

## EXETER COLLEGE

### Complaints & Appeals Procedure for use by Student Members

#### Introduction

1. Exeter College fosters a sense of community in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected. It is grateful for feedback from its members and it takes seriously complaints about any aspect of its operation. Wherever possible, the College endeavours to resolve complaints promptly and locally.
2. The Complaints and Appeals Procedure outlined below is intended to be followed by current students, and former students (in the case of former students, complaints and appeals should normally be made within three months of being granted Leave to Supplicate or otherwise completion of their studies), in cases of disagreement with regard to:
  - Domestic matters (e.g. accommodation and services, including catering);
  - Financial matters (e.g. battels for fees and domestic charges, student support);
  - Academic matters (e.g. award of prizes, tutorial arrangements).
3. Typically, complaints will refer to isolated incidents and the provision of services by the College. The College has separate procedures for complaints about individuals which involve harassment (e.g. bullying, victimisation, racial or sexual harassment), detailed in the *Green Guide*. This policy does not apply to appeals against the outcome of a general disciplinary procedure or an academic disciplinary procedure: these have their own procedures set out in the *Red Book*.
4. The majority of cases will normally be settled by the complainant resolving their grievance directly with the relevant tutor, college staff member or departmental manager. Where this has been attempted and resolution is not possible, complainants can adopt an informal procedure (described in section 2 below), but a formal procedure is also available where a complainant wishes to register a written grievance (described in section 3). This procedure also details how appeals can be made. A flowchart illustrates the various stages of the process (see Appendix 1).
5. Anonymous complainants or complaints made on behalf of someone else will not be considered, unless there are compelling reasons for doing so. Such reasons should be clearly stated.
6. Disciplinary action may be taken against anyone who victimises or retaliates against a student who brings a complaint in good faith, and against any student who brings malicious or vexatious complaints.

#### Informal Procedure

7. Under the informal procedure, the student member is asked to raise their complaint with the relevant College Officers. The relevant College Officers are as follows:
  - for academic matters: the Academic Dean
  - for issues involving domestic College staff and services e.g. food and accommodation and related financial matters; security; reception services (Turl Street Porters' Lodge / Cohen Quad Front Desk); maintenance: the Domestic Bursar
  - for financial and computing matters: the Finance & Estates Bursar

- for matters pertaining to the Development and Alumni relations Office: the Director of Development & Alumni Relations
  - other behavioural and general disciplinary matters: the Sub-Rector
  - for matters pertaining to the Library: the Librarian
  - for matters pertaining to sports facilities: the Treasurer of the Amalgamated Clubs
  - for welfare matters: the Welfare Dean
  - for matters relating to provision for disabled students: the Disability Lead
  - for matters relating to the College’s implementation of “Prevent” legislation, including the application of its external speakers policy: the Prevent Lead
  - for complaints about a College Officer: the Rector, or the Sub-Rector if the complaint is about the Rector
8. In case of doubt about the appropriate College Officer the Academic Dean will advise.
9. This informal procedure is intended to encourage discussion and understanding of the problem, and in some cases, may lead to its resolution without submission of a formal complaint. The complainant can be accompanied at any stage of the informal procedure by another member of College.
10. To resolve the complaint the relevant Officer will normally arrange a meeting with the complainant and:
- seek to offer helpful and confidential advice and/or
  - try to find a remedy, or a reconciliation (in cases where relations have broken down between individuals, and the complainant does not object to this course);
  - note the withdrawal of a complaint where the complainant decides to do so;
  - record the outcome in a written response to the complainant.
11. The outcome may involve instigation of action under another College procedure.

### **Formal Procedure**

12. All formal complaints must be made in writing to the Rector, or the Sub-Rector in the Rector’s absence (or the Senior Fellow, if the Rector is absent and the complaint is about the Sub-Rector). Formal complaints about the Rector must be made in writing to the Sub-Rector. The formal procedure will normally be used only when the informal procedure has not achieved a resolution. In cases where the complainant has adopted the formal approach immediately, it will be open to the Rector to refer the complaint back to an earlier stage in this process. Formal complaints will not normally be considered three months after the occasion of the complaint or in cases when the matter is being addressed under another College procedure: someone seeking to bring a complaint outside the normal three month time period must include with their formal complaint the reasons why they were unable to bring the complaint within the normal time period.
13. If a formal complaint is taken forward, the Rector will convene an *ad hoc* committee of three members of the Governing Body, not including the student’s tutor(s), college adviser or any Fellow previously involved in the procedure, to hear the complaint. All those chosen will be bound by the requirements of confidentiality. The *ad hoc* committee will be free to invite a representative of the appropriate Common Room Committee to the hearing. The role of the representative will be to provide a student perspective to inform the committee’s decision.

14. The complainant may take advice in advance of the hearing and will be given adequate opportunity to make representations to the hearing itself, being given the chance either to make a written submission, or, if they prefer, to appear before the committee. The complainant may, in the latter case, be accompanied by a member of college. Along with the complainant and anyone accompanying them, any member of College involved in the presentation of the case against the complaint will withdraw before a decision is made. The committee's decision will be conveyed in writing to the Governing Body. The committee's written decision will include all the relevant facts. A copy of it will be given to the complainant.

### **Conference of Colleges Appeals Tribunal (CCAT)**

15. If a complaint remains unresolved after the College's internal procedures have been exhausted a student member may appeal to the Conference of Colleges' Appeals Tribunal (CCAT), of which Exeter is a member. The student should file such an appeal with the Secretariat of the Conference of Colleges within five days of the ad hoc Committee's determination. Information on the procedure for applying to the Tribunal is available from the Exeter College Academic Office. On completing consideration of a complaint, the Tribunal will issue its decision and this concludes the College procedures for the formal examination of a complaint.

### **Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

16. If a complaint remains unresolved after the CCAT procedures have been exhausted a student may ask for the complaint to be reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE; see [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk) for further information). Application forms and guidance notes are available from Exeter College's Academic Office. Please note that complaints relating to student discipline and academic matters are also within the scope of the OIAHE. However, complaints relating to matters of academic judgement (i.e. about academic performance) or admissions cannot be dealt with by the OIAHE.

### **Monitoring Arrangements**

17. The College Secretary, on behalf of the Rector, will keep a register of the number of complaints made using the formal procedure in an academic year, and a summary of numbers and outcomes will be collected submitted to the Governing Body via the Education, Research, and Welfare Committee, along with recommendations for any action required in response to the issues identified in complaints. The register will indicate how many formal complaints have been registered and what stage they reached (categorised into resolved by the Committee, recommendation to Governing Body in favour of the complainant or not in favour of the complainant, appeal CCAT).

**[Adopted by Governing Body Trinity Term 2018]**

## Appendix 1: Complaints & Appeals Flowchart

