



The British University in Egypt

# **Student Complaints Procedure**

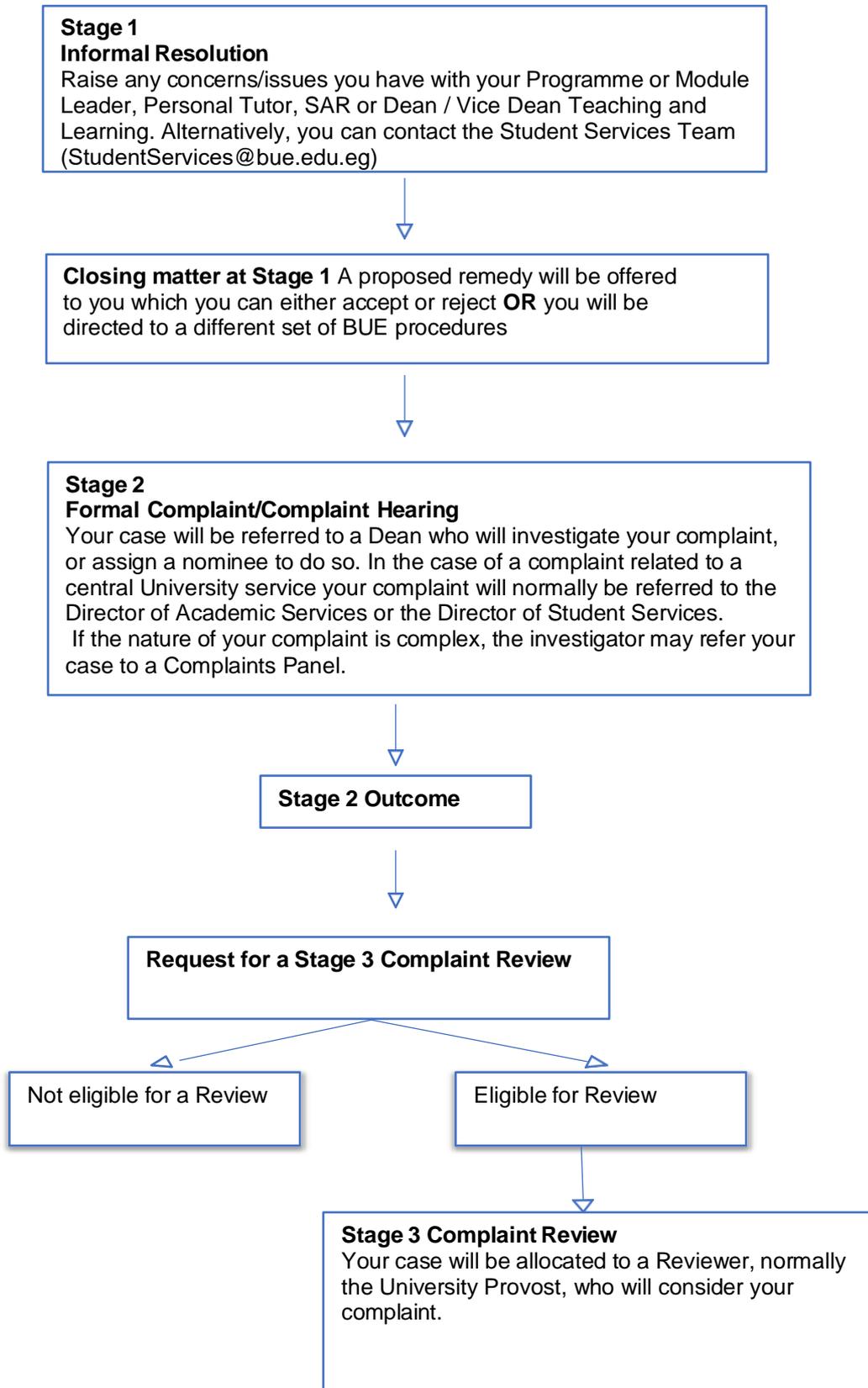
## Key Policy Information:

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## Student Complaints Procedure Flowchart



## 1. Introduction – What is a complaint?

- 1.1. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the University's action, inaction or standards of service which have been provided by or on behalf of the University, on or off the campus (this could be academic, administrative, services, etc).
- 1.2. The University will not normally deal with the following as complaints under this procedure:
  - a) a complaint relating to Admissions, Finance, and English Tests can be dealt with [here](#)
  - b) a concern about a decision made by an academic body regarding student progression, academic assessment and awards, which should be pursued under the Academic Appeals Procedure;
  - c) dissatisfaction about the outcome of an academic misconduct process, which should be pursued under the Student Academic Misconduct Procedure;
  - d) a concern about bullying or harassment by a student should be dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Procedure, which can be found in section 12 of the Academic Regulations [here](#);
  - e) a concern about a decision made under other specific regulations outlined in the Academic Regulations; or a concern about a decision raised and still under consideration at SSLC;
  - f) a confidential, whistleblowing issue which would be dealt with by the University Provost;
  - g) employment matters for any student who is also a member of staff at the University, which would fall within the appropriate HR policy; and
  - h) a complaint from an employer in relation to their employee who is a BUE student:
    - i. on an internship or other industry placement;
    - ii. whose studies are partly or fully sponsored by an employer;
  - i) a matter that has been subject to legal proceedings in a court or tribunal unless those proceedings have been put on hold; or
  - j) a complaint that has already been dealt with through another process or considered by another appropriate body.
- 1.3. Where a complaint involves multiple issues, which do not fall neatly into the category of complaint the matters may be considered together. Depending on the individual circumstances of each incident, the University reserves the right to either suspend one procedure pending the outcome of the other or decide not to pursue a procedure in favour of the other.

## 2. Who is covered by this procedure?

- 2.1. This procedure applies to:

- a) current students registered and/or enrolled with the University;
- b) a student on suspension

### 3. Who is responsible for this procedure?

- 3.1. The University Provost has overall responsibility for the procedure to ensure that its provisions continue to meet required standards and reflect best practice.
- 3.2. The University Provost will review this procedure from time to time, usually every two years, to ensure that its provisions continue to meet required standards and reflect best practice.

### 4. When can a complaint be made?

- 4.1. A complaint can be made about an issue or event which occurs while you are enrolled as a student at the University. Complaints must be submitted as soon as possible and must be made no later than two months after the event occurs.
- 4.2. If a complaint consists of a series of connected events, the time limit will start running from the most recent event. However, any concerns should be raised as soon as possible to enable them to be investigated effectively.
- 4.3. Complaints submitted outside of those time limits will not be considered unless good cause can be shown i.e. that it has not been possible to submit a complaint as a result of exceptional circumstances and relevant evidence in support is provided.
- 4.4. An example of such circumstances may be a serious illness, a disability or bereavement. A busy lifestyle will not be considered as an exceptional circumstance.

Reasons for the delay in submitting the complaint must be provided with supporting evidence to extend the time limit to bring a complaint out of time. Where good cause cannot be shown for late submission of a complaint, supported by evidence, the University will not be under an obligation to investigate that complaint.

- 4.5. A letter explaining the complaint has been submitted out of time will be sent if the University does not accept a complaint.

### 5. Group complaint

- 5.1. Where the issues raised in a complaint affect a number of students, those students can submit a complaint as a 'group complaint'. In such circumstances, the members of the group should nominate one student to act on their behalf as group representative. The University will normally deal with this representative only and expects the representative to liaise with the other students in the group complaint.
- 5.2. Each member of the group must provide to the University:
  - a) express written consent for the representative to deal with the complaint on their behalf;  
and
  - b) evidence to demonstrate how s/he has been affected by the matter that is the subject of the complaint.

- 5.3. All evidence submitted to support the complaint must be agreed between the group representative and the members of the group and submitted with the complaint form. The complaint form must be signed by the nominated representative and a sheet attached to the complaint form containing names and signatures of the complainants comprising the group.
- 5.4. The University reserves the right to refuse to accept or to progress group complaints where it concludes there is insufficient common ground between the members of the group because, for example, the facts do not apply to all members of the group and the complaint cannot reasonably be investigated collectively, or the remedy sought is not appropriate for all members of the group. Separate complaints may, in those circumstances, be submitted and considered in respect of the relevant individuals.

## 6. Anonymous complaints

- 6.1. Anonymous complaints will not normally be considered. Exceptionally, however, an anonymous complaint may be considered when the University concludes that there is a compelling case, supported by evidence, for the matter to be investigated and an investigation is not prejudiced by the anonymity of the complainant.

## 7. Complaints about academic validating partners

- 7.1. Where a student is studying for a degree validated by a UK academic partner, students should make their complaint via the BUE complaints process before contacting the validating partner. Information on how to access a partner's complaints process can be provided by your Faculty Senior Assistant Registrar (SAR), or the Director of Student Services (DSS).

## 8. Evidence

- 8.1. Students using this Procedure must support their complaint with robust evidence. For example, relevant email correspondence, as well as meeting notes, can help the effective investigation of your complaint.
- 8.2. Wherever possible all correspondence related to your complaint should be made via your BUE email account or through BUE dedicated systems. All correspondence to you, in relation to your complaint, will, wherever possible, be sent to your BUE email account.

## 9. Good conduct

- 9.1. Students using this procedure are expected to act professionally, reasonably and fairly towards University staff, and, in particular, to refrain from conduct which is abusive, aggressive or otherwise requires action under the Student Disciplinary Procedure (in section 12 of the Academic Regulations [here](#));

## 10. Confidentiality

- 10.1. University staff will handle complaints with an appropriate level of confidentiality, and release information only to those who need it for the purposes of investigating or responding to it.
- 10.2. Details of any complaint about another student or member of staff will be shared with them, so that

they can respond to any allegations made against them.

10.3. Anyone making a complaint is expected to maintain confidentiality and avoid publishing to third parties, either on social media or by other means, any correspondence about the complaint between the complainant and the University.

10.4. We will share the details of the complaint outcome with the relevant Faculty.

## 11. Use of data from complaints

11.1. The University may collect data on complaint outcomes at each stage of this procedure and use the data:

- a) internally for reporting, evaluation, learning and training; and
- b) externally for discussion with regulators in the higher education sector.

11.2. The data used by the University for the purposes set out in paragraphs a) and b) will be anonymized wherever possible. Personal Data will not be shared with any other third parties unless the University has a legal obligation to do so or is otherwise permitted to do so.

11.3. Faculties are required to keep full, confidential, and accurate records of all complaints received throughout the course of an academic year. These records will be submitted annually to Student Services for review, discussion and analysis at University Teaching and Learning Committee within an institutional context.

## 12. Unreasonable or inappropriate complaints

12.1. If a complaint is unreasonable or inappropriate, the investigation will be terminated. A complaint will be considered unreasonable or inappropriate if it is:

- a) obsessive, harassing, or repetitive;
- b) insistent on pursuing non-valid complaints and/or unrealistic, unreasonable outcomes;
- c) insistent on pursuing what may be valid complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- d) designed to cause disruption or annoyance; and/or
- e) demanding redress which lacks any serious purpose or value.

12.2. In such cases, the University will write to the complainant explaining why consideration of the complaint is being terminated. To challenge this decision, reasons must be submitted together with any supporting evidence in writing to the University Provost within ten working days of the date of the University's letter.

12.3. The University may consider referring you for disciplinary action (as per section 12 of the Academic Regulations [here](#)) where your complaint is vexatious.

## 13. Support for students

13.1. BUE provides a number of student support services. Students are encouraged to engage with the services and take up any appropriate support available to them. For more information, students should contact their faculty student office or the BUE Student Services ([StudentServices@bue.edu.eg](mailto:StudentServices@bue.edu.eg))

## 14. How to use this procedure

14.1. This procedure consists of three stages described below. The purpose of the procedure is to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage, and, where appropriate, to implement remedies promptly.

## 15. Stage 1: informal resolution

- 15.1. If you wish to make a complaint, in the first instance, you should always try to resolve issues early and informally. This could be by either speaking to the member of staff involved, the module leader, the programme leader, a Teaching Assistant or your personal tutor. If that does not resolve the complaint, or you would rather not speak directly to the staff involved, you can contact your faculty SAR or the Vice Dean Teaching, Learning (VDTL) or the Dean. If you are not sure who is the best person to speak to about a complaint, please contact the Student Services (StudentServices@bue.edu.eg).
- 15.2. The University encourages students to meet their SAR or the VDTL in person wherever possible, as we believe that a face-to-face discussion may help to resolve a problem quicker. We also offer telephone and online meetings. If there is a reason that you cannot meet with a SAR or the VDTL to discuss your complaint, for example due to serious illness or a disability, this must be communicated as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be agreed.
- 15.3. You can make an appointment with a Faculty SAR or the VDTL at the front desk of the Student Services or through your Faculty Student Office and should do so as soon as possible and not later than the time limits described in para 4.1 above.
- 15.4. If you cannot attend an appointment with the SAR or the VDTL, you need to give advanced notice. If you do not attend a scheduled meeting, without a reasonable explanation, we reserve the right not to schedule any further appointments for you and your complaint will be closed. The SAR or the VDTL shall decide in his/her discretion what constitutes “reasonable explanation”.
- 15.5. If you fail to respond to written correspondence in relation to your complaint (e.g. a request to meet or a request for further information) within a space of 10 working days, without a reasonable explanation, your complaint will normally be closed. Staff handling the complaint shall decide at his/her discretion what constitutes a “reasonable explanation”.
- 15.6. The University will normally provide you with a response in relation to Stage 1 within 20 working days from receipt of the complaint. We reserve the right to extend the period at our discretion.
- 15.7. Key questions for you to address in your Stage 1 complaint include:
- What specifically is your concern about, and which area(s) of the University is/are involved?
  - What outcome is hoped for and how it can be achieved?
  - Can the complaint be resolved on the spot by providing an apology/explanation/alternative solution?
  - What assistance or support is needed in taking this forward?
- 15.8. Where it is clear that a concern will need to be considered at the formal stage rather than the informal stage, we will direct you to complete the Student Complaint Form, to give full details of the complaint and provide any relevant documents.

## 16. Closing the matter at Stage 1

- 16.1. Depending on the nature of your complaint, the outcome of Stage 1 will be communicated to you in writing. All actions taken in investigating the complaint (such as meeting with you), the decision, and details of what is communicated to you) will be recorded in a way that can be referred to by staff dealing with the complaint at a later stage. Stage 1 will come to an end when a proposed remedy is accepted by you or you have rejected the proposed remedy or you have not been successful in meeting with the relevant member of staff after making reasonable attempts to do so, or you have been directed under paragraph 18.9 to submit your complaint at Stage 2.

## 17. Stage 2: formal complaint

- 17.1. You have 14 working days from the date the Stage 1 outcome is communicated to you in which to escalate matters to a Stage 2 formal complaint. The outcome will be communicated to you via your official BUE email account.
- 17.2. If you want to submit a complaint at Stage 2, you need to complete the online Student Complaint Form. We will normally acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working days.
- 17.3. The University will move a complaint to formal Stage 2 for investigation when:
- informal resolution was attempted, but you remain dissatisfied; or
  - the issues raised are complex or a more detailed investigation is required.
- 17.4. Prior to making a Stage 2 complaint, you must have tried to resolve the issue informally. If you fail to make an attempt to resolve a complaint informally, we reserve the right to ask you to engage with the SAR or VDTL in the first instance.
- 17.5. When completing the Student Complaint Form we encourage you to state your complaint clearly, succinctly and in the order that events occurred; using numbered paragraphs where possible to identify each issue. All relevant evidence must be provided together with the Student Complaint Form. The Student Complaint form should then be submitted to The Student Services who will pass to the relevant Faculty, DSS or Director of Academic Services (DAS) accordingly.
- 17.6. On receipt of a Stage 2 Student Complaint Form, the Dean, DSS or DAS (or his / her nominee) will determine whether the complaint has been submitted under the right procedure and within the correct deadlines. Complaints related to a Faculty will be referred to the relevant Faculty Dean and complaints related to a central University service will be referred to the DSS or DAS. You will be notified in writing if your complaint is not accepted for any reason.
- 17.7. In some cases, the Dean, DSS or DAS (or nominee) may consider the complaint to be more appropriate to be dealt with under another procedure and will refer the matter for consideration under that procedure, or refer you to other sources of support.
- 17.8. If a complaint is eligible, the Dean, DSS or DAS (or nominee), will investigate your complaint, as s/he considers appropriate to establish all the facts relevant to the points made in your complaint and provide a full, objective and proportionate response. This may involve interviewing you and any witnesses, if appropriate, and reviewing any evidence presented by you and the University before issuing you with a response.

17.9. Having considered the complaint and the evidence presented in support of it, together with any findings of an investigation, the Dean, DSS or DAS (or nominee) will produce a decision letter, which will inform you of the process followed, the information gathered, the conclusions drawn and any recommendations made.

17.10. The Dean, DSS or DAS (or nominee) may forward his/her investigation report to other senior members of staff at the University for any recommendation to be agreed before it is issued to you.

## 18. Complaint hearing at Stage 2

18.1. If the nature of your complaint is complex, the Dean, DSS or DAS (or nominee) may decide to convene a complaint hearing by a panel consisting of three senior members of staff who have had no previous involvement in your complaint. A member of staff may also be present to take notes of the meeting.

18.2. Panel composition will normally be the Dean of the relevant Faculty (for Faculty related complaints) or DSS/DAS (for central University service complaints) ii) Faculty SAR (or DSS, SAR Information and Computer Science, or DAS if no faculty SAR is present) and iii) a senior member of staff with no prior involvement in the case.

18.3. You will be given notice of the hearing and invited to attend. You are entitled to submit further evidence and call witnesses provided that all information and documents are received by us by no later than 3 working days before the complaints hearing.

## 19. Companion At Meetings

19.1. You may be accompanied to any meetings by a member of the Student Services Team, a Member of the Students Union or a fellow student if you wish. They may take notes on your behalf, make representations on your behalf and ask questions, but are not entitled to answer questions on your behalf.

19.2. We may ask you to choose a different companion if, for example we think that your chosen companion may cause a conflict of interest or if their presence may prejudice the meeting. This decision is entirely at the discretion of the University.

## 20. Legal Representation

20.1. This complaints process is not a legal procedure but is instead a formal mechanism by which consideration can be given to the matters raised by you. The purpose of a complaint hearing is to enable you to explain your complaint and how you think it should be resolved, and to assist us in reaching a decision based on the available evidence and the representations you have made. Legal representation is not, therefore, permitted at meetings taking place at any stage under this procedure.

20.2. At the hearing, the members of the panel will:

- go through the complaints process with you;
- give you the opportunity to explain your complaint;
- review those parts of the evidence which support your complaint or adversely affect it; and
- provide you with an opportunity to challenge any evidence.

- 20.3. After an initial complaint hearing we may carry out further investigations and hold further complaint hearings as we consider appropriate.
- 20.4. The University will take notes of the hearing setting out who attended, a brief outline of the proceedings, and the reasons for the decisions taken.

## 21. Closing the complaint at Stage 2

- 21.1. The outcome of Stage 2 will be communicated to you in writing, normally within 20 working days from receipt of the complaint, outlining the reasons for each decision and, where relevant, the right to a review at Stage 3. We reserve the right to extend the period at our discretion.
- 21.2. Where you have grounds to escalate the matter to Stage 3, you should do so within 14 days of communication of the outcome of Stage 2.

The grounds on which you may refer the matter to Stage 3 are set out in paragraph 21.2.

- 21.3. If you do not take the complaint to Stage 3 within the time limit for doing so, the Dean, DSS or DAS (or nominee) will close the matter without further notice to you.

## 22. Stage 3: complaint Review

- 22.1. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 on the grounds stated below, you have two weeks to request a Stage 3 Review by submitting a request to the University Provost and stating "Stage 3 Review Request", together with your full name and student number in the subject section of your email.
- 22.2. Requests for a complaint Review will be granted on limited grounds, namely:
  - i) there was a procedural irregularity at the formal stage (e.g. there was a material failure by the University to follow the complaints procedure at Stage 2, clear reasons were not provided for the decision at Stage 2, or there is factual evidence of bias);
  - ii) new material evidence which the student was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process;
- 22.3. You should set out your concerns clearly and provide evidence in support (where possible). You must explain how the response received at Stage 2 falls within one or more of the grounds set out above in paragraph 21.2 and outline what we should do to resolve the complaint.
- 22.4. A senior member of the University with no prior involvement in the matter, usually the University Provost, will make a decision as to whether your request for a Review at Stage 3 is based on the permitted grounds and eligible to be considered at Stage 3.
- 22.5. If the University believes that one or more of the grounds for Review apply to your case, the University Provost will review all information / papers collated for the complaint, together with any new evidence presented, on paper but may contact you and anyone previously involved in the complaint as well as any new witnesses.
- 22.6. The purpose of conducting a complaint Review is to consider whether the ground(s) relied on by you have merit. Stage 3 will not usually involve a fresh, full investigation. A complaint must have been considered at formal Stage 2 before it can be escalated to Stage 3 Review.

The outcome of Review will be that the University Provost either upholds the outcome made at the formal stage or makes a different finding which overturns the outcome. The decision taken by the Reviewer at the Review stage is final. The final decision of the Stage 3 Review will be communicated to you in writing, with reasons.