CTF Complaints Procedures

[Academic appeals and student complaints; QAA Quality Code Chapter B9]

Policy adopted: 13th March 2018

Note: February 2020: This procedure is in the process of being revised to match the Federation’s current structures. New versions have been agreed for students on Anglia Ruskin and Durham degrees. This policy – amended as shown – remains current for BTh and DTM students until a revised version is agreed.

Scope

1. This procedure applies to complaints about people acting in the course of providing services to students on behalf of the CTF charity including, but not limited to, admissions, teaching and assessment. It also applies to staff directly employed by the charity.

2. Complaints about services, activities, resources or employment provided by Member Institutions ("Houses") should be made through that House’s own procedures.

Introduction

3. The Federation takes its responsibilities for the well-being of staff and students seriously and is committed to the provision of a high quality educational experience. Where individuals have cause for concern about any aspect of their Federation life, we undertake to respect that concern and to handle complaints in a way which is sympathetic, fair and efficient; encourages informal conciliation; facilitates early resolution; maintains individual privacy and confidentiality and permits useful feedback.

4. We recognize that complaints and concerns can arise in many different circumstances and that they need to be handled in different ways:

   a. complaints about behaviour that fails to respect the personal integrity and individuality of others or which constitutes harassment on the grounds of race, sex, physical appearance, religious conviction or any other ground, will be handled through the Federation’s anti-bullying and harassment procedures;

   b. complaints arising from or relating to an individual’s employment by the Federation will be handled through the disciplinary or grievance procedures;

   c. complaints about the teaching of a particular course or module should be taken up with the appropriate Award Secretary in the first instance. The Federation Office can advise students on who this is;

   d. complaints about the results of any formal examination or assessment will be handled by the relevant University or awarding body, using their own examination appeals procedures. Contact details are given at the end of this document;
e. complaints about Common Awards decisions should be using the separate procedures which are annexed to this document.

5. All other complaints should follow the procedure outlined below. In all cases, it is helpful if the complaint or concern is raised as soon as possible after the event(s) which gave rise to it.

6. At every stage it is useful to keep a personal written record of what has been discussed, with whom and the outcome, even if the complaint is resolved at the informal stage.

Stage 1: Seeking Advice

7. Individuals considering making a complaint should if possible discuss this decision with an appropriate person within their own House. For students this would normally be their personal tutor or Director of Studies. For staff it would be their manager.

Stage 2: Informal process

8. The individual should make an informal approach to the person who would be in a position to resolve the complaint. This could be someone in charge of a facility or service or the person about whom they wish to complain. If the complainant does not feel able to make a personal approach to another individual, then this stage should be omitted and they should proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Formal process

9. If it is not possible to resolve the complaint informally, or if the complainant does not wish to deal directly with the person about whom they are complaining, the formal process should be followed. This also applies if the complaint is about a serious or urgent matter.

10. The complainant should make a written statement of the circumstances of the complaint and any steps which have been taken to resolve it. This should be sent to the Chief Operating Officer (COO) or, if the complaint concerns the COO, to the Chair of the Federation Board.

11. The COO (or Chair) will investigate the matter. This will usually involve referring the written statement to the individual or organization complained about so that they may make a written response. The investigation may involve a meeting of all interested parties or may be dealt with entirely by written submissions. If there is a meeting, the complainant will be invited to bring a friend or colleague to help them represent themselves. This may be someone unrelated to CTF and may be a trade union representative but otherwise may not be someone acting in a legal capacity. The companion may not speak on the complainant’s behalf (unless this is a reasonable adjustment to ensure equality of access).

12. Complainants will be given up to 10 working days to respond to any requests for further information.

13. Once the investigation is complete, the COO (or Chair) will give a written report of their findings and a recommendation of any remedy or further action that should be taken. The length of time taken to complete an investigation will depend in part on the complexity of the complaint, but it is expected that most complaints would be resolved within 20 working days (extended by any time required for the complainant to respond to requests for information).
Stage 4: Appeal

14. If the complainant is not satisfied with the result of the investigation they may appeal to the Chair of the Federation Board (or, in the case of the complaint being about the Chair, another Board member). He/she will review the matter and make a binding response within 20 working days.

External Complaint Schemes

15. If the complainant is not satisfied with the result of the Federation’s complaint procedure, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) might be able to help. [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk). The OIA is an independent organisation which has been set up to consider student complaints. Its service is free but be aware that the OIA cannot help with some issues.

Contact details

Federation Office              general-enquiries@theofed.cam.ac.uk  01223 767 787
COO                            Details available from the Federation Office
Chair of CTF Board            Details available from the Federation Office

Cambridge University Complaints processes for BTh and DTM students
[www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk](http://www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk)