



Lincoln College Student Complaints Policy

1. Application

- 1.1. This policy applies to undergraduate, graduate, and visiting students of the College, and to associate members of the JCR and MCR; and refers to all such people as 'students'.
- 1.2. Complaints are taken seriously; students will not suffer any disadvantage as the result of making a complaint in good faith. Complaints that are vexatious or malicious are likely to be a breach of students' obligations and may result in disciplinary action being taken under the College's Non-Academic Discipline Policy, as set out in the [Student Handbook](#).

2. Rights of Complaint

- 2.1. The Student Complaints Policy exists to enable students of Lincoln College to raise a concern or make a complaint about a College matter arising while they are a student of the College. Students who have withdrawn or completed their studies may make a complaint under this policy provided that they were a student at the time the event(s) occurred and that they make the complaint within the timeframe given in 2.3.
- 2.2. Anonymous complaints or complaints made on the behalf of another individual will not be accepted, except where the College Officer receiving the complaint judges that there is a compelling reason to do so.
- 2.3. Complaints should be made contemporarily – this is usually taken to be no later than three months after the event(s) in question. Where a greater period of time has elapsed, the complaint will only be taken forward where the College Officer receiving the complaint judges that there is a compelling reason for the delay.
- 2.4. The College makes a distinction between Complaints and Appeals; there are separate procedures for dealing with each. An Appeal is a request to reconsider a formal decision made by a College Officer or Committee and is dealt with under the Appeals process (see 2.6.b).
- 2.5. Under the Student Complaints Policy, a student may make a complaint to the College about any of the following, provided that what is complained about is alleged to have had a specific individual impact upon the student making the complaint:
 - a) The College's academic provision;

- b) The College's pastoral provision;
- c) The College's domestic provision;
- d) The behaviour of Fellows or staff;
- e) Financial matters;
- f) The College's By-Laws, Statutes, or Regulations;
- g) Any other aspect of College life which is alleged to have had a specific individual impact upon the student making the complaint.

2.6. The Student Complaints Policy does not cover complaints that are dealt with under the following separate College and/or University of Oxford procedures:

- a) **Admissions.** For complaints relating to admissions, please refer to the [Undergraduate Admissions Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#) and the [Graduate Admissions Complaints Procedure](#).
- b) **Appeals regarding the decision of a College Officer, or by a student who is the subject of a decision by the Disciplinary Committee or the Academic Disciplinary Committee.** For appeals, please see Appendix B of the College's By-Laws, as set out in the [Student Handbook](#).
- c) **Bribery or Fraud.** For complaints relating to bribery or fraud, please see the [Prevention of Bribery and Fraud Policy](#).
- d) **Common Room Complaints.** For complaints relating to the Junior Common Room or the Middle Common Room, please refer to the complaints policies in the common rooms' respective constitutions.
- e) **Harassment complaints.** For complaints related to harassment, please refer to the [Policy and Procedure on Harassment](#).
- f) **University Academic Appeals.** For complaints and appeals relating to the decision of an academic body, including examination results, please refer to the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#).
- g) **University Student Complaints.** For complaints relating to University administrative and support services, including departmental facilities and central facilities, such as libraries and counselling, and for complaints relating to University academic services and support, including departmental teaching and supervision, please refer to the [University's Student Complaints Procedure](#).

2.7. In addition, the Student Complaints Policy does not cover the following:

- a) Academic judgement (i.e. decisions that can only be made by applying an academic expert opinion).
- b) Matters covered by the [Lincoln College Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#).
- c) Private disputes between students.
- d) Private disputes between students and members or employees of the College, where the dispute does not arise out of the conduct of those members or employees acting or purporting to act in their capacity as members or employees of the College.

- e) Complaints about individuals who are neither members nor employees of the College.
- f) Complaints about issues that affect a cohort or group of students, where there is no specific individual impact on a student. Such complaints should be raised via the established consultative methods, such as the Junior Relations Committee or the Academic Feedback process.

3. Summary of Procedure

3.1. The Student Complaints Policy comprises two stages:

Stage One: Informal Stage

Stage Two: Formal Stage

- 3.2. Where possible, the College endeavours to resolve complaints informally. Any student wishing to make a complaint under the Student Complaints Policy should start at Stage One and progress through the stages sequentially as necessary.
- 3.3. Where efforts have already been made to resolve matters informally without success or, where there are compelling reasons not to pursue informal resolution, Stage One of the Procedure may be waived upon agreement by the student and the College.
- 3.4. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially by all parties. Information will only be shared where it is necessary to do so in order to conduct a fair investigation.
- 3.5. The College may decline to investigate a complaint where the substance of the complaint has already been considered by the College; or is currently being considered, or has previously been considered by an external body, such as the Office of the Independent Adjudicator or a court.
- 3.6. Any student considering making a complaint under the Student Complaints Policy may seek confidential advice and guidance from their Tutor(s), College Advisor, or the Senior Tutor; and confidential guidance and support from the [Oxford Student Union](#).

4. Informal Procedure

- 4.1. To initiate Stage One of the Student Complaints Policy, the student should raise their complaint, either orally or in writing, with a suitable College Officer. Where a College Officer feels that he or she is not the appropriate person to handle the complaint, he or she will, with the student's consent, refer the complaint to an appropriate College Officer. The following College Officers should be approached in the first instance:
 - a) **The College's academic provision:** The Senior Tutor.
 - b) **The College's pastoral provision:** The Welfare Dean. If the Welfare Dean is the student's tutor, the Welfare Dean shall nominate another senior fellow, not being the student's tutor, to receive the complaint.
 - c) **The College's domestic provision:** The Domestic Operations Manager.

- d) **The behaviour of Fellows or staff:** The Senior Tutor (if Fellows or academic staff); the Bursar (if administrative or domestic staff).
- e) **Financial matters:** The Bursar.
- f) **The College's By-Laws, Statutes, or regulations:** The Bursar.
- g) **Any other aspect of College life which is alleged to have had a specific individual impact upon the student making the complaint:** One of the Officers listed above, depending on the nature of the complaint.

- 4.2. The College Officer handling the complaint will investigate and attempt to resolve the complaint. In doing so, he or she may need to seek further information from the complainant or from other involved parties, subject to the complainant's consent.
- 4.3. Where a complaint pertains to an individual member or employee of the College, or a body of the College, the College Officer handling the complaint will usually inform the individual or body that is the subject of the complaint. Where the complainant does not give consent to this, it will not usually be possible to continue the investigation.
- 4.4. The College Officer handling the complaint will inform the complainant in writing of the results of the investigation and the proposed resolution within 10 working days of the conclusion of the investigation. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the results of the investigation or the proposed resolution, he or she may proceed to Stage Two of the Student Complaints Policy within 10 working days of receiving the written outcome of their Stage One complaint.

5. Formal Procedure

- 5.1. Students must have exhausted Stage One of the Student Complaints Policy or provided a compelling reason to waive Stage One of the Procedure, before embarking on Stage Two.
- 5.2. To initiate Stage Two of the Student Complaints Policy, the student should make their complaint in writing to the Sub-Rector, with the header 'Formal Complaint'. The complaint should include the following:
 - a) A detailed account of the complaint, including the dates and times of any specific incidents, and the name of the individual or body against which the complaint is being made, where applicable.
 - b) An account of the steps taken to resolve the complaint thus far. Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage One proceedings, he or she should provide a detailed explanation as to why. Where the complainant believes there to be compelling reasons to waive Stage One of the procedures, he or she should detail these reasons clearly.
- 5.3. If the Sub-Rector is the student's Tutor, he or she shall nominate another senior Fellow, not being the complainant's tutor, to receive the complaint and conduct the Formal Procedure.

- 5.4. The Sub-Rector shall write to the student within 10 working days of receiving the complaint to confirm:
- a) Receipt of the formal complaint.
 - b) Whether the formal complaint falls within the remit of the Student Complaints Policy. Where a complaint cannot be progressed under the Student Complaints Policy, a written explanation will be provided.
 - c) The name of an investigating officer, usually another senior member of the College, without prior involvement in the case, who has been appointed to conduct an impartial investigation. Where the complainant objects to the appointment of the investigating officer and the Sub-Rector believes their grounds for objection to be reasonable, an alternate investigating officer will be appointed.
- 5.5. The investigating officer shall conduct an investigation into the complaint. This may include but is not limited to: meeting the complainant, meeting the individual(s) against whom the complaint has been made, speaking to witnesses, and reviewing evidence.
- 5.6. When meeting the investigating officer, the complainant may be accompanied by a fellow student, a member of the Oxford SU Student Advice Service, or another supporter or advisor. The student should not be accompanied by a family member, unless by prior agreement with the investigating officer, and may not be accompanied by a legal advisor.
- 5.7. The investigating officer shall seek to balance the need to investigate thoroughly with the need for complaints to be resolved in a timely manner.
- 5.8. Within 10 working days of the completion of the investigation, the investigating officer shall produce a written report setting out the details of the investigation, including details of any evidence considered, and their findings. Copies of the report shall be provided to the complainant, to any person or body against which the complaint has been made, and to the Sub-Rector.
- 5.9. The Sub-Rector shall consider the investigating officer's report and communicate any outcomes and remedies to all parties in a written complaint outcome letter. The communication shall mention the complainant's right of appeal, as set out in Appendix B of the College's By-Laws, as set out in the [Student Handbook](#).

6. Appeal

- 6.1. Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution of their complaint, he or she may appeal. For the Appeals procedure, please see Appendix B of the College's By-Laws, as set out in the [Student Handbook](#).