



**BACKSTAGE**  
ACADEMY

---

**Student Complaints**

---

## Student Complaints Procedure

---

### About this procedure

1. Backstage Academy values the views of its students highly, and therefore aims to manage complaints in a way that is sensitive to the needs of each specific case, and supportive of the Academy's goal of providing the best possible student experience. There are several informal channels through which it is hoped that most problems can be resolved. If, however, you need to pursue a complaint formally, Backstage Academy will treat it seriously and impartially, on the basis set out in this document.
2. The Student Complaints Procedures have been developed as part of Backstage Academy's commitment to ensuring the quality and standards of its programmes of study, academic services and facilities. They aim to provide a clear and impartial process for handling student complaints within a reasonable timescale and with due regard to the spirit of natural justice, and that you and staff members clearly understand:
  - the grounds on which you can make a complaint;
  - the process for making a complaints;
  - what other steps you are able to take.
3. These and procedures **do not** cover complaints relating to:
  - Applications;
  - Academic misconduct;
  - Decisions relating to progression, academic assessment and awards
4. The policy and procedures follow the guidance published by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator and aligns with both the OIS Good Practice Framework (2016) and with the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018).

### What is a complaint?

5. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about Backstage Academy's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider
6. A complaint is different from an academic appeal, which is a request for a review of a decision made by an Assessment Board charged with making decisions on student progression, assessment and award. The Student Complaints Procedure cannot change a decision made by an Assessment Board.

## What kind of complaints can be considered?

7. Grounds for complaint might include:
  - i. Dissatisfaction with standards of academic provision (for example, the basic academic framework such as course design, content and structure; resources and facilities; arrangements for assessment; and information provided to you about your course).
  - ii. Dissatisfaction with the quality of supervision and tuition.
  - iii. Failure to meet obligations (such as those set out in the Prospectus, the Partnership Agreement, and the Equality and Diversity Policy – or assurances which may have been given to you on an individual basis).
  - iv. Deficiencies in standards of service (which might include problems with support facilities or administrative services).
  - v. Harassment, bullying and victimisation.
  - vi. Other deficiencies in the quality of your learning experience.

## Exclusions

8. Complaints which:
  - Have already been investigated and dealt with;
  - Are outside of the scope of this procedure;
  - Are made without disclosing adequate grounds;
  - Have been disposed of in court or tribunal proceedings or under a settlement agreement between the complainant and Backstage Academy;
  - Are malicious, vexatious or frivolous; Are repetitive or harassing;
  - Are non-meritorious or where the requested outcomes are deemed to be unreasonable; or
  - Where students or their representatives are aggressive, offensive or abusive, or where demands are unreasonable in nature or unreasonably persistent;

will not be dealt with under this Procedure.

## Who can make a complaint?

9. These procedures are intended for use by registered or enrolled students of Backstage Academy or those who have recently left Backstage Academy subject to the timeframes outlined in the procedures below. You must submit a complain yourself, and Backstage Academy will only consider appeals form a third party in exceptional circumstances.
10. A complainant should be a registered student of Backstage Academy, although a student who has withdrawn or left Backstage Academy can invoke the procedure within 28 days of their leaving.
11. Where a complaint is raised by a number of students, it can be dealt with as one collective complaint, in the following circumstances:
  1. the case is conducted through a lead student to facilitate the progress of the complaint;
  2. ii. the names of all students who wish to bring the complaint forward are disclosed to Backstage Academy on a Group Complaint Consent Form and to confirm that

the student nominated as the lead student will act as the facilitator for the complaint during all stages of the Procedure.

### **Early resolution/Informal Procedure**

12. . Generally, complaints are most easily resolved if they are raised at the time the problem first occurs and with the person/s directly involved. Often, you will be able to resolve your complaint simply by discussing it with a relevant staff member, with your personal tutor, or an appropriate course representative.
13. Where the subject of the complaint lies outside of the remit of the staff member with whom it has been raised, you or they may seek the advice of the Director of Operations and Student Services who may determine that a different member of staff should investigate the concern raised.
14. You will receive an informal written response to your complaint within 10 working days days of receipt of the notification of the concern. The letter will also inform you how to take the complaint to the next stage of the process if you are unhappy with the outcome and should you wish to do so.

### **Formal Procedure**

15. If you are unhappy with the outcome of the early resolution stage, you may take your complaint to the Formal Stage of this procedure. You should submit your formal complaint within 10 working days of receiving the informal written response.
16. In exceptional circumstances it may be appropriate for students to progress directly to Stage 2 of the Procedure without first attempting internal resolution at Stage 1. Examples of when this might be appropriate include complex complaint issues which require a detailed investigation.
17. Your formal complaint must be submitted in writing using A Formal Complaint Form and should explain why you are unhappy with any previous response(s). The complaint will be assessed to ensure that it fits within the scope ie has been or would be better considered under another procedure and/or is within the timeframe outlined in this document.
18. Your written complaint should be sent to the Admissions and Administration Manager and include the following information:
  - i. your name and student ID number
  - ii. details of the course you are – or were –studying
  - iii. details of the main issue of concern
  - iv. an outline of any informal discussions which have already taken place to resolve the issue (including the names of any staff involved and any relevant dates) and why wyou are unhappy with the outcome of th informal stage of the procedure
    - i. a summary of the resolution/outcome you are seeking
    - ii. any other supporting information (such as, for example, copies of correspondence which you feel illustrates your complaint)
19. Your complaint will be forwarded to the Academic Director who will appoint an Investigating Officer who is unrelated to the case. You will be advised of the name and contact details of

the Investigating Officer, who will normally meet or communicate with you to discuss the matter in further details.

20. It is anticipated that the investigation of most Stage 2 complaints will be completed within 28 days of the appointment of the Investigating Officer. If there is any delay in the process (i.e. if the investigation is not completed within 28 days) the student will be informed.
21. The investigator may seek to resolve the issue:
  - on the basis of the documentation,
  - having sought further information from the members of staff involved in the original complaint
  - may, call a hearing at which you and any other persons involved may submit their respective cases. Both you and any person who is the subject of the complaint may each be accompanied at any such hearing by another member of the Backstage Academy Community.
22. At any stage in the proceedings of a formal case, and in order to try to resolve the issue, both parties should consider the role of mediation. If however, mediation proves unsuccessful, the proceedings would revert back to the stage at which mediation was attempted.
23. The Investigating office will forward report to the Academic Director who will write to you with details of the outcome and any action Backstage Academy intends to take. The written response will state whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or rejected and the reason(s) for this decision.

#### **Your right to review**

24. You have the right to request a review of the decision made by the Complaints Officer. Reviews will be considered by the Appeals and Review Board. The Appeals/Review Board will not rehear the case afresh but shall:
  - i. review the procedures followed to date
  - ii. establish whether any new evidence that is material and substantial has been presented which for valid reason was not available the Investigating Officer;
  - iii. Consider whether the outcome was reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances.
25. Notice of your request for review should be sent to the Administration and Admissions Manager within writing within **five** working days of the dispatch of the decision of the original hearing. You may submit a written statement for consideration by the Appeals Board.
26. The Appeals and Review Board will normally meet usually within **five** working days or receipt of your request for review. The manner in which the review shall be conducted, and the evidence heard will be entirely at the discretion of the Chair of the Board and in accordance with the terms of reference for the Appeals and Review Board.
27. Having reviewed the case, the Appeals and Review Board may:
  - i. confirm the original decision
  - ii. uphold your appeal and substitute its own decision for the original one.
28. You will be notified in writing of the Appeals and Review Board's decision within 5 working days of that decision being made.

29. The decision of the Appeals and Review Board is final and there is no further process for review within Backstage Academy. You will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter. This provides you with formal confirmation that you have completed all available stages of the Academy's internal procedures.

**Further action (insert further review by University of Bolton?)**

30. Normally the decision of the Appeals and Review Board is final, and you will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter. However, having exhausted the Backstage Academy's procedures and if you still believe your complaint has not been dealt with properly, or that the outcome is unreasonable, you may make a further appeal to the University of Bolton through their appeals procedures [INSERT WEBLINK]
31. If after your review by the University of Bolton, you are still dissatisfied with the decision, you may be able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided the complaint is eligible under its rules. Should you decide to make a complaint to the OIA, the OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter
32. Information about the role of the OIA and the procedure for submitting complaints can be obtained from the OIA website: [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)

**Monitoring**

33. A report of all complaints and appeals is presented annually to Academic Board and the Backstage Academy Board for the purpose of monitoring, quality assurance and enhancement

