Higher Education Complaints Process

Applies to:	
Harrogate College	
Keighley College	
Leeds City College	
Leeds Conservatoire	X
Leeds Sixth Form College / Pudsey Sixth Form College	
Luminate Group Services	
University Centre Leeds	X

CHANGE CONTROL

Version:	5	
Name of author:	HE Quality	
Name of responsible committee:	HE Quality	
Related policies: (list)	HE Complaints Policy HE Harassment, Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy	
Equality impact assessment completed	**Date:**	Sept 26
	Assessment type **X Full** **☐ Part** **☐ Not required**	
Environmental Impact Assessment Completed	**Date:**	Sept 26
	☐ Yes **☐ No** **X Not required**	
Policy will be communicated via:	Committee Structure, Student and Staff websites, VLE, CECIL	
Next review date:	September 2029	

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1. PROCESS STATEMENT

The purpose of this process is to ensure that University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire is providing the highest quality services and facilities to its Higher Education learners and stakeholders. If there are areas of our provision which are of concern this document will outline the process that needs to be followed to raise this concern or complaint. The following principles apply to this process:

- The active promotion of equality of opportunity throughout University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoires activities and the learning experience;
- The provision of an open and transparent process;
- The timely resolution of complaints in a fair and equitable manner;
- The assurance that students will not be disadvantaged once a complaint has been reported;
- Continuous service improvement as part of University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire's HE Quality processes.

2. COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS

Relevant complaints shall be conducted in accordance with this process and the expectations set out in the Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Concerns, Complaints and Appeals (Nov 2018)and the guidance set out in the OIA Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals (2022) as in the regulations approved by University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire's Governing Bodies, and shall seek to uphold the principles of fairness, consistency, equity and equal opportunities. The handling of all complaints will be completed within 90 days of the start of the formal stage, in accordance with the OIA guidelines.

3. IMPARTIALITY OF DECISION MAKERS

To ensure impartiality in the dealing of complaints, no person shall be permitted to take part in the making of a decision regarding a complaint after the informal stage where they have an interest through being a member of the same academic department in which the complainant is registered.

Any person must declare any connection they may have to a complainant which may impact the decision making and will therefore not be involved in the complaint.

4. COMPLAINTS

This process relates to complaints from students, applicants, guardians, employers and members of the public. University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire welcomes comments and suggestions for the improvement of its services. University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire and has established a variety of feedback opportunities to ensure that students and employers (where appropriate) can take part in the decision-making processes at course/programme level or via their students' union. students' and employers should consider addressing comments and suggestions to an appropriate member of staff.

This process can be applied by the complainant themselves, or by a nominated representative.

Anonymous complaints are also covered within this process and will follow the same timelines. University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire will log and investigate anonymous complaints where it is possible to do so. University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire

University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire,

This process does not apply to Academic Appeals; Academic Appeals are defined as:

- A request to review a decision that has been made in relation to the progress of the student on their programme of study, including the award of any qualification as a result of that progress.

If a student submits an Academic Appeal concurrently with a Complaint cess, the complaint will not be investigated until the completion of the Academic Appeal.

5. PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALY AND DATA PROTECTION

All evidence submitted by a complainant in support of a complaint will be treated with respect for the privacy of the complainant and will be confidential to those members of staff concerned with the matters raised in the complaint. Unless relevant parties have consented to have their information shared beyond. Evidence submitted will be shared with investigators of the complaint.

Any member of staff involved with a complaint in any capacity will ensure that the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) is always complied with.

6. FAIR TREATMENT

No individual raising a complaint under this process, whether successfully or otherwise, will be treated less favourably by any member of staff than if the complaint had not been brought. All staff involved in handling any stages of a complaint have a duty to ensure that any decision they make regarding assessment of evidence, or the way a student is treated, must not be influenced by the raising of a complaint. If evidence to the contrary is found, the member of staff may be subject to action under the Staff Disciplinary Procedure.

Where an individual believes that consideration of a complaint is likely to affect the relationship between a student and a member of staff, all parties will be expected to continue that relationship in a professional manner. Only in exceptional circumstances will University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire consider agreeing to a request for alternative working arrangements whilst the complaint is being investigated.

7. ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

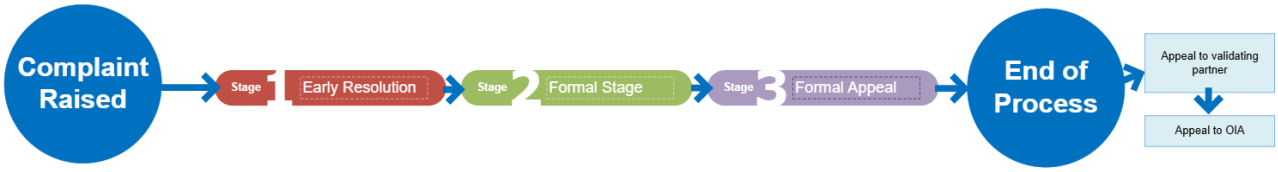
Individuals can obtain advice on this process from several sources. The Student Support team or representative from the relevant students' union can provide advice independent of University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire, including assistance in submitting a complaint. Staff can seek advice and support on understanding the process from HE Quality.

HE Quality can only provide advice to students and staff on the operation of this process.

Academic staff will not be able to provide advice to students on individual complaints.

8. COMPLAINTS PROCESS

For current and ex-students and parents/carers/guardians and members of the public.



To enable swift investigation and resolution, complaints must usually be made within 3 months of the date on which the event complained about occurred or as soon as possible, or on which the

complainant could reasonably be expected to have known about the matter. University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire recognises this may not be possible in every case.

Information about formal complaints about Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct can be found in the HE Harassment, Violence and and Sexual Misconduct Policy.

9. STAGE 1 – EARLY RESOLUTION STAGE

Where an individual considers they have grounds for complaint, they should email University Centre Leeds: hequality@ucleeds.ac.uk or Leeds Conservatoire: complaints@leedsconservatoire.ac.uk .

Informal Resolution:

We encourage complainants to first try and resolve the issue informally, either by speaking directly with those concerned, or the programme team.

Possible resolution could include;

- Giving more information or a more detailed explanation
- Suggesting solutions
- Providing an apology where appropriate
- Recommending further assistance or support

Should informal resolution not settle the issue, then the complaint will proceed to Stage 2: Making a formal complaint. Contact the Quality Team for guidance and information on your complaint, ideally with evidence supporting the complaint.

All staff should take appropriate and reasonable action; every effort should be made to establish the facts and resolve the problem. The complainant should be contacted within 10 working days, by a member of the Quality Team.

If the complaint is against a member of staff whose behaviour suggests discrimination based on race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender identity or any other protected characteristic covered by the Equality Act 2010, then the complaint should progress straight to Stage 2 and University Centre Leeds or Leeds Conservatoire must notify the HR department immediately.

Important - Both staff and the complainant should keep a record of the complaint/concern, which maybe requested and used as evidence in any subsequent complaint's investigation, should there be any further escalation by the complainant. A copy of this record must be forwarded to HE Quality.

10. STAGE 2 – FORMAL STAGE

If the complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, the complainant can progress the issue(s) to the next stage of the process. Resolution should be reached within 20 working days of the outcome of Stage 1.

Making a formal complaint:

Formal complaints must be raised to HE Quality and any evidence should be included at this stage. Complaints will be logged by the HE Quality Team and any evidence will be collected for the investigating officer (usually the Head of School/Department or an appropriate manager. The investigating officer may wish to have a meeting with the complainant, but this is not mandatory.

The complainant should contact the Quality Team, by email on hequality@ucleeds.ac.uk/ complaints@leedsconservatoire.ac.uk identifying the nature of the complaint and the steps taken to try and resolve this issue.

Any complaints received against an individual will be treated confidentially. The complainant will receive a response within **10 working days**, detailing how the complaint will be investigated and by whom, and an anticipated date for the outcome of the investigation. If there has been no attempt to resolve the matter informally, the complaint will be referred to the relevant department for investigation and to attempt to resolve the issue.

On completion of the investigation the HE Quality Team (or nominated representative) will email the complainant detailing the decision/outcome and the reasoning behind that decision. This should be completed within **20 working days** of the start of the investigation.

Investigation of complaint

- The Investigating Officer will undertake an investigation into the complaint, and may, at their discretion, contact the complainant and/or any individuals implicated within the complaint.
- The Investigating Officer will contact the complainant within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint. If this timescale is to be extended, they will be kept informed of progress.
- The complainant may be accompanied to any meeting(s). However, any accompanying persons may not speak for the complainant or attend in place of the complainant. Legal representation will not be facilitated.
- The Investigating Officer will, supported by the Quality Team, record their findings. These findings will not be shared with the complainant due to the possibility sensitive or confidential information which may compromise the privacy of individuals concerned.
- The investigating officer will decide, based on the available evidence, the outcome of the investigation into the complaint and this will be sent via email, with potential actions and conditions where appropriate.

11. STAGE 3 – FORMAL APPEAL

This stage of the process should only be used when the complaint is not resolved at either Stage1 or 2 and should be progressed by the complainant within 10 working days of the outcome of a Stage 2 investigation. The detail of complaint must be formally submitted in writing via email and must include what steps have already been taken to try to secure resolution at Stages 1 and 2 and the required resolution sought.

Appeals should be sent to:
hequality@ucleeds.ac.uk
complaints@leedsconservatoire.ac.uk

Investigation of complaint

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- The Investigating Officer will, supported by the Quality Team, record their findings. These findings will not be shared with the complainant due to the possibility sensitive or confidential information which may compromise the privacy of individuals concerned.

- The investigating officer will decide, based on the available evidence, the outcome of the investigation into the complaint and this will be sent via email, with potential actions and conditions where appropriate.

A written response will be sent within **10 working days** detailing how the complaint will be investigated, and when the complainant should expect an outcome. On completion of the investigation by University Centre Leeds or Leeds Conservatoire, the investigating officer will write to the complainant, detailing their decision and the reasoning behind that decision. This will be within **30 working days** of the start of the Stage 3 investigation.

12. COMPLETION OF PROCEDURES

Stage 3 is the end of University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoires process, and the complainant will be issues with a Completion of Procedures letter, which will detail the decision and how to escalate to validating partners or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). If the complainant remaining dissatisfied after Stage 3 they have the right to refer the matter to the validating body if the provision is not validated by Luminate.

Details can be found here:
OU Validated Awards Handbook or the University of Hull Quality and Standards

If following the above, the complainant remains dissatisfied they have the right to request a review of the outcome with the OIA within 12 months of the receipt of a Completion of Procedures letter from the validating body.

13. EMPLOYERS

This process should be followed for complaints made by employers.

If an employer has any concerns/complaints with the service provided by University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire, they should raise their concerns (within no later than six months of the occurrence) directly with:

- The relevant Programme Manager or Head of Department for the area; or
- Dean of Higher Education (University Centre Leeds / Vice Principal (Leeds Conservatoire)

14. REVIEW

Owner: HE Quality and Standards
Introduced:
Last review: December 2026
Next Review: December 2029

University Centre Leeds and Leeds Conservatoire reserves the right to review the policy at any time. This policy is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective and inclusive.

Change Summary		
Version	**Date**	**Summary of changes**
4	21.07.2025	Additions of stages and the process at each stage
5	18.09.26	Reviewed, minor wording changes and made more concise. Added visual diagram.