

# making an academic complaint

## How to complain about problems with your academic experience

### making an academic complaint

Any student can make a complaint about their programme of study or the university's academic facilities using the academic complaints procedure.

While academic appeals relate to academic outcomes (e.g. a mark or degree classification), academic complaints relate to other aspects of the student's academic experience of study at UEA. These might relate to the quality of academic resources (e.g. the library, computer facilities or lecture theatres) or to processes like the support provided whilst on a placement, the support provided by advisers or the fairness or robustness of marking practices in your School of study.

Complaints about non-academic services such as catering, accommodation or careers are dealt with by a separate non-academic complaints procedure. If you are not sure whether to make an academic complaint or a non-academic complaint, talk to an Advice Worker who will be able to help.

Alleged harassment is dealt with under separate procedures. For the general policy

for the university, see the [Policy Statement and Guidelines on Bullying, Harassment and Abuse, Assault and Stalking](#) and the [Procedures for Dealing with Harassment](#). To find out more about support from uea(su), see: [www.uea.su/advice](http://www.uea.su/advice).

The Academic Complaints Procedure is intended to ensure your concerns are fully considered and that, where appropriate, action will be taken to resolve the problem in a timely manner. Complaints will be dealt with seriously, but students are not expected to make frivolous or malicious complaints. Students should not experience problems or prejudice in the future just because they have previously made a complaint.

### stages of complaint

The academic complaints procedure comprises three stages

- an informal stage
- Stage 1, in which a Faculty Academic and Complaints Panel (FACP) considers the complaint; How to complain about problems with your academic experience

- Stage 2, if there has been a procedural irregularity in the consideration of a Stage 1 complaint. A Stage 2 complaint will initially be considered by a Director of University Services.

A FACP will uphold a complaint if any of the following are found:

- correct procedure was not followed
- you experienced prejudice and/or bias
- significant changes were made to a course which were not properly communicated
- the teaching, supervision or research training was insufficient
- natural justice dictates that the complaint be upheld
- the learning support provided was unsatisfactory or inappropriate.

## the informal stage

Before initiating a Stage 1 academic Complaint you should try and resolve the matter informally; for example, by talking to your advisor, supervisor, lecturer, module organiser, Course Director or Head of School. advice(su) can support you at this stage as well as with making a formal complaint. The Hub may suspend a Stage 1 academic complaint while it checks whether you have tried to resolve the matter informally yourself, or while an attempt at informal resolution is made. To start a complaint you need to complete an academic complaint form; there are different forms for a Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint. These are available from the UEA website at: <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching/students/forms>.

If you are not sure which form to use, check with us.

## evidence

The academic complaints procedure stresses the need to provide 'evidence' in support of your complaint and this can be time consuming to put together. The evidence, which should be submitted with your complaint form, must be specific and objective. It will normally consist of a statement from you and, where the circumstances demand, include independent third-party evidence.

## stage 1 complaints

In the complaint form you are asked what your concerns relate to, what your complaint is and what you would like done about it. For help with writing a statement, see our info sheet on writing an effective statement at:

[www.uea.su/advice-housing/academicadvice/](http://www.uea.su/advice-housing/academicadvice/).

Once completed, you should submit your complaint form and supporting evidence to your Hub. The Head of School will be made aware of the content of the complaint and will consider if it can be informally resolved. If it cannot the FACP will then consider the complaint.

Each faculty has its own FACP (there is one for students on UG and PGT taught courses and one for students on PGR programmes such as MPhils and PhDs).

The FACP is made up of a chairperson, 3 members of staff from the faculty, one member from a panel in another faculty and a secretary from the Learning & Teaching Service (LTS).

You should receive an acknowledgement letter informing you of when your complaint will be considered by the FACP within 5 working days of submitting it. The FACP meeting should be within 20 days from the date you submitted your complaint. You will usually be informed of the outcome of your complaint within 10 working days of the FACP meeting, or you will be told that more time is needed to consider your complaint.

If your complaint is upheld the letter will also say what action will be taken to remedy it. The remedy will be individual to your particular complaint. In some cases, FACPs can agree to make compensatory payments for upheld complaints.

If your complaint is rejected you should receive a full and clear explanation of the decision.

If you are not happy with the decision you may be able to make a Stage 2 complaint if there has been a procedural irregularity in the Stage 1 procedure. In some cases, you may be able to make a complaint to the Office of Independent Adjudicators if you do not meet the grounds for a Stage 2 appeal.

## stage 2 complaints

A Stage 2 complaint may be made if there has been a 'procedural irregularity' at Stage 1. This includes cases where:

- not all of the evidence has been weighed in the consideration of a complaint, or
- factual data has been misinterpreted.
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The time limit for making a Stage 2 complaint is within 15 working days of the date you were notified of the outcome of a Stage 1 complaint.

Before deciding whether to make a Stage 2 complaint, you can ask in writing for copies of all the evidence considered in reaching a decision on your stage 1 complaint. The 15-day time limit for making a stage 2 complaint does not start to run until you have received this evidence.

Details of where to submit your complaint can be found on the Stage 2 form. The relevant Director of University Services will check whether there is evidence of procedural irregularity and either accept or reject your complaint. You will be told of the outcome of your complaint within 20 working days.

If the complaint is upheld the case shall be referred to the next FACP for consideration and shall be treated as though it is a Stage 1 complaint.

If it is rejected this decision will be reviewed by one of the Academic Directors. If the rejection is confirmed, there is no further right of complaint within the university.

### **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**

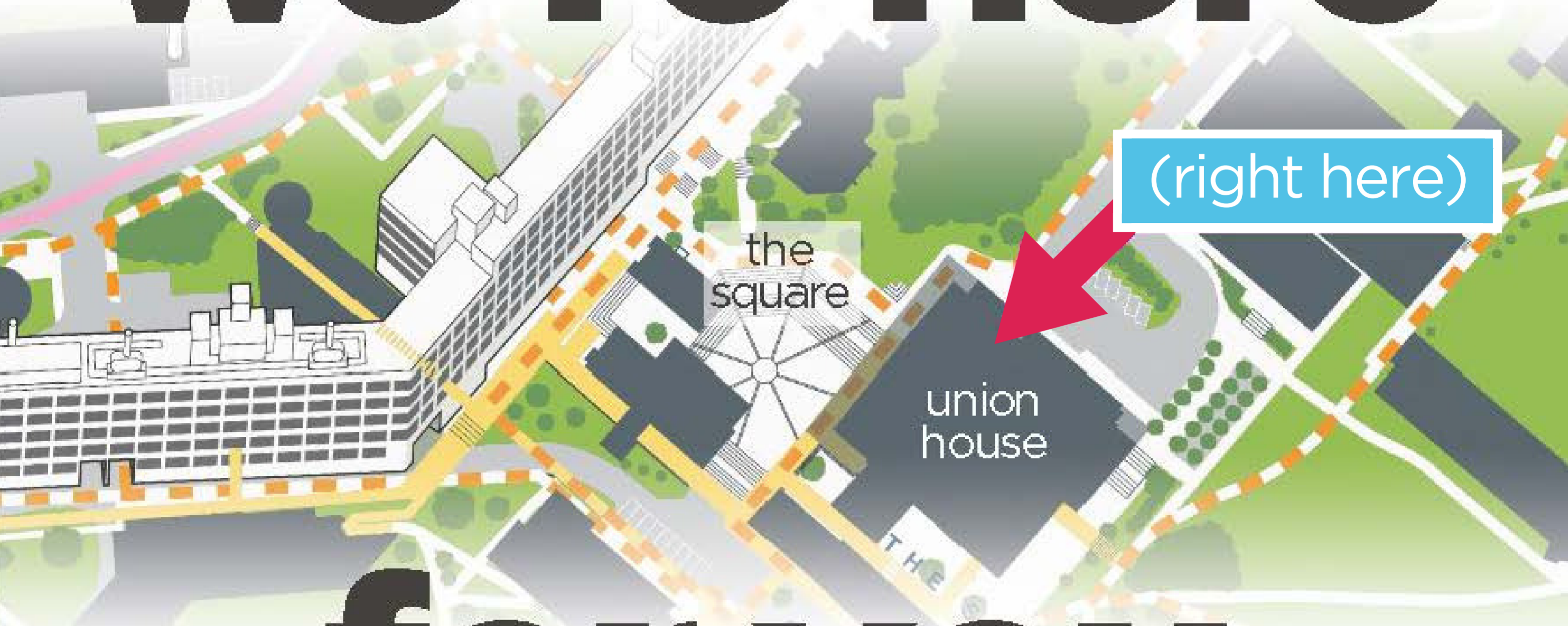
In certain circumstances after the completion of the Stage 1 Complaint and/or once you have completed all internal procedures, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) may be able to consider your case. OIA application forms are available from: [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk).

The full academic complaints procedure can be found at:

<https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/7465906/Section+3+Academic+Appeals+and+Complaints+Procedure.pdf>.

**We strongly advise you to see an Advice Worker or the Union Academic Officer if you are considering a complaint or applying to the OIA for a review.**

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(right here)

# for you

*With*

## free, confidential, impartial advice

mon - fri 10.00 -16.00 01603 593463

[advicecentre@uea.ac.uk](mailto:advicecentre@uea.ac.uk)

[uea.su/advice](http://uea.su/advice)

we've got your back