



# Complaints Procedure

**Approving Body:** University Executive

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# Complaints Procedure

**PLEASE NOTE**

Students have recourse to a specific Complaints Policy. All such complaints should be lodged in accordance with this Policy, which is outlined at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/handbook/complaints/>

## 1. Introduction

Aberystwyth University (AU) is committed to providing a high-quality service and experience to staff, students and members of the public.

However, there may be rare occasions where a mistake occurs and / or where individuals feel that their expectations have not been met by AU. In such circumstances, individuals are encouraged to submit feedback to AU and are equally entitled to lodge a complaint. We need to know when things go wrong in order to put things right and, where appropriate, make improvements for the future.

These Procedures outline how individuals can submit a complaint, and how AU in turn will respond.

## 2. Contents

Who can complain?	Page 2
Which complaints can / cannot be considered?	Page 3/4
Procedure for dealing with complaints from the General Public	Page 4
External consideration of complaints	Page 7

### 3. Who can complain?

Members of staff, students, and the public are encouraged to submit feedback to AU and are entitled submit a complaint in line with the relevant complaints process. However, the process to be followed depends on any existing relationship between the University and that individual.

Complaints relating to fundraising, the Department of Information Services and suspected breaches of the Welsh language Standards are dealt with under specific complaints process listed in Appendix 1.

#### *Staff<sup>1</sup>*

As employees of the University, staff have recourse to a number of specific policies and procedures, and it may be more appropriate to consider any complaint in accordance with those processes.

These policies and procedures include:

- Staff Disciplinary Procedure (Ordinance 32)
- Staff Grievance Procedure (Ordinance 33)
- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures relating to the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Pro Vice-Chancellors (Ordinance 31)
- Whistleblowing (Public Interest Disclosure)
- Dignity & Respect at Work Policy
- Procedure for the Investigation of Misconduct in Research

Copies of these policies and procedures can be found at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/corporate-information/policies/>.

#### *Complaints about staff*

The nature of the complaint relating to staff, either from another member of staff, a student or a member of the public, will determine the policy and procedure that will apply. Examples of these can include, but are not limited to Staff Grievance Procedure, Dignity & Respect at Work Policy and Disciplinary Procedure. In all such cases the complaint should be directed to the Director of Human Resources.

#### *Registered Students*

Students have recourse to a specific Complaints Policy. All such complaints should be lodged in accordance with this Policy, which is outlined at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/handbook/complaints/>.

Students, who have concerns that they have been treated unfavourably or be subjected to bullying or harassment because of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex or sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, religion or belief (or no religion or belief), maternity/pregnancy, gender identity or status, age, trade union membership, disability, offending background or any other protected characteristic, can raise concerns according to the Code on Dignity and Respect at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/student-dignity-respect/>

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<sup>1</sup> This also applies to students who are employed by AU, where the complaint is directly related to that employment.

Complaints submitted by the parents or guardians on behalf of an Aberystwyth University students will be treated as General Complaints ( see below) unless they are received with the explicit written permission of the student. If so, they will be treated under the Students complaints process as noted above. Complaints relating to other matters should be lodged in accordance with the procedure outlined from page 7.

### *Applicants*

Applicants wishing to make a formal complaint in regard to an aspect of the undergraduate or postgraduate admissions service should follow the guidance available at:  
<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/study-with-us/admissions/admit-policies/complaints/>

Complaints regarding other matters shall be dealt with in accordance with complaints submitted by the General Public.

### *General Public*

*Which complaints can / cannot be considered?*

#### *Complaints which can be considered*

Unless there is another, more appropriate Complaints Procedure to which a Complainant has recourse, this Procedure can normally deal with most types of complaints, including those in relation to:

- suspicions of unlawful and unethical employment practices, including in supply chains; and
- a perceived failure to follow the University's own processes, including in relation to decision-making.

#### *Complaints which cannot normally be considered*

There are occasions when it would not be appropriate for the University to consider a complaint in accordance with this Procedure. Such occasions include where:

- there is another, more appropriate Procedure to which a Complainant has recourse;
- the complaint is in relation to the Students' Union, which as an independent organisation has its own, separate Complaints Procedure available at <https://www.abersu.co.uk/aboutaber/abersustaff/complaintsform/>
- the complaint is submitted anonymously, and the University cannot therefore issue a response to the Complainant (although the University may choose to investigate whether there are any grounds for the complaint);
- the Complainant disagrees with a decision taken by a democratic body within the University in accordance with the institution's processes; and
- a complaint is not made with 30 University working days of an issue arising or becoming known to the Complainant.

#### 4. Procedure for dealing with complaints from the public

##### *Stage 1 Resolution*

If after considering the points above, you believe you have a complaint that falls within the remit of this procedure, every effort should be made to resolve a complaint with the University department(s) concerned and the matter discussed with the member of staff involved in the issue. If the matter remains unresolved, the complaint should be submitted in writing to the Head of Department. If the complaint relates to the Head of Department, then it will be referred to the relevant line manager for their consideration.

The Head of Department/line manager should normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days. The matter will be investigated, and following consideration of the complaint, the Head of Department or relevant line manager, will write to you normally within 10 working days of receiving the complaint informing you of the findings and of any steps taken to resolve the matter, if appropriate.

##### *Stage 2 Procedure*

Should it be necessary to escalate the matter to a Stage 2 - Procedure, this should be undertaken within 10 University working days of the conclusion of Stage 1.

Complaints to be considered via this Stage 2 Procedure should be submitted via:

- the online complaints form (available at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/about-us/complaints/>);
- e-mail to [vice-chancellor@aber.ac.uk](mailto:vice-chancellor@aber.ac.uk); or
- post to the Vice-Chancellor's Office, Aberystwyth University, Visualisation Centre, Penglais, Aberystwyth, SY23 3BF.

Complaints may be submitted in either Welsh or English, and you will receive a response in your chosen language. Your language choice will not lead to any delay in receiving a response.

All complaints received shall be subjected to a preliminary review by the Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office to ensure that it is appropriate for the complaint to be considered via this Stage 2 Procedure. Where it would be appropriate to consider the complaint under another existing procedure, or if the complaint has not yet gone through a Stage 1 process, the Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office shall re-direct the complaint and advise the Complainant accordingly, enclosing a copy of the applicable procedure for information.

##### *Consideration of the Stage 2 complaint*

Following review, a member of the University Executive shall normally be charged with considering and responding to a complaint forwarded for their consideration, in consultation

with the department(s) involved. As part of this process the complainant may be invited to attend a meeting with the member of the University Executive.

A response shall normally be issued by the member of the University Executive to the Complainant within 10 University working days.

Sometimes, complaints can be complex and require a response to be coordinated across many departments. In such cases, and where additional time is required to issue a substantive response, the Complainant will be advised accordingly and provided with an indication of the amount of time required before issuing a substantive response.

### *Appeal*

Where a Complainant is not content with the substantive response received following the previous stage of the process, they may appeal and request that the response is reviewed at a higher level within the University.

In such circumstances, the Complainant should formally request a review of the response received via:

- e-mail to [vice-chancellor@aber.ac.uk](mailto:vice-chancellor@aber.ac.uk); or
- post to the Vice-Chancellor's Office, Aberystwyth University, Visualisation Centre, Penglais, Aberystwyth, SY23 3BF.

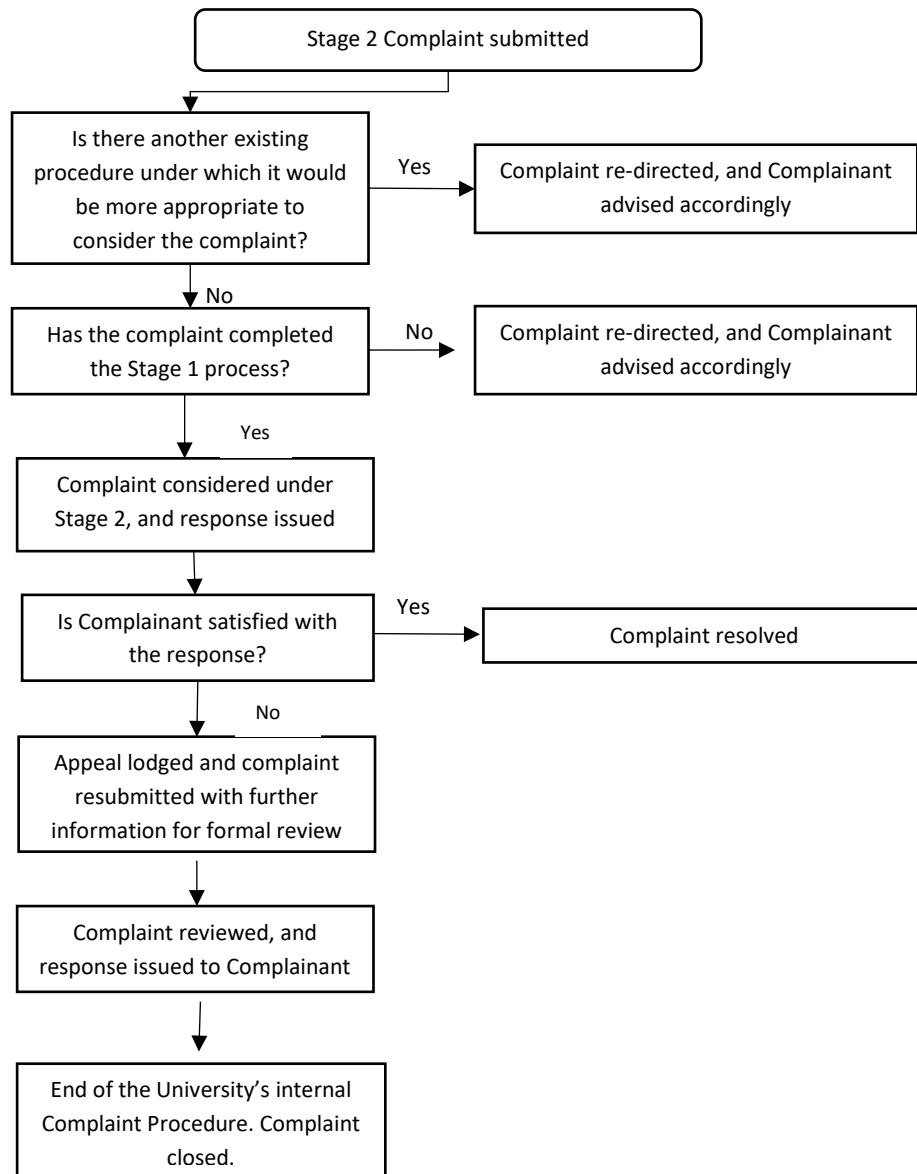
All requests for a review should be submitted within 10 University working days of the Complainant receiving the substantive response and should detail the reasons/grounds for appeal. Grounds for appeal can include:

- the submission of new evidence, not available at the time of the original complaint
- evidence of defects or irregularities in the Procedure followed when reaching the original outcome, which are of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the same decision would have been reached had they not occurred.

The individual or body undertaking a review will not have been involved in issuing the previous response to the Stage 2 complaint, and would typically be one of the following, depending on who issued the previous response and the nature of the complaint: Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Chair or Deputy Chair of the Council, a member of the University Council or any of its sub-committees.

A review shall be conducted, and a further response normally issued to the Complainant within 10 University working days. The outcome of this review shall be final, with all stages within this Formal Procedure exhausted.

The chart and text below sets out the key stages which will be followed when considering and responding to a Stage 2 complaint.



## External consideration of complaints

It may be possible for complaints considered by the University in accordance with the Formal Procedure outlined in this document to be escalated to an external individual or organisation.

### *Commission for Tertiary Education and Research Medr*

Medr can consider some complaints against the University once the institution's own internal processes have been exhausted. Further information on the types of complaints which can be considered by Medr can be found at [Home - Medr](#)

### *The Visitor*

AU's governing documents, specifically Ordinance 29, include provision for complaints made by members of the University's academic staff. The Visitor's jurisdiction is limited to adjudicating on petitions from such members of staff on the interpretation and application of the institution's Charter, Statutes, Ordinances, Regulations and Policies, provided the point at issue is not an employment dispute.

The Visitor is normally concerned with such matters as procedural propriety, fairness, prejudice and irregularity and he or she will only intervene if he or she considers that there is a risk of impropriety by the University either in terms of failing to observe its own rules and/ or procedures, or although having followed proper procedures, it has reached a decision that no reasonable body could have arrived at.

The Visitor does not have jurisdiction to consider any complaints made by members of non-academic staff.

The Visitor does not have jurisdiction to consider any complaints made by students or former students or complaints in respect of an application for admission to the University.

Further information on submitting a petition to the University's Visitor can be found within the applicable Ordinance (available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/corporate-information/governance/about-governance/#ordinances>).

## Appendix 1

Complaints with respect to fundraising undertaken by the University should be submitted to the Development and Alumni Relations Office in accordance with that department's Fundraising Complaints Procedure, which is available at:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/development/about/complaints-procedure/>.

Complaints with respect to the Information Services department should be submitted in accordance with that department's Complaints Procedure, which is available at:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/regulations/complaints/>.

Suspensions that Aberystwyth University has breached the terms of its Welsh Language Standards should be submitted via the form available at: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/cgg/bilingual-policy/complaints-procedure/>.