, then it may be necessary to invoke other University procedures e.g., Disciplinary Procedure for Students, the Anti-Harassment and Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy; or the Suitability for Practice Procedure. The student will be advised in writing if this course of action is considered and given one opportunity to conform to acceptable codes of behaviour. If this requirement is not complied with and the inappropriate behaviour continues, the student will be notified in writing by the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration that their complaint has been paused pending the outcome of disciplinary procedures, and ultimately the complaint may be deemed to be vexatious in accordance with the definitions in Section 10. There may then be a right of appeal in accordance with Section 10 above.

12 Recorded Evidence

12.1 Recorded material may be accepted as evidence in respect of a complaint, at the discretion of the University, with due consideration to current legislation. However, any parties undertaking recording, should be aware of the legal and regulatory implications of recording without consent (including the University's Code of Conduct for Students).

13 Confidentiality

13.1 All records relating to the complaint will be kept in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations. Due regard will be given to the confidentiality of all parties, with information being shared only for the purpose of investigating complaints. It should be noted that in order to permit appropriate investigation of complaints under this procedure, the content will be disclosed to individuals who are involved in putting the Procedure into effect or whose input

may be required to respond to the issues e.g., Faculty staff, the Inclusion Manager, the relevant Student Administration Officers or any persons named in the complaint. By submitting a complaint, the student consents to the disclosure, storage and sharing of information relevant to the complaint within the University at all stages of the Procedure. If this presents a problem for the student, they may wish to seek advice from the Quality Manager; however, not providing consent may affect the University's ability to consider the complaint fully. Any information used for monitoring purposes will be anonymised.

13.2 Where possible, full details of the outcome of complaint investigations will be made available to the student but on occasion it may be necessary to take into account the rights of individuals to confidentiality. When this is necessary, the student will be advised of the reason for the non-disclosure of information unless this in itself would breach the confidentiality of other individuals.

14 Accompaniment at Complaint Hearings

14.1 At any meeting which is part of this Procedure, the student is entitled to be accompanied by an enrolled student, friend, relative, member of staff of the University (or of a Partner college/organisation), a Students' Union Advisor or any person who is needed to support them with any individual needs (e.g. carer, signer). This person may also make representations on behalf of the student, provided the student is also present. The student is expected to respond directly to any questions from Investigators / Panels.

14.2 It is recognised that in limited circumstances the student may wish to request legal accompaniment at an investigatory meeting or panel hearing. In such limited circumstances a written (email is acceptable) request should be submitted at least 5 working days prior to the meeting/hearing, including the name of the individual being invited and the reason for the request. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration (or nominee).

14.3 If the request is permitted, the University reserves the right to have its own legal accompaniment. Each party will bear its own legal costs and will be responsible for ensuring that the meeting arrangements and necessary documentation are provided to those accompanying them.

14.4 If prior notification of legal or professional body representation is not given and a student brings a professional body representative or a legally qualified person to a meeting, the meeting will not proceed and will be adjourned.

15 Consideration under more than one procedure

15.1 Where complaints raised by a student fall under the remit of more than one procedure e.g. the Academic Integrity Procedure as well as the Complaints Procedure, it may be necessary to suspend the investigation of one procedure until the matter under the other procedure has

been resolved. Alternatively, with the agreement of all parties, it may be possible to consider all matters concurrently, in which case it should be explicit where overall responsibility lies for the matters raised and who will determine the final outcome. The Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration or nominee will make a case-by-case assessment of the best way to handle complex or interconnected cases and a flexible approach may be taken to vary normal procedures where reasonable. Consideration will be given to the outcome the student is seeking, opportunities for early resolution, whether a single process can be used to establish the facts and used as a basis for decisions under another process and how to make it as easy as possible for the student. The student will be kept fully informed of the procedure under which their complaint is being investigated and any variation to normal procedure and records will be kept of why a different process was followed.

15.2 If, following guidance from the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration (or nominee), it is deemed that another procedure is more suitable for dealing with the issues raised, then the case will be considered under the more appropriate procedure, and the student will be informed accordingly.

16 Complaints made against Members of Staff

16.1 Complaints involving allegations of misconduct by a member of staff will be investigated under this procedure in relation to the service a student has received from the University, and whether that service has fallen below expected standards. Allegations will be taken seriously and investigated fairly, promptly, and with due regard to confidentiality.

16.2 Where a complaint against a member of staff includes allegations that may constitute misconduct, the Complaints Casework Team will conduct a full investigation under the Student Complaints Procedure, with guidance and support from Human Resources.

16.3 If any complaint made against a member of staff under this procedure is of misconduct, the Human Resources department (in consultation with the Complaint Casework team) may consider if any precautionary measures are required. In the case of students, these measures will be put in place by the student conduct team and in the case of staff, HR will put any necessary precautionary action in place in conjunction with the Line Manager.

16.4 If precautionary measures are required during the investigation, these will be determined and implemented by the relevant teams: the Student Conduct Team for student-related matters, and Human Resources for staff-related concerns.

16.5 If the investigation concludes that the complaint is upheld and involves staff misconduct, the matter will be referred to Human Resources for consideration under the University's Staff Disciplinary Procedure.

16.6 Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process.

16.7 Members of staff about whom complaints are made may be concerned about the process of hearing the complaint. The University recognises that it has a duty to ensure that its staff are also treated fairly throughout the process, and to that end, the following support and information will be provided:

- Members of staff will have the right to be supported by their line manager throughout the process. If the line manager is also involved in the complaint, then an alternative senior member of staff will be nominated to provide that support.
- Members of staff will be advised at the commencement of the Complaints Procedure, of the nature of the complaint.
- Members of staff will have the right to reply to any such complaint at any stage in the process.
- Members of staff will have the same right of access as the student to any documentary evidence presented as part of, or in support of, any such complaint.

16.8 Following the outcome of the complaint investigation, the matter will be referred to Human Resources for consideration under the appropriate staff procedures, including the Staff Disciplinary Procedure where applicable.

17 Complaints made against non-University Staff

17.1 Where a complaint is made against a non-University member of staff e.g. a member of staff from a placement provider or individual employed through an outsourced service, the University will work with appropriate staff of the alternative employer to facilitate investigation / resolution of the matter, taking all reasonable steps to do so, if necessary.

17.2 Care will be taken to ensure the General Data Protection Regulations (or any other relevant legislation) are complied with, ensuring that information is shared on a confidential, need-to-know basis only.

17.3 The student will be kept informed of the procedures being implemented, and progress being made with expected timeframes.

18 Attending Interviews and Panel Hearings

18.1 If the student's normal place of study is not on the Wrexham campus and/or the student has difficulties in attending interviews or panel hearings in person e.g. because of disability or caring responsibilities, arrangements will be made for the student to participate by video conferencing.

19 Training, Monitoring and Review

19.1 Training will be provided to all staff involved in the implementation of the procedure.

19.2 Monitoring of the process will be undertaken through the recording of individual cases and the preparation of an anonymised Annual Report for consideration by the University Academic Board or appropriate committee of the Academic Board. This report will analyse case data and include recommendations for enhancement, including identification of further training opportunities.

19.3 In the case of complaints resolved at the formal or review stage, any recommendations resulting from student complaints or made by the Investigating Officer or Review Panel should be allocated to the Dean of Faculty or appropriate Operational Head to be addressed in an appropriate and timely manner. Any programme level recommendations will be included in the Continuous Monitoring Report for monitoring and completion. The Dean of Faculty / Operational Head will be responsible for informing the Quality Manager of these actions/remedies, who will record their progress for inclusion in the annual report. This will ensure that any examples of good practice or lessons learnt are disseminated on a University wide basis.

19.4 Partner colleges and organisations – as an important aspect of monitoring the quality of the University's awards, partner colleges and organisations will be expected to provide the following to the Partnerships Quality Manager:

- A copy of the partner college/organisation's Complaints Procedure and to advise the University of any changes subsequently made to it.
- An annual summary of any formal complaints received from students studying for the University's awards, detailing how they have been dealt with through the partner college/organisation's formal complaints procedure.

20 Procedural Steps: Student Complaints Procedure

20.1 Prior to a complaint entering the Student Complaints Procedure, students are expected to have engaged with the University feedback mechanisms available to them e.g., the Student Representative system and Student Voice Fora. The Students' Union also provides an online tool to raise concerns. The Students' Union can be contacted for advice and guidance on suadvice@wrexham.ac.uk.

20.2 In order to raise a formal complaint students are required to complete the student complaint form (available from complaints@wrexham.ac.uk). Completed forms should be submitted via complaints@wrexham.ac.uk **within six months of the event/ action or inaction** that is the cause of the complaint. Students are encouraged to raise concerns as soon as possible, as it allows for more effective investigation and resolution.

20.3 Each matter of concern raised as part of the complaint must be evidenced, such evidence may include programme specifications, module handbooks, programme handbooks, emails,

hand- outs, Moodle announcements etc. Concerns that are not supported with appropriate evidence are unlikely to be considered, unless sufficient reason for lack of evidence can be provided.

20.4 Following the submission of a complaint, students may be required to meet with the Quality Manager in order to discuss the cause(s) for concern, the supporting evidence and the outcome(s) being sought. The Quality Manager will determine the most appropriate stage at which the complaint will be accepted into the procedure.

20.5 If no prior attempt has been made by the student to resolve the complaint, the student will be advised to initially pursue the issues raised, under Stage 1 of the procedure (informal) with the relevant Academic or Operational Department, if that is deemed to be appropriate.

20.6 At all stages of the formal complaint procedure, cases may be presented in Welsh or English. If the complainant intends to be present at a meeting, they must give prior notice of their preferred language.

20.7 Subject to eligibility, the University will try to resolve a complaint at the earliest stage. If it is evident from an initial review that the complaint is justified or partially justified an attempt may be made to put things right without a full investigation and in the interest of achieving a practical remedy in a timely manner.

21 Stage 1 – Early/Local Resolution at a local level

21.1 The Quality Manager will facilitate a resolution at local / faculty level as appropriate. This may involve the student meeting with an appropriate member of staff from the faculty or operational department. Further investigation may be required to obtain additional information before a resolution is reached.

21.2 Exceptionally, if the nature of the complaint indicates that it would not be possible for the Faculty or Department to act impartially, the complaint may be handled by an alternative senior staff member. The student will be notified of this decision in writing.

21.3 Students can be supported at Early Resolution meetings by a student representative or a Students' Union Advisor if required. Additional support or assistance can also be sought from the Student and Campus Life team. Any requests for reasonable adjustments will also be considered.

21.4 Every effort should be made by all parties to find a mutually acceptable solution to the issues raised. In some instances, an explanation, alternative outcome or an apology may resolve the matter.

21.5 The member of staff dealing with the complaint should normally provide the student with a written response to the complaint **within 40 working days for individual complaints and 60 days for group complaints** of it being raised. However, reasonable extension to this timescale may be necessary during University holiday periods, when complaints raise multiple complex

issues or as a result of circumstances beyond the University's control, in which case the student will be kept informed of progress.

21.6 The written response will detail whether or not the complaint has been upheld and what proposed outcome is being offered. The response will also detail any lessons that can be learnt from the matter(s) raised, with the aim of improving the overall student experience.

21.7 Records of all meetings held with the student and other parties will be maintained, including documentation detailing the proposed outcome and the student's responses, as these may be required if the student remains dissatisfied and requests that the complaint is dealt with under the Formal Stage of the procedure.

21.8 Should the student remain dissatisfied with the outcome at the Early Resolution Stage, they will be informed of the right to refer the matter for consideration at the next stage of the procedure and the deadline for doing so.

22 Stage 2 - Formal Stage (Investigation)

22.1 A student complaint may be accepted directly into the Formal Stage of the procedure if the issues raised are complex and require detailed investigation and a need to gather extensive evidence. A Quality Manager will need to approve this course of action.

22.2 If a student remains dissatisfied with an outcome at the Stage 1 Informal / Early Resolution Stage, they should detail which matters of the complaint they remain dissatisfied with by emailing complaints@wrexham.ac.uk **within ten working days** of being notified of the outcome of the Stage 1 Informal / Early Resolution Stage of the procedure.

22.3 Evidence must be provided to support a request to progress the complaint to the Stage 2 Formal Stage and the outcome(s) sought must be clearly outlined.

22.4 A senior officer in Strategic Planning and Student Administration will review a request to progress concerns to the Stage 2 Formal Stage of the Procedure to ensure that it complies with the requirements of the Student Complaints Procedure. The complaint will be progressed to the Stage 2 Formal Stage of the procedure provided that the following criteria are met:

- The complaint has previously been considered under the Stage 1 Informal / Early Resolution Stage of the procedure; or exceptional reasons for not doing so have been identified.
- The request has been received **within ten working days** of the notification of the outcome at the Stage 1 Informal / Early Resolution Stage of the procedure. This deadline will only be extended in exceptional circumstances, for which evidence must be provided, and the application for extension to the deadline will be considered by the Head of Quality or nominee.
- Evidence in support of the complaint progression request has been provided or good reason for this omission has been supplied.

- The matters raised and evidence provided suggest it would be possible for a materially different outcome to be achieved by investigating the complaint at the Stage 2 Formal Stage of the procedure.
- The complaint is not determined to be frivolous, malicious or vexatious in accordance with Section 10 above.

22.5 The complaint will not be accepted into the Stage 2 Formal Stage of the Procedure if the criteria are not met. The student will be advised accordingly in writing.

22.6 If the senior officer in Strategic Planning and Student Administration determines that all / some of the complaint meets the requirements of the Complaints Procedure, it will be accepted into the process and all deadlines specified within this procedure thereafter will apply from the date of the acceptance of the formal complaint into the procedure. The student will be notified of this acceptance in writing.

22.7 If the complaint is accepted into the Stage 2 Formal Stage of the procedure, the Head of Quality's nominee will appoint an academic or operational member of staff, not previously involved in the complaint, to act as Investigating Officer. The Investigating Officer will be drawn from a pool of trained and experienced staff.

22.8 If the complaint has been in relation to a member of staff, the investigator will work with the Complaints Team, and the HR Partner/HR Advisor to: agree the scope of the investigation; determine what evidence will be gathered, including who will be interviewed as a potential witness; agree the scope of the investigation; determine what evidence will be gathered, including who will be interviewed as a potential witness

22.9 The Investigating Officer may meet with relevant parties, including the student to obtain further information and will have access to information already considered during the Stage 1 / Early Resolution Stage. It is a requirement that staff will meet with the Investigating Officer to assist with their enquiries when requested. A member of the Quality team will be in attendance at all meetings convened by the Investigating Officer to take notes of the meeting.

22.10 The Investigating Officer will make every effort to conclude the investigation **within 40 working days for individual complaints and 60 days for group complaints** of appointment. If this is not possible, the student will be advised in writing of the reason for the delay and the deadline by which it is expected that the investigation will be completed.

22.11 The Investigating Officer's report will contain details of the methodology used to investigate the complaint and will reach one of the following conclusions:

- That the complaint has been partially or wholly upheld in which case a proposed remedy/outcome will be offered.

OR

- That the complaint has not been upheld as there are no grounds or evidence to support it.

22.12 When the complaint is not upheld but as part of the investigation, opportunities for the implementation of good practice are identified, these matters should be included in the report, but it should be noted that these suggestions for improvement do not indicate that there were any failings on behalf of the University and had no material impact on the student's experience.

22.13 When the complaint has been partially or wholly upheld, the Investigating Officer will identify the remedial action necessary to resolve the matter. The following list provides examples of the remedies which may be appropriate but is not exhaustive and options may be used in combination:

- An apology to be offered.
- Improvements or alterations made to support, teaching or services in order to improve the student experience in future.
- Compensation offered for inadequate support, teaching or services.
- Compensation offered for the distress and inconvenience which may have been caused.
- Other appropriate identified remedial / improvement opportunity.

22.14 When, in the opinion of the Investigating Officer, the circumstances of the complaint may have had an impact on the assessment of the student, the matter will be referred to the Chair of the relevant Assessment Board for further consideration under the Academic Appeals/Review of Assessment Board Decisions Procedure.

22.15 When the investigation is completed, the Investigating Officer will send the report to the relevant Dean of Faculty or Operational Head and the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration (or their nominee), and in the appropriate HR Business Partner if the complaint has been in relation to a member of staff. The report should make recommendations for resolution of the complaint, highlighting any recommended changes to processes to avoid a repeat of the situation and/or to improve the student experience.

22.16 The Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration (or their nominee) will discuss the report with the relevant Dean of Faculty or Operational Head to ensure that all aspects of the complaint have been adequately investigated and to review the feasibility of the recommendations proposed and their implementation. If the recommendations include financial compensation, it may also be necessary to consult the Director of Finance.

22.17 If the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration (or their nominee) determines that the complaint has not been fully investigated or in their opinion the findings or recommendations are unreasonable, the report will be returned to the Investigating Officer for further consideration.

22.18 When the Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration (or their nominee) is satisfied with the Investigating Officer's report they will ensure that an outcome letter is sent to the student on behalf of the Investigating Officer.

22.19 If one or more of the grounds specified in Section 23 below are met, the student may request a review **within ten working days** of the date of the Formal Stage outcome letter. Dissatisfaction with the outcome or remedy offered at the Formal Stage is not sufficient grounds to request a review.

22.20 If the student does not have grounds to request a review under this procedure or decides not to take this course of action, then the internal procedures will be deemed to be completed.

23 Review Stage

23.1 A request for a review will only be accepted if one or more of the following grounds is met:

- There has been a material irregularity at the Formal Stage of the procedure which has evidently affected the outcome.
- There is evidence that not all of the relevant facts were considered during the Formal Stage investigation.
- There is new evidence which may affect the Formal Stage outcome and there is good and reasonable cause why this information was not provided at the time of the Formal Stage investigation.

23.2 When a complaint has been investigated under the procedure of a partner/college organisation and the student remains dissatisfied, the student may refer the complaint for a review under this stage of the University procedure, provided that one of the grounds stated above is met.

23.3 **Within ten working days** of the Formal Stage outcome letter the student should complete the Review Stage Student Complaint Form and submit it to complaints@wrexham.ac.uk with any written evidence, detailing the reasons for the request for a review (see Review Panel Procedure).

23.4 Within seven working days a senior officer in Strategic Planning and Student Administration will consider the request for a review, determine whether or not it meets the criteria outlined in para 23.1 above and notify the student accordingly. The result of this review will be that either:

- No grounds for a review have been established in which case the Senior Officer will advise the student of this decision;
- OR
- Grounds for review have been established in which case a Review Panel will be convened to consider the matter further.

23.5 If grounds for a review have been established, the Senior Officer in Strategic Planning and Student Administration will notify the Investigating Officer that the complaint is progressing to Review Stage of the procedure, request a written report of the Formal Stage investigation and advise that they will be required to present that report at the Review Panel hearing.

23.6 Convene a Review Panel

23.6.1 A Review Panel will normally be convened within twenty working days of the review being accepted by the Senior Officer. This timescale may need to be extended during University holiday periods in which case the student will be kept informed of the reason for the delay and the likely length of that delay.

23.6.2 The Review Panel membership will consist of the following:

- Chair: a senior member of academic staff approved by Academic Board to act as a Chair on panels,
- A senior member of academic or operational staff;
- A member of the Students' Union.
- An officer of Strategic Planning and Student Administration.

23.6.3 All panel members will be independent of the student and their subject area and will have no previous involvement in the case. The Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration will nominate a member of Strategic Planning and Student Administration staff to act as Secretary.

23.7 Remit of the Panel

23.7.1 The Complaint Review Panel is empowered to determine that:

- The decision of the Investigating Officer at the Formal Stage of the hearing will be upheld, in which case the student will be provided with reasons for that decision;

OR

- The decision of the Investigating Officer at the Formal Stage of the hearing will not be upheld and to substitute its own determination and remedies in respect of the complaint.

23.8 Documentation and Preparations for the Meeting

23.8.1 At least five working days before the Panel meeting, the student will be notified of the date and arrangements for the meeting and provided with relevant documentation. The student will be asked whether they will be accompanied at the hearing and whether or not they wish to call any witnesses. Documentation will consist of the student's complaint form with accompanying evidence, the request for a review form, the investigating officer's report, copies of relevant procedures and academic regulations and any other documentation requested by the Chair of the Review Panel. In the interests of transparency, all documentation seen by the Panel will also be made available to the student.

23.8.2 The student will not be permitted to submit new evidence at this stage unless (in accordance with para 4.4.1 above) good and reasonable cause why the evidence was not provided at the Formal Stage of the procedure has been provided.

23.8.3 Guidance in respect of accompaniment at the Panel meeting can be found in section 14 above.

23.8.4 The Chair of the Panel will determine which members of staff are required to attend the Panel meeting to provide evidence. The Secretary will notify these staff members that their attendance is required at least five working days before the meeting.

23.8.5 The Chair of the Panel will determine whether the witnesses which the student wishes to call are appropriate. If the witnesses are permitted, the student should be notified, and it will be the student's responsibility to liaise with the Secretary to determine timings and to provide the witnesses with details of the arrangements for the review meeting.

23.9 Attendance at Meeting

23.9.1 If the student advises that they will attend a hearing but does not do so and no reason or apologies are provided, the hearing will continue in their absence. If reasons are provided, the Chair will decide whether or not to grant a postponement. Evidence of mitigation will be requested and presented to the Chair for approval. If approved by the Chair, a postponement will be granted but on one occasion only.

23.9.2 If the student is unable to attend a hearing for exceptional reasons, they must advise the Panel Secretary no later than 48 hours before the hearing. Where possible, an opportunity may be provided for the case to be heard through electronic means and/or the student will be invited to present a written statement for consideration by the Hearing Panel.

23.9.3 If the student advises that they will not be attending the hearing or no reply is received following one reminder, the hearing will proceed in their absence.

23.9.4 Where every opportunity has been offered to allow the student to attend the Complaints Hearing, but they are still not able/declines to attend, the Hearing may proceed without their attendance.

23.10 Procedure at the Panel Meeting

23.10.1 It is anticipated that normally, the investigating officer and the student will be present in the meeting simultaneously and will remain in the meeting to hear all evidence from witnesses, withdrawing when the Panel is deliberating on the evidence heard. However, if in the opinion of the Chair of the Review Panel, it would assist with the gathering of evidence or protecting confidentiality, both parties may be requested to withdraw while witnesses are questioned.

23.10.2 The Investigating Officer will be invited to summarise their investigation and outline the reasons for their decision at The Formal Stage. The student will then be invited to present their complaint and to respond to the Investigating Officer's report.

23.10.3 Witnesses may be called who may be questioned by the Panel. With the permission of the Chair, the student and the Investigating Officer may question the witnesses.

23.10.4 When all evidence has been heard, the student and Investigating Officer will withdraw and the Panel will deliberate in private.

23.11 Decision of the Review Panel

23.11.1 Normally, the decision of the Complaints Review Panel will be communicated to the student and to the Faculty/Operational Department in writing within seven working days of the meeting. Where the Panel is unable to reach a decision or it is not possible to adhere to the deadline (for example, if an adjournment in the proceedings is necessary) all parties will be kept informed of progress and provided with reasons for the extension of the timescale.

23.11.2 If the complaint is not upheld, as part of the review, opportunities for the implementation of good practice will be identified; these matters should be included in the Completion of Procedures letter and any subsequent report, but it should be emphasised that these are suggestions for improvement only and do not indicate that there were any failings on behalf of the University.

23.11.3 If the complaint has been partially or wholly upheld, the Panel will identify the remedial action necessary to resolve the matter. The following list provides examples of the remedies which may be appropriate but are not exhaustive and are not mutually exclusive:

- An apology to be offered;
- Improvements or alterations made to support, teaching or services to improve the student experience in future;
- A fee waiver / reduction offered for inadequate support, teaching or services;
- Compensation offered for the distress and inconvenience which may have been caused.

23.11.4 If, in the opinion of the Panel, the circumstances of the complaint may have had an impact on the assessment of the student, the matter will be referred to the Chair of the relevant Assessment Board for further consideration under the Academic Appeals/Review of Assessment Board Decisions Procedure.

23.11.5 The decision of the Complaints Review Panel is final and represents the completion of the University's internal complaints procedures. The student will be notified of the Complaints Review Panel's decision through the issue of a Completion of Procedures letter.

24 Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

24.1 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. Wrexham University is a member of this scheme. If you are unhappy with the outcome, you may be able to ask the OIA to review your complaint. You can find more information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right if something has gone wrong here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/>

24.2 You normally need to have completed the University's procedure before you complain to the OIA. The University will send you a letter called a "Completion of Procedures Letter" when you have reached the end of our processes and there are no further steps you can take internally. If your complaint is not upheld, the University will issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter automatically. If your complaint is upheld or partly upheld, you can ask for a Completion of Procedures Letter if you want one. You can find more information about Completion of Procedures Letters and when you should expect to receive one here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers/completion-of-procedures-letters/>

25 Accessibility

25.1 Wrexham University strives to be a supportive and trauma-informed university in the design and operation of all our processes and procedures. If you need adjustments to access this procedure or have any other comments to make on the accessibility, wording or any part of this procedure, please do email us on ASK@Wrexham.ac.uk.