

Exeter College

Complaints and Appeals Procedures

Overview

Exeter College's complaints procedure is designed to ensure that any questions and problems you may have in connection with the College are aired quickly, and resolved fairly and consistently. We therefore encourage you to use the following procedure to facilitate this. Complaints may relate to a wide range of issues, including health and safety, the physical environment, and the standards, performance, decisions or actions of one or more of our members of staff or of the College as a whole.

The procedure is designed to be accessible and transparent, and to indicate how such matters should be dealt with within Exeter College, although we reserve the right at our discretion to vary, replace or terminate the procedure at any stage. It cannot be used to deal with an anonymous complaint as it would be difficult to accurately determine the particular circumstances relating to such a complaint.

Qualifying Complaints

These Complaints and Appeals Procedures apply only to those who have been directly affected by a decision or action of the college, including Fellows, Students and Employees. Please note that complaints that relate to the areas specified below are not covered by this procedure, and are subject to alternative procedures (follow the URLs for further details). The College recognises the requirement as an employer to comply with the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and to take all steps to ensure that any complaint is handled both fairly and reasonably.

Issues of harassment, victimisation or bullying

Code of Practice on harassment:

https://www.exeter.ox.ac.uk/policies/0095_harassment-policy-and-procedure.pdf

Complaints from non-academic staff members concerning their employment

Grievance Procedure:

https://www.exeter.ox.ac.uk/policies/0050_grievance_procedure.pdf

Complaints from academic or academic-related staff members concerning their employment

Grievance Procedures:

https://www.exeter.ox.ac.uk/policies/0001_Statutes.pdf (Appendix Part VI)

Complaints from Students and Visiting Students of the College

Student complaints:

https://www.exeter.ox.ac.uk/policies/0088_Student_Complaints_Procedure.pdf

The Red Book: <https://www.exeter.ox.ac.uk/students/the-red-book-and-the-green-guide-2/>

Feedback on admissions decisions

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/decisions/complaints-and-appeals>

Fundraising complaints

<https://www.exeter.ox.ac.uk/fundraising-complaints-procedure/>

Stages of the Procedure

The complaints procedure enables you to raise and settle any complaint you may have as quickly and as near to the point of origin as possible.

Stage One: Discuss your complaint with the person most relevant to the situation

Many issues will, and indeed should, be resolved informally. This may be done by contacting the member of staff with whom you were originally in contact, or another person who is immediately concerned with the complaint that has arisen.

If an informal approach does not result in the required resolution, you should follow the procedure set out below.

Stage Two: Send a written complaint to the College

Your letter should be dated and should state that you are raising a written complaint under our complaints procedure. It should be addressed to the Head of the Department relating to the issue you are raising and copied to the College Secretary. We will respond to your complaint as soon as is reasonably practicable, and usually within four weeks. It may take longer in certain circumstances. The written complaint will typically be considered by the Department concerned and the response will be from the Head of that Department. If the College considers that the complaint merits further investigation, we will refer the complaint to Stage Three of the Procedure.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated.

Stage Three: Investigation

If a complaint is deemed by the College to merit further investigation, we will communicate this to you. The investigating officer or panel may determine its own procedure. The result of the investigation will be communicated to you in writing, including notice of any further action such as disciplinary procedures or training, within six weeks. The outcome of the investigation may be to uphold or reject the complaint in whole or in part. If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel may recommend appropriate action to resolve the complaint, and/or changes to College policy and procedure to prevent similar issues in future.

Stage Four: Appeals Procedure

Failing satisfactory resolution at Stages Two or Three, you may appeal to the Rector. You should do this in writing, within four weeks of receiving the outcome of Stages Two or Three, in writing to the College Secretary, stating your original complaint and your reasons for requesting the appeal.

The Rector may delegate consideration of the appeal to a Fellow or panel of Fellows. The Rector, Fellow or Panel may meet with you as soon as is reasonably practicable to discuss your complaint. They will attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of both you and the College. Whatever decision is taken by them will be final and will be confirmed to you in writing usually within four weeks of your request for the appeal. Any request for an appeal should be received within four weeks of receiving the result of the relevant stage of the Procedure.

This is the final stage of the College's complaints procedure.

Guidelines

Complaints should be raised as early as possible and in any event within six weeks of the action or of the communication of the decision that forms the subject of the complaint, and the above procedure followed without unreasonable delay at any stage.

When considering a suitable resolution, the person hearing the complaint will consider whether similar complaints have been raised before, how they have been resolved, and any follow-up action that was taken, and whether the matter may be dealt with under alternative procedures open to the complainant or whether the subject is addressed in other College procedures, policies or publications that are already available.

Implementation, Monitoring and Review of this Procedure

This procedure will take effect from 1st June 2020. The Governing Body of the College has overall responsibility for implementing the procedure and for monitoring any complaints raised under it. The procedure will be reviewed on a regular basis following its implementation and may be changed from time to time and without notice.

By College Order 20/048, this policy was approved by Governing Body on 17th June 2020 with immediate effect.

It was updated in January 2021 to correct links to other policies.