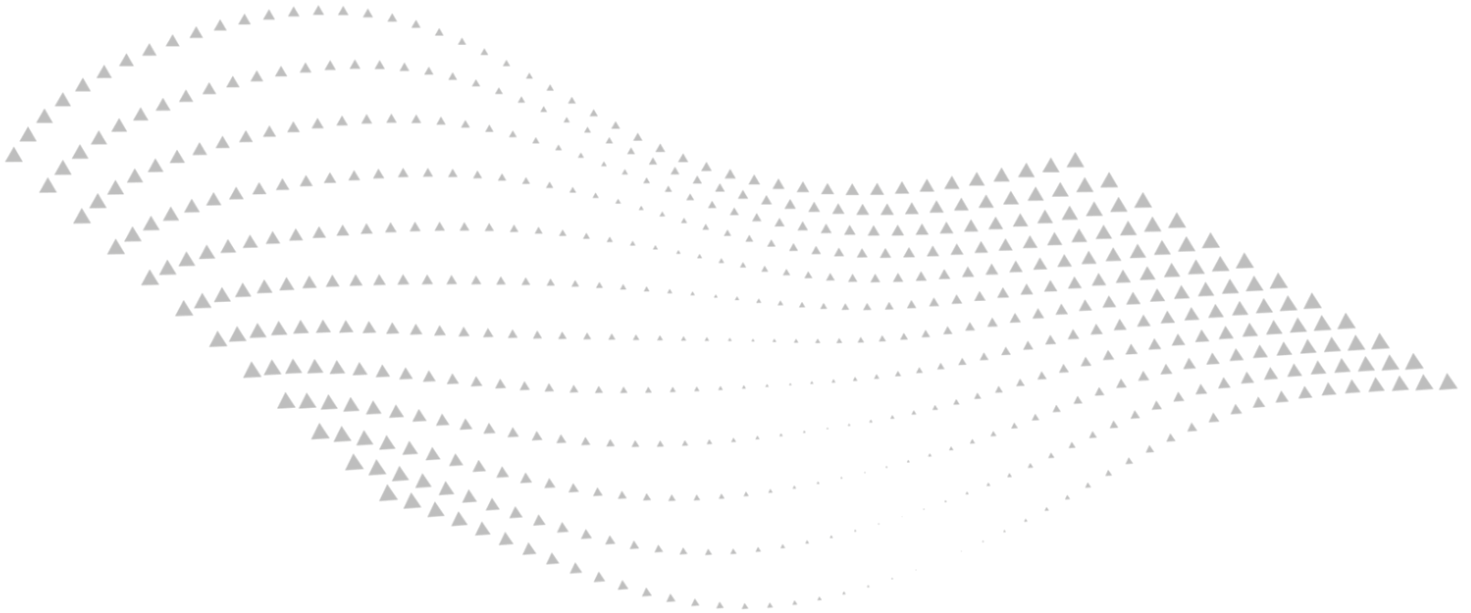


Student Complaints Procedure



Last approved: September 2023

Approved by: Quality Assurance and Compliance Committee

Next review due: September 2027

1 Introduction

Your views are important to us. If you have a concern about an aspect of your student experience at BIMM University, you can let us know. Submitting a complaint is one option but other options are available - we encourage you to consider all options.

You could try:

- Giving feedback – for example to relevant staff at the university, via Student Representation Forums (SRF) or university surveys.
- Speaking to a member of staff on site (for example, the student wellbeing team or academic administration team).
- Raising your concern informally with the team involved.

2 Making a complaint

2.1 What can be considered as a complaint?

Our student complaints procedure may be able to address your concerns.

It covers the following areas:

- The delivery of teaching and supervision.
- A non-academic University service, such as a front desk.
- Information in a handbook or advertising or promotional material.
- Facilities, such as buildings on campus.
- The conduct of a member of University staff.

Important: You can only use this procedure for something that happened to you as a current student.

If your concern relates to the outcome of an assessment, or the outcome of a disciplinary or other procedure (including Fitness to Study), then this would be classed as an appeal. Your complaint may be rejected, and we may ask you to resubmit your complaint as an appeal if it falls within this category – details on the appeals procedure can be found [here](#).

2.2 Eligibility

You can follow the student complaints procedure if you're a current registered student studying at BIMM University. You can also use it if you're a recent graduate, or have recently withdrawn, provided you meet the time limits outlined in [section 2.4](#).

Third parties (including Parents) cannot directly raise a complaint on behalf of a student - however students may nominate a third party to correspond with the University once a complaint has been raised. This option will be available on the [complaints form](#). In all cases, you're expected to raise your complaint within our time limits.

2.3 What you can't complain about

We will not pursue complaints:

- Regarding the behaviour of another student - this is covered under our [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#).
- Relating to the application or Admissions process - these are covered under ‘Applicant appeals and complaints’ [here](#).

2.4 Time limits

The time limits for each element of the procedure are provided here for reference – please refer back to these when submitting your complaint.

Section of procedure	Type	Complaint to be raised	We seek to resolve within
4.1	Stage 1 - Informal (Early Resolution) complaints.	As soon as possible, or within 28 days of the incident.	28 days.
4.2	Stage 2 – Formal (Investigation) complaints.	Within 90 days of the informal resolution, or the date of the incident if not raised informally.	28 days.
4.3	Stage 3 – Review.	Within 21 days of your formal (stage 2) outcome.	21 days.
5	Independent Review by the OIA	Within one year of receiving your completion of procedures letter.	N/A

We may exceptionally consider complaints outside of our time limits, at the discretion of the University. If you submit a complaint outside of our time limits, you must explain why it is late, preferably with evidence, and if we don’t consider it exceptional, we will issue you with a letter explaining that you’re out of time. This is called a Completion of Procedures letter. You can use this to contact the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#) (see section 4).

We may sometimes take longer to look into your complaint, which means we can’t get back to you within the response times indicated above. If this happens, we’ll send you an email letting you know.

3 Principles of the Complaints Procedure

- 3.1 As a general principle, the University expects that Complaints will be dealt with informally in the first instance. Many Complaints can be dealt with quickly and effectively in this manner without the need to follow formal procedures, and the Complaints Procedure has been designed with this in mind.
- 3.2 The University expects that you will not engage in frivolous, vexatious or malicious complaints. This could include:
- complaints which are harassing, repetitive or pursued in an unreasonable manner.
 - insistence on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes.
 - complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
 - demands for redress which lack any purpose or value.
- 3.3 In such cases, the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement reserves the right to terminate consideration of the complaint. You will be given an explanation, in writing, of why your complaint has been terminated and details of any further right to complain.

Furthermore, where a complaint is found to have been brought with frivolous, vexatious or malicious intent, this may itself prove grounds for disciplinary action against you under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#).

- 3.4 No student will be disadvantaged by having raised a Complaint.
- 3.5 Your Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained in the handling of Complaints, except where disclosure is necessary to progress the Complaint. It is the University's expectation that the confidentiality of any documentation generated by a Complaint will be respected by all parties.
- 3.6 If you wish for the University to communicate with a representative throughout the process, you must provide written permission to do so – third parties (even parents) cannot raise a complaint on your behalf without this permission, which can be given via the [complaint form](#).
- 3.7 The Complaints Procedure is an internal process, and that the University will not communicate or meet with legal representatives as part of proceedings.
- 3.8 All individuals interacting with this procedure are expected to conduct themselves in a courteous, respectful manner that reflects dignity and respect.

4 Making a complaint

4.1 How to submit your complaint

If you have a concern, the first thing to do is tell us. Our complaints process comprises three stages:

- Level 1 – informal (early resolution).
- Level 2 – formal (investigation).
- Level 3 – review.

We aim to resolve all complaints as soon as possible, typically at the informal stage. The level of complaint does not reflect the severity of a complaint (e.g., we would still expect you to aim to resolve even major complaints informally in the first instance).

4.2 [Level 1 – Informal \(Early resolution\)](#)

To submit your initial complaint, get in touch with the relevant department or team. For example, if the complaint is about your course, contact your Course Leader or Head of School in the first instance. If you are unsure, please speak to a member of staff on campus, or contact cap@bimm.co.uk for assistance.

You can raise your complaint verbally, or via email to the team or person you would like to complain about. When raising your complaint, state clearly what you are dissatisfied with, and how you would like your complaint to be resolved.

A Level 1 (early resolution) outcome can be verbal or written. You can request your preference.

We strongly urge you to try and resolve your concerns informally where possible. However, if for any reason you wish to engage with the alleged offending party or you do not believe this be appropriate given the nature of the complaint, you can raise your complaint at Level 2 instead.

4.3 Level 2 – Formal (Investigation)

If you have received a response to your early resolution complaint, and the outcome hasn't addressed your concerns, you can ask for it to be investigated further. This is known as a Level 2 (formal) complaint.

You should submit your formal complaint **within 90 days** of receiving your early resolution (or informal) outcome or from the date of the incident if your Complaint is not lodged informally.

If you do not submit a complaint within the above timescale, then you will need to provide good reason (for example, a health reason) for the delay on your form, otherwise we may reject your complaint.

Stages

- 1) You should submit your [complaint form](#) to cap@bimm.ac.uk along with any supporting evidence and documentation.
- 2) The QAE team receives your complaint. We will:
 - Send an auto-reply email to your form submission (so you'll know we received your form).
 - Send an email within 5 working days confirming whether we're investigating your complaint at Level 2 (We may contact you after you initially submit your complaint, if we need more details to fully understand your concerns).
- 3) The QAE team will appoint an Investigating Officer (This will normally be a senior member of the Provost's Office) to look into your complaint.
 - This will be someone who has had no involvement with the complaint prior to formal submission.
 - You may be contacted by the Investigating Officer for more information during this process.
- 4) The QAE team will write you a letter on behalf of the Investigating Officer to conclude your Level 2 complaint, taking into account the Investigating Officer's findings, within 28 days of submission. There will be 3 possible outcomes:
 - i. Your complaint is **upheld**: We find this complaint in your favour, meaning we overrule the original complaint outcome, and provide a solution.
 - ii. Your complaint is **partially upheld**: This can sometimes happen if there is not enough evidence to support your complaint, or if we agree but are not able to provide the solution you seek.
 - iii. Your complaint is **not upheld**: We do not uphold your complaint – this will normally mean that we agree with the original outcome, and do not find the complaint to be in your favour.

4.4 Level 3 – Review

If you have received an investigation response, and you continue to have concerns, you can ask for a review. A review **is not a reinvestigation** but considers complaints on three grounds. These are:

1. There were circumstances, or *new evidence has come to light*, which affects the student's complaint that could not reasonably have been made known to the investigators at the time the complaint was originally considered.
2. There was a *procedural error* in the complaints process which could have produced a different outcome would had the error not occurred.
3. There was *evidence of bias* in the complaints process which could have produced a different outcome would had the bias not occurred.

You should not request a review simply because you do not like the outcome of your complaint - but if you consider any of the above grounds to be relevant to your complaint, you can request a review using the [Internal Review Request form](#) within 21 days of resolution of your formal complaint.

Level 3 reviews are received by the QAE team, who will pass it to the Deputy Provost for investigation. Where the Deputy Provost is unavailable or has been involved in an earlier stage of your complaint, we will pass the review over to a senior member of the Provost's Office.

Before we conduct a review, the QAE team will:

1. send an autoreply email to your review submission.
2. contact you about your review request, usually within five working days, and may ask for more details.
3. confirm whether we're reviewing your complaint within five working days of submission. If it doesn't meet the grounds for review, or it's late without good reason, we'll normally send you a completion of procedures letter at this stage.
4. You will be notified of the outcome of your review, and the reason for the decision, normally within 28 days of the date your request was accepted.

This will be written notification, via what is known as a Completion of Procedures letter. This confirms that your complaint has been through all of BIMM University's complaint procedure stages.

5 **Independent Review**

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provides an independent scheme for the review of university student complaints and appeals. If you have exhausted our complaints process, and have received a Completion of Procedures letter, you may wish to contact the OIA – they have their own rules and requirements for investigating student complaints which can be found on their [website](#).

To request a review by the OIA, you will need to contact them within 12 months of the date of your Completion of Procedures letter.

Appendix 1 – Complaints Flowchart

Following stage 1 informal (early resolution), if a student wishes to make a complaint:

