

Student Complaints Procedure

A. Introduction

1. Corndel College London (CCL) is committed to providing a high-quality experience for our students. However, we acknowledge that there may be circumstances when a student is dissatisfied with an aspect of their experience with us. When this happens, we want an opportunity to put things right. We urge students to inform us as soon as there is a matter of concern to allow us to respond swiftly to find a resolution.

2. The Student Complaints Procedure aligns with the following requirements and expectations:
 - i. The OfS for Students Conditions of Registration, in particular Conditions B and C.
 - ii. Higher Education: consumer law advice for providers published by the Consumer and Markets Authority (CMA).
 - iii. The Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals published by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).
 - iv. The revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.
 - v. Corndel College London's contractual relationship with its students including students undertaking degree apprenticeship programmes.

3. This procedure also aligns with and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:
 - [Kingson University Academic Regulations for Degree Apprenticeship \(AR10\)](#)
 - [Kingson University Undergraduate Academic Regulations \(AR2\)](#)

B. Definitions, Scope and General Principles

• Definition

4. A complaint is “an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a provider’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider.”¹

5. A complaint under this procedure is usually about (but not limited to):
 - i. an expression of dissatisfaction with an aspect of the programme, such as a specific concern about the provision of a programme or a related academic service, which is within CCL’s control.
 - ii. CCL’s failure to meet obligations, including those outlined in programme handbooks, Student Terms and Conditions, the Student Protection Plan (including CCL’s failure to follow published regulations, procedures and/or policies).
 - iii. an action or lack of action taken by CCL and/or taken by staff members undertaking activities on behalf of CCL.

¹ [Good Practice Framework - OIAHE](#)

- iv. the standard of a service provided by CCL or on our behalf by a third party.
- v. misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional materials and other information provided by CCL.
- vi. concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration.
- vii. poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by CCL or on CCL's behalf by a third party.

- **Scope**

- 6. Current students studying at CCL on programmes that will lead to a Higher Education award can use this procedure to raise a complaint.
- 7. Former CCL students who have studied on a programme that led to a Higher Education award and meet the conditions in **paragraph 19** below can use this procedure to complain about CCL's action or inaction during the student's programme.
- 8. Complaints should be raised informally by students and former students at Stage 1 of the procedures set out in **Section C** below before progressing to Stage 2 and 3 of this Procedure.
- 9. Where multiple students are affected by an issue and wish to submit a group complaint, they must file a group complaint by appointing one or two representatives. All group members must sign a statement confirming that the complaint reflects the views of all the students mentioned in the complaint.
- 10. This Student Complaints Procedure does not cover disputes relating to the matters set out below:
 - i. complaints or appeals about the admissions process. Please refer to CCL's Admissions Policy for more information.
 - ii. allegations about student behaviour. Please refer to CCL's Student Conduct Policy for more information.
 - iii. allegations about academic integrity and possible academic misconduct. Please refer to CCL's Academic Integrity Policy for more information.
 - iv. disputes about students' academic performance and/or matters relating to academic judgement, assessment boards and student assessment. Please refer to CCL's Academic Appeals Procedure for more information.
- 11. Some matters may include concerns relating to this Complaints Procedure and matters which relate to other CCL policies and/or procedures. Where this is the case, CCL will assess the circumstances individually. Students will be informed about which issues fall under which procedure and directed accordingly. Students will also be advised on the impact of following multiple procedures simultaneously, including the possible need to pause one procedure until another procedure is complete. If there is substantial overlap, CCL may combine the investigations. For example, if a complaint includes issues that could be addressed by the Academic Appeals Procedure, a joint investigation might be

conducted. In such cases, students will be informed about which policy or procedure will be used to reach the final outcome.

12. Degree Apprenticeships have an end-point assessment (EPA) which may be delivered by an independent end-point assessment organisation. Complaints relating to a student's EPA assessment process and/or outcome delivered by an independent organisation (where such is not CCL) should be referred to the relevant End Point Assessment Organisation's complaint process.

13. This procedure does not deal with complaints about employment issues (for example, where an apprentice may wish to make a formal complaint about their employer or vice versa). In this circumstance, the apprentice and/or their employer should follow the employer's internal Human Resources policies and procedures in line with the terms of the employment contract.

- **General Principles**

14. CCL is committed to operating this Procedure with fairness and transparency. The following principles apply to the management of complaints:

- i. CCL seeks to resolve complaints in a timely manner and informally at a local level where possible.
- ii. Decisions will be reasonable and evidence-based, and the reasons for decisions will be clearly explained.
- iii. Students will be supported by CCL and not treated less favourably or be disadvantaged if they make a complaint, whether or not the complaint is upheld. However, CCL reserves the right to take disciplinary action against a student if they make a complaint that is wholly unreasonable, vexatious, frivolous, abusive or malicious in nature.
- iv. A staff member referred to in a complaint will not be treated less favourably by CCL than if the complaint had not been brought. If, however, a complaint against a member of staff is upheld, that staff member may be asked to undertake additional training, or be provided with support, or may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.
- v. Students will be notified as soon as possible if the remedy they are seeking is beyond what CCL can reasonably provide.
- vi. Complaints will be handled with the appropriate level of confidentiality. Please refer to **Section E** for further information.

- **Standard of Proof**

15. When determining whether or not something occurred, the 'standard of proof' used by CCL will be the 'balance of probabilities'. This means that based on the evidence available it is more likely than not that something happened.

- **Representation**

16. A student attending a meeting during the consideration of a complaint by CCL has the right to be accompanied by a current CCL student or current CCL staff member at any stage of the process.
17. Neither the student nor CCL would normally be represented by a legal practitioner at meetings held under this Procedure. A student may choose to pursue legal action on issues relating to a complaint. However, CCL reserves the right to request that legal proceedings be suspended where our internal procedures have not been completed. Students should also refer to guidance of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator regarding this.
- **Timeframe for bringing a complaint**
18. Timeframes for making a complaint, and for escalating the matter through the Stages of this Procedure are set out under each Stage below.
19. Former students can use this procedure to complain about matters which arose or were concluded within the final three-months of their studies as a registered CCL student and no later than three-months of their last registered date with us. Former students must ensure that matters they wish to complain about are raised within the permitted timescale and are about matters relating to their studies or enrolment as a student at CCL.
20. Where a timeframe in this Procedure is not met, some flexibility may be provided in exceptional circumstances, where the student or former student is able to demonstrate that they had a good reason supported by evidence for the delay. CCL will determine what constitutes a 'good reason' in these circumstances. For example, a serious illness or operation or a medical emergency may be deemed a 'good reason' by us. Examples such as, being on holiday, having exams or assessments, issues with employment workload management and/or forgetting to make a complaint within the timeframe etc., would not be considered 'good reasons' for not submitting a complaint on time.

C. Complaints Procedure

21. CCL has a three-stage internal process which consists of the following:
- Stage 1: Informal Resolution
 - Stage 2: Formal Investigation
 - Stage 3: Complaint Review
- **Stage 1: Informal Resolution**
22. This stage provides an opportunity to swiftly resolve a concern. Students should email ace@corndel.com with their concern by:
- i. providing a brief summary of their complaint; and
 - ii. stating the resolution the student is seeking.

23. A 'Stage 1: Informal Resolution' complaint should be raised within three months of the incident about which the student is complaining or, if a series of events has given rise to a complaint, within three months of the final event in the series.
24. CCL will typically resolve the matter no later than **15 CCL Working days** from the date a student submitted their Stage 1 complaint. Students will be notified of the outcome in writing, and provided with the reason(s) for any decision.
25. Students will be notified if it is likely to take more than **15 CCL working days** from the date a student submits their Stage 1 complaint to resolve the matter.
- **Stage 2: Formal Investigation**
26. A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the response to their complaint at Stage 1: Informal Resolution, may complain at Stage 2: Formal Investigation by submitting a completed Stage 2 Complaint Form within **10 CCL working days** of the date of the Stage 1: Informal Resolution outcome.
27. If a student considers their complaint is too serious to be considered under Stage 1: Informal Resolution, they may request that it proceeds directly to Stage 2: Formal Investigation.
28. A request for a complaint to proceed directly to Stage 2: Formal Investigation must be raised within three months of the incident about which the student is complaining or, if a series of events has given rise to a complaint, within three months of the final event in the series.
29. CCL reserves the right to ask that the student's complaint be considered at Stage 1: Informal Resolution and where this happens, will provide the student with the reasons for this decision.
30. The student should provide the following information in the Stage 2: Formal Investigation complaint form:
 - i. Details of the matter that they are complaining about;
 - ii. Evidence in support of their complaint; and
 - iii. The outcome and resolution that they are seeking.
31. On receipt of the Stage 2: Formal Investigation complaint, CCL will determine whether the matter falls under the scope of the Student Complaints Procedure and whether the deadline for submitting the complaint has been met.
32. CCL will normally acknowledge receipt of a Stage 2: Formal Investigation complaint and confirm whether it can be considered under the procedure within **5 CCL working days** of receipt of the complaint.

33. A Stage 2: Formal Investigation will normally be completed within **25 CCL working days** but where the case is complex, it may take longer. Where a complaint is likely to take longer to investigate, the student will be notified of the expected timeframe.
34. The Academic Registrar will appoint a Stage 2 Investigator to consider the complaint. The Stage 2 Investigator may seek further documentary evidence and information in writing and/or meet with the student submitting the complaint, relevant members of staff and other students.
35. Following completion of the investigation, the Stage 2 Investigator will determine whether the student's complaint is upheld. Where the complaint is upheld, the Investigator will recommend a remedy.
36. The student will be informed in writing of the outcome of the Stage 2: Formal Investigation and the reasons for the decision.
- **Stage 3: Complaint Review**
37. A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2: Formal Investigation may request a review of the outcome by submitting a Stage 3: Complaint Review form within **10 CCL working days** from the outcome of Stage 2: Formal Investigation.
38. A student may only submit a Stage 3: Complaint Review on one or more of the following grounds:
- i. there is material procedural irregularity at Stage 2: Formal Investigation, meaning that the relevant procedures were not followed during the process and this has had a significant impact on the outcome;
 - ii. there is new evidence that could have made a difference to the outcome, and the student has good reasons for not making the evidence available earlier;
 - iii. clear reasons about why the complaint was not upheld at Stage 2 were not given by CCL;
 - iv. the outcome of Stage 2: Formal Investigation is unreasonable given the facts of the case.
39. The student should provide the following information in the **Stage 3: Complaint Review Form**:
- i. the ground(s) (from those in **paragraph 38** above) for which the student is requesting a review.
 - ii. details of why the student considers a review is required.
 - iii. where applicable, any new evidence to support the request for a review with an explanation of why the student could not provide the evidence earlier.
 - iv. the resolution that the student is seeking.
40. The Stage 3: Complaint Review will consider whether the outcome of the Stage 2: Formal Investigation was reasonable based on the evidence. The complaint will not normally be reinvestigated. Where applicable, the Stage 3: Complaint Review will consider any new

evidence provided by the student where it is determined that there is a good reason as to why the evidence was not provided earlier.

41. The Academic Registrar will nominate a Complaint Reviewer to consider the Stage 3: Complaint Review request. The Reviewer may hold further discussions with relevant members of CCL staff and students during the Stage 3: Complaint Review.
42. CCL will normally complete a Stage 3: Complaint Review within **10 CCL working days**. Where Stage 3 is likely to take longer to complete, the student will be notified of the expected timeframe.
43. Students will be notified of the outcome of the Stage 3: Complaint Review in writing and provided with the reason(s) for any decision.

D. External Review: Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

44. If, having completed the three stages, a student is dissatisfied with the final decision on their case, they may be able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). Information and eligibility rules are available at www.oiahe.org.uk
45. At the completion of the processes relating to a student complaint, a letter informing a student that procedures are complete will be issued by CCL. If a student requests a Completion of Procedures Letter from us following completion of Stage 1: Informal Review, Stage 2: Formal Investigation or prior to the completion of Stage 3: Complaint Review, CCL will provide a letter confirming that the student has not yet completed the Student Complaint process.
46. Students who wish to make a complaint to the OIA, should submit their claim to the OIA within 12 months of the date of their Completion of Procedures Letter.

E. Confidentiality and Data Protection

47. The information submitted by a student to us in support of a student's complaint will be held in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Data Protection legislation and our Student Privacy Notice. We will make sure that matters overseen by us as part of processing the complaint are carried out with the appropriate level of confidentiality. Information will only be made available to those who need it for the purposes of managing and responding to the student's complaint.
48. We may need to disclose to other relevant staff and external organisations as part of the management of a student's complaint. Where there are elements which are particularly sensitive and the student has concerns about their confidentiality, the student can raise this with the Academic Registrar who will discuss how disclosure can be minimised, if possible and appropriate to do so.
49. Where we need to obtain information from a third party as part of processing a student's case, we will only give the third party as much detail about the student and their situation as is necessary to obtain the evidence required. Staff will ensure that discussions held

about the student’s complaint are undertaken with the correct level of confidentiality, unless, where doing so could put others at risk.

50. At all stages of the complaints procedure a student should avoid disclosing unnecessary personal information (e.g. medical conditions etc.) unless where it is relevant to the issues raised. A student must also avoid disclosing personal data of another person(s) in the complaint(s) unless where the student has been given written permission by the person(s) to do so.

E. Reporting and Monitoring

50. The Academic Board and the Board of Governors will receive an annual summary report of the number of complaints brought by students and an overview of decisions reached. The reports will show trends and make recommendations for improvements where necessary. There will be no reference to individual cases. A confidential record, as required by the general data protection requirements, will be kept separately for individual cases.

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