



Senate Handbook

Student Handbook

Complaints

This Handbook supplements Regulations governed by Senate.

It includes policies, procedures, advice and/or guidance that students are expected to follow in the proper conduct of University business.

Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	General principles	4
	2.1 Who can make a complaint?	4
	2.2 Who is responsible for managing complaints?	4
	2.3 Who can I go to for informal advice and support?	5
	2.4 The Student Advice Centre and Mediation	5
	2.5 Kaplan International College students	5
	2.6 Students studying with a validated partner	5
	2.7 Admissions Appeals and Complaints	6
	2.8 Dignity at Study	6
3	Broad outline of the stages of an investigation	7
4	Your rights	8
	4.1 Transparency	8
	4.2 Right to a fair hearing	8
	4.3 Supporting the investigation	8
	4.4 Continuation of studies and registration	9
	4.5 Malicious complaints	9
5	Stage 1 – Informal investigation	10
6	Stage 2 – Formal investigation	11
7	Stage 3 – Appeal	14
8	External complaint	16
Appendix A	General exclusions from the complaints procedure	17
Appendix B	Examples of potential complaint remedies	18

Major changes to this document since version 3.1 (September 2017):

- Note that complaints about academic judgement will not be accepted
- Removal of external complaint from process flow diagram
- Note that complaints about a formal outcome will be considered as stage 2 complaints
- Removal of references to stage 4 of the process, renamed external complaint

1 Introduction

Universities, like other public bodies, have a duty to conduct their affairs in a responsible and transparent way and to take into account both the requirements of funding bodies and the standards expected in public life. As part of its overall commitment to equality of opportunity, Cranfield University is fully committed to promoting a good and harmonious environment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

The University recognises, however, that from time to time you may feel dissatisfied with some aspect of your dealings with the University. Some examples may include:

- you have concerns that your academic advisers (e.g. Course Director or Supervisor) have not provided you with an appropriate level of academic support;
- you have concerns that the University is not adhering to its own policies and procedures;
- you have questions over your financial dealings with the University;
- you believe that one of the services provided by the University is inadequate
- you have concerns about the conduct of another member of the University (as detailed in the University's Dignity at Study Policy).

The University will not accept complaints about academic judgement.

There are some matters which are excluded from these procedures, because other mechanisms exist to consider any issues or concerns. These are outlined in Appendix A.

This Handbook describes the University's approved procedures for the management of concerns, concerns or complaints made by students. It supplements Regulation 26 of the University's regulations and outlines the details of the procedures that will be followed in the event of a concern or complaint being made by a student against the University, its services and/or its staff.

If you have been provided with a copy of this Handbook directly, it is likely to be because you have outlined that you are dissatisfied with one or more aspects of your student experience. This Handbook outlines how the University will consider your concerns or complaints and the procedures it will follow to investigate them.

Throughout this Handbook, the term "complaint" will be used to describe any and all issues or concerns you may choose to raise. The University is committed to ensuring that any of your concerns are dealt with quickly and fairly, and with due concern and care for your current and future studies. The use of the term "complaint" should not be seen to imply that the matter, whatever the outcome, will be held against you in your continuing studies and assessment.

2 General principles

2.1 Who can make a complaint?

The procedures outlined within this Handbook are open to all students currently registered with the University, including those registered as visiting students or associate students (i.e. for short periods of time for learning credits) and students registered with Cranfield University but studying at a partner institution. If there is good reason, the University will accept complaints from former students, up to three months after the date of either the formal confirmation of their award or of their cessation of registration.

Complaints can be made by individual students or by a group of students providing that one student is identified as the main contact for the purposes of communications with the group. The University will also accept complaints made by third parties on behalf of students, providing that a compelling case is made to demonstrate why the student is unwilling/unable to act on his or her own behalf, and providing that the University has received a statement in writing that the student is prepared for the third party to act on his or her behalf in full. The University reserves the right to make a judgement on whether or not to consider formal complaints made anonymously, and whether to treat any complaint made as an anonymous complaint.

2.2 Who is responsible for managing complaints?

This Handbook refers throughout to key people in the University who manage formal complaints. For the avoidance of doubt:

- The “Lead Investigator” is the person within the University responsible for the area of the University involved in the formal complaint. He or she will usually refer the investigation of the complaint to one or more other staff, but will retain ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the complaint is investigated fully and fairly.
- The Academic Registrar may delegate the management of individual complaints to one or more of the Assistant Registrars.

Any individual undertaking a role within the formal complaints procedures will normally have no prior knowledge of the matter and are asked to raise any potential conflicts of interest with the Academic Registrar as they become apparent. If the conflict of interest is deemed to be prejudicial to the investigation the individual concerned will be removed as an investigator. If the individual concerned continues to be involved, a record of any conflict of interest raised will be retained along with the findings of the complaint.

Where complaints are made which directly involve a Lead Investigator and/or the Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor, the University Secretary will identify an appropriate member of senior staff to manage the individual complaint instead, to ensure fairness to all parties. Similarly, where a complaint is made which directly involves the Academic Registrar and/or University Secretary, the Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor will identify an appropriate member of senior staff to manage the individual complaint.

All staff involved in the management of complaints are committed to ensuring that the matters are resolved fully and finally at the end of the process, and to ensuring that the people involved in the complaint will continue fully and appropriately in their future interactions in the University without prejudice.

2.3 Who can I go to for informal advice and support?

Further advice and support within the University is available from:

- staff in Education Services (including the Academic Registrar, the Assistant Registrars and Student and Academic Support Leads;
- staff in the Student Advice Centre;
- those staff identified as Lead Investigators above;
- staff and students in the Cranfield Students' Association (CSA).

2.4 The Student Advice Centre and Mediation Services

The Student Advice Centre is able to offer advice and guidance to you in seeking a resolution to your complaint, as well as general advice on the complaints procedure. In addition, staff in the Student Advice Centre have mediation skills, and are able, where appropriate, to facilitate mediation between you and the person(s) your complaint concerns.

Mediation is a confidential process which can bring about an early resolution to a complaint where both parties are able to see each other's point of view and, with the aid of a mediator, can co-operate to find a resolution. The mediator will aim to produce with all persons involved a written resolution to the complaint that is fair and acceptable to all parties.

Upon receiving your request for mediation the Student Advice Centre aim, subject to the availability and willingness of the parties involved, to arrange a mediation session within ten working days. Taking part in mediation is completely voluntary: there is no requirement for either yourself or the other parties involved in your complaint to take part should you or they not wish to.

Whilst mediation can be very effective as a tool to resolve complaints early at the initial informal stage, you are able to request help with mediation at any internal stage of your complaint (Stages 1-3). Taking part in mediation will not preclude you from taking a complaint further if you are unable to reach a written resolution, and you will not be bound by any of the discussions or concessions made during an unsuccessful attempt at mediation.

2.5 Kaplan International College students

Students who are following the Pre-Master's programme at Kaplan International College London (KICL) with an offer to study at the University should make any complaint they have to KICL. Should any KICL student make a complaint to the University, the complaint will be referred back to KICL and a message sent informing the student that this is what has been done. However, students are free to pursue a complaint with the University if the complaint remains unresolved through KICL local procedures, and refers to an aspect over which the University has jurisdiction and power to deliver a remedy.

2.6 Students studying with a validated partner

The University offers a number of courses in conjunction with validated partners. Any complaint by a student studying with a validated partner should be made in the first instance to Cranfield following the procedures set out in this Handbook. The University will normally investigate the complaint under this procedure, however where the complaint concerns something outside of the University's jurisdiction it may refer the complaint to the validated partner.

2.7 Admissions Appeals and Complaints

Appeals or complaints concerning any admissions decisions should be made in accordance with the admissions feedback, complaints and appeals procedure, as detailed on the University website.

2.8 Dignity at Study

The University has a Dignity at Study policy, which concerns bullying, harassment discrimination and intimidation, further details of which can be found in the Senate Handbook on Student Welfare. Any complaint concerning bullying, harassment, discrimination or intimidation will be dealt with by the University through this complaints procedure.

3 Broad outline of the stages of an investigation

All investigations are managed in the following way:

STAGE 1 <i>informal investigation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- you should try and resolve your complaint at the local level- Schools and service departments may publish local complaint mechanisms for you to use- rapid resolution sought- you should make a note of any attempts you make to resolve your complaint (e.g. dates and outcomes of any meetings you have had, copies of emails you have sent)
--	---



You have the right to complain formally at any time, but you will be asked to outline what attempts you have made to resolve your complaint informally

STAGE 2 <i>formal investigation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- detailed enquiries and a full and documented investigation is undertaken to verify the nature and substance of your complaint and determine any appropriate redress- outcomes may be dismissal of the complaint, or any redress deemed appropriate by the Lead Investigator
--	--



You have the right to appeal any decision made at Stage 2 under certain circumstances – see Stage 3

STAGE 3 <i>appeal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- you may appeal to the Academic Registrar against the outcome under certain circumstances- he or she can either dismiss your appeal (if it is not appropriate) or will appoint one or more independent people to review how the original investigation(s) was conducted- your appeal will either be dismissed by them, or the matter referred back for further investigation by new investigators in the light of your submission
------------------------------	--

If at this stage you believe you have been treated unfairly, you can complain to a body outside of the University

You can contact the Student Advice Centre either as a pre-emptive measure or at any internal stage (Stages 1-3) of your complaint to discuss if mediation would be an appropriate measure to seek a resolution to your complaint.

4 Your rights

The following rights apply to all internal stages of an investigation (i.e. Stages 1, 2 and 3).

4.1 Transparency

During the course of any investigation, you will be informed and kept up to date of:

- the names of the people who have been appointed to investigate the allegation;
- the projected timescales for the completion of any investigation and, if there are unexpected delays or deferrals, any revised timescales;
- all evidence received or collected by the investigators;
- the final decision(s) of the investigators, in the form of a written report for a Stage 2 or Stage 3 investigation.

You will also be entitled to receive on request copies of any evidence or key documents that influence the final decision of the investigators, and the right to rebut or dispute the honesty or accuracy of that evidence.

4.2 Right to a fair hearing

The University takes any investigation very seriously, and is committed to ensuring that it appoints investigators who are not prejudiced or biased against any person involved in the investigation.

If you believe, however, that an appointed investigator may be aware of your personal or educational circumstances, to the extent where they may have made pre-informed decisions about your complaint, you may raise this with the person responsible for appointing the investigator. He or she will then consider whether those circumstances represent a “conflict of interest” in them serving as an investigator, and will either appoint a different investigator(s) or explain to you why this is not appropriate or necessary.

4.3 Supporting the investigation

You are required to meet reasonable requests of the investigators, including attending informal meetings with them and/or with others.

You have the right to refuse to meet the investigators or provide evidence, but on the understanding that any right to appeal (Stage 3) against the final decision on the grounds of incomplete evidence may then be deemed invalid by the Academic Registrar.

You have the right to be accompanied in any meeting you may have by any person you choose. This person shall be referred to as your “friend” in any meeting or formal report. If you wish to bring a friend to a meeting, you are required to notify the investigators in advance. Your friend is entitled to discuss any matter with you during the course of the meeting (including requesting a private discussion), but is not entitled to represent you or your views on your behalf.

During the course of any investigation, you have the right to request a reasonable deferral of any meeting with the investigator, or any deadline of request for information, but only on the grounds that you need further time to prepare for the requested meeting or information. The investigators reserve the right to continue their investigations in the meantime, and to reach a decision if they deem your deferral request to be unreasonable.

During any meeting or interview, you or your friend is entitled to ask for copies of any evidence discussed with you, and for a short break either to discuss any points being raised with you, or for you to collect or discuss your thoughts in private.

4.4 Continuation of studies and registration

In most cases, you have the right to continue your studies with the University, and you should continue to do so.

At any stage, however, if the Academic Registrar believes the matter under investigation, or your behaviour or response to the investigation, represents a health or safety risk to yourself or to other members of the University, he or she may authorise a temporary suspension of registration and/or a restriction to your presence on University premises.

The Academic Registrar may only take such action on receipt of clear evidence and after due consultation with other staff of the University. He or she will explain the reasons for taking such action to you. Any suspension or restriction of presence will likely remain in place for the duration of the investigation.

4.5 Malicious Complaints

Cranfield University is committed to promoting a harmonious environment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and in which no-one feels threatened or intimidated. As such, students found to be making malicious complaints which conflict with this commitment may face disciplinary or, if warranted, criminal proceedings.

Examples of malicious complaints include, but are not limited to:

- harassing or repetitive complaints;
- complaints which are intended to cause disruption, distress or annoyance, either to an individual or to the University as a whole;
- complainants undertaking actions which wilfully and maliciously disrupt the due process of any investigation.

The University reserves the right not to investigate, or to cease investigation of, any complaint which it considers to be malicious in nature.

5 Stage 1 – Informal investigation

The University is committed to providing the best possible student experience, and where complaints do arise the University aims to resolve these as soon as is possible. Most complaints are best resolved at the local level and as soon as the problem arises, where the issues can be understood fully by people directly related to the nature of the complaint. It also believes that informal investigation and resolution helps to ensure that misunderstandings are identified quickly, and that the process of resolving a complaint helps to build stronger relationships between the parties involved. All complaints should be submitted within a reasonable timeframe (normally twenty working days) of the incident(s) in question.

Complaints which arise from a formal outcome (i.e. an examination board decision or rejection of an appeal) will be treated as Stage 2 complaints, with no informal investigation.

You are encouraged to raise your concerns directly with the people involved, or if you feel uncomfortable doing so, with their immediate line manager, or with someone in the School or service department you feel comfortable talking to.

Generally, it is always helpful if you can identify:

- the exact nature of your complaint;
- specific examples which demonstrate what you are unhappy about;
- how you believe your complaint can be resolved;
- who you believe may be able to resolve the matter.

Example:

You may feel that your research supervisor is not supporting you effectively. You can provide examples where he or she has cancelled meetings with you at short notice, or examples where you have asked for particular information and he or she has not provided it. You think your concern could be overcome if your research supervisor can meet with you at specific and regular times, and that notes of the meetings are taken. You think that the Director of Research should be able to support your requests, and ensure the meetings take place.

Example:

You feel that you have been charged too much for tuition fees. You can show the fees you expected to pay (either from your offer letter or from the tuition fee sheet, and that the amount on your bill is different to that). You think this can be corrected by the Student Finance team checking you have been charged the correct amount.

Please note that many areas of the University have their own locally-published complaints procedures. These represent Stage 1 of the procedures outlined in this Handbook.

While the University hopes that all complaints can be resolved informally, you are advised during this stage to keep records of the actions you and others have taken to resolve your complaint. This will include:

- keeping copies of emails you have sent and received;
- making a note of the dates and times of any meetings, and a record of what was agreed at those meetings.

If you do submit a formal complaint (Stage 2), you will be asked to outline the actions you have already taken, and these records will help you to explain that.

6 Stage 2 – Formal investigation

If you believe that the result of the informal investigation (Stage 1) has been unfair or inappropriate, then you may appeal in writing to the Academic Registrar (through studentcomplaints@cranfield.ac.uk). Either the Academic Registrar, or a member of his or her staff, will contact you to discuss your circumstances and advise you on possible next steps. He or she will also review your complaint submission to make sure it conforms to the requirements outlined below, and has the right to refuse to accept a formal complaint unless it does.

You must be a registered student to submit a complaint, and you are advised to submit a complaint as soon possible after the circumstances leading to it. The University will not accept submissions from you if you have ceased to be a student and more than three months have passed since you either left the University, or were notified of your result. The Academic Registrar reserves the right to exercise his or her discretion not to accept a complaint which is not submitted in a timely manner (normally within twenty working days of the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation), although this decision will not preclude you from submitting a Stage 3 appeal.

On acceptance the Academic Registrar will forward the complaint to the appropriate Lead Investigator. This is either the Head of your School, or the Head of the relevant Service Department.

It is very important that any Stage 2 complaint is as comprehensive as possible. In order for it to be accepted you should structure your complaint in the following way:

1. Personal information

You should include your full name, your student number, your course, and the address that should be used to contact you.¹

2. The nature of your complaint

You should state clearly exactly what your complaint is about. If you have included more than one specific issue, please detail these clearly in separately-numbered points.

3. The evidence or circumstances leading to your complaint

Depending on the nature of your complaint, this may include:

- a timetable or “story” of independent incidents, including dates and times;
- emails or letters you have written or received;
- a list of people who can verify that specific incidents have taken place, and that the investigators may wish to contact.

(Please note that any investigation will normally involve you meeting with the investigators to explain or expand upon this evidence, but you will normally be expected to include all of the key important information in your initial statement.)

4. The remedy or remedies you are seeking as an outcome

You should state clearly what action you believe needs to be taken in order for you to feel satisfied that your complaint has been resolved. If you have included more than one specific issue, please detail your preferred remedies clearly in separately-numbered points. No

¹ It will be generally expected that you will be contactable – and contacted – through your @cranfield.ac.uk email address.

commitment will be made by the Lead Investigator at this stage about whether your remedy or remedies will be considered appropriate or reasonable.

5. An outline of what steps you have taken so far to address the complaint informally (Stage 1)

If this is not outlined in 3 above, you should state clearly, providing dates and times of meetings, who you have already discussed your complaint with and what the outcome(s) of those discussions were.

On receipt of the submission of a formal Stage 2 complaint, and its acceptance by the Academic Registrar, the Lead Investigator will appoint one or more persons to make detailed enquiries and obtain evidence to either support or dispute the allegation. You will be contacted within ten working days of the submission of your complaint to outline who has been appointed to undertake any investigation(s).

If you have any concerns that the investigator(s) is too familiar with the case to undertake the investigation, please raise this as soon as possible with the Academic Registrar (through studentcomplaints@cranfield.ac.uk), who will consider whether an alternative investigator should be appointed.

It is open to the Lead Investigator to consider whether any immediate action is necessary before a full investigation is conducted. This may include making changes to your immediate study environment (e.g. providing you with specific or alternative learning support or making adjustments to ensure that contact between you and the people concerned with your complaint is limited). In very exceptional circumstances, the Lead Investigator may choose to make changes to your registration (up to and including a temporary suspension), but may only do so after consulting the Academic Registrar.

You should also receive formal contact from the appointed investigator(s). He or she or they will contact you within ten working days of their receipt of your complaint from the Lead Investigator. Before contacting you, the investigator(s) will have read your formal statement, and will provide you with an estimate of how long it will take to conduct the investigation. The appointed investigator(s) may at this stage also outline who they will meet with, and what further evidence they will be seeking.

It is likely in a formal investigation that you will be required to have a formal and structured meeting with the investigator(s), at which notes are likely to be taken. You may bring a friend to this meeting and make notes of your own, and you may also ask to see the notes made by the investigator(s), to check for accuracy. Your friend may speak with you, either in the meeting or privately, but may not speak on your behalf.

The investigator(s) are entitled to ask for other evidence from you, including access to your emails, or documents on your personal filestores if they wish to determine the full extent of the circumstances of any complaint. They may also meet with other members of the University, or ask for evidence from others and you will be advised of this additional evidence and activities by the investigator(s).

If an investigation takes more time than initially estimated, the investigator(s) will advise you of the delay through your preferred contact address, and provide you with a revised estimated date of conclusion.

At the conclusion of their investigations, a recommendation to either dismiss the complaint, or uphold it (either fully or in part) and provide appropriate redress will be made to the Lead Investigator. He or she will ensure all elements of your complaint have been considered, and determine whether to take forward any recommendations.

A report will also be provided to you at the end of the process, to outline and explain any decisions made. This will represent the completion of Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.

If you believe that the result of the formal investigation (Stage 2) has been unfair or inappropriate, then you may appeal in writing to the Academic Registrar (via studentcomplaints@cranfield.ac.uk). A request for an appeal will only be accepted if it is made within twenty working days of the notification to you of the Stage 2 outcome. Either the Academic Registrar, or a member of his or her staff, will contact you to discuss your circumstances and advise you on possible next steps.

7 Stage 3 – Appeal

The University takes allegations and their investigations extremely seriously, and acts in an appropriate manner to ensure that fairness for all parties is maintained throughout. It will likely assert that decisions arising from an investigation have been the result of a fair and thorough investigation, and are based on evidence provided by the parties concerned.

You have the right to appeal to the Academic Registrar against any decision arising from an investigation, but only on specific grounds. These are:

- A. that the evidence provided to the Lead Investigator, or to the assigned investigator(s) was incomplete or inaccurate, to the extent where it is reasonable to conclude that the decision may have been different;
- B. that the investigator(s) had summarily dismissed significant pieces of evidence in coming to his or her or their decision;
- C. that the investigator(s) had not made clear recommendations on each element of the formal complaint;
- D. that the investigator(s) were prejudiced or biased against the complainant(s), including any undisclosed conflicts of interest.

You may not appeal because you do not like the outcome, or because you believe the recommended redress is unfair or inadequate, given your complaint. (You retain, however, the right to complain about the University to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education – see section 8 – External complaint).

Any appeal must:

- (a) be submitted in writing to the Academic Registrar (via studentcomplaints@cranfield.ac.uk) within twenty working days of the conclusion of the Stage 1 or Stage 2 investigation;
- (b) state clearly which of the grounds A, B, C and/or D above are relevant to the appeal;
- (c) provide a clear statement of the foundation for the appeal, and evidence to support this statement (b) above;
- (d) outline a preferred outcome or solution for any appeal investigator to consider.

Please note that the Academic Registrar may summarily dismiss your appeal if:

- (a) it is not based on one of the permitted grounds of appeal; or
- (b) he or she does not believe that you have provided sufficient evidence to merit an investigation; or
- (c) it was submitted out of time.

He or she can only do this after consulting either the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) or the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) with details of the circumstances, and only with his or her agreement. The Academic Registrar will confirm with you in writing if your appeal is dismissed.

If the appeal is accepted, the Academic Registrar will then, within ten working days of this receipt, appoint one or more senior members of the University to investigate your appeal. The investigator(s) will contact you to confirm they have been appointed and outline to you the timescales they believe will be needed to review your appeal and come to a decision.

If you have any concerns that these appointees are too familiar with the case to undertake the investigation, please raise this as soon as possible with the Academic Registrar, who will consider whether an alternative investigator should be appointed.

The investigator(s) shall not review the matter themselves, but instead focus on the process of the previous investigation, in line with the stated grounds of appeal. On completion of their investigation into your appeal, you will be provided with a report, including a decision and the reasons for it. The investigators may decide:

- (a) to dismiss your appeal; or
- (b) to fully or partially uphold your appeal, and refer the matter back to the Lead Investigator, with a request to authorise a re-investigation of the matter by different persons.

Any re-investigation will be conducted in the same manner as a Stage 2 investigation, save that the recommended outcomes of the re-investigation are considered as final, with no recourse to a second Stage 3 investigation (appeal). The decision of the University at that point would be considered final.

8 External complaint

At the completion of Stage 3, the University will consider any decision it has made to be final and complete, with no further right of appeal. This is equally true if any appeal you have made is dismissed summarily by the Academic Registrar, or if you have no grounds for appeal.

If, however, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome or the way that the University has managed the allegation and its subsequent investigations, you have the right to submit a complaint against the University to the external regulator for the UK higher education sector, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

More information about the OIA can be found at www.oiahe.org.uk.

In order for you to use the OIA, the University must agree that you have exhausted the internal procedures. This is managed by the Academic Registrar issuing a “completion of procedures letter” to you. A “completion of procedures letter” will be provided to you on request following the conclusion of any Stage 3 appeal (whether it is not accepted, summarily dismissed or fully investigated).

You may also request from the Academic Registrar a “completion of procedures letter” at any point in the process if you do not believe the University is capable of following its own procedures fairly, and you do not wish to engage further with the University on this matter.

Please note that the OIA will not consider any complaint from you unless a “completion of procedures letter” has been provided to you.

Any complaint to the OIA must be registered within twelve months of the University issuing a “completion of procedures letter”.

Appendix A

General exclusions from the complaints procedure

The procedures outlined in this Handbook cover any and all concerns and complaints raised by students with the following exceptions (which are addressed through other mechanisms):

a. Appeals against the management of formal University procedures

The University operates a number of procedures to manage its students effectively. These processes include rights of appeal within them, and any complaints of the unfairness of those procedures are addressed through the stages of those individual procedures. This includes:

- the conduct and outcome of any disciplinary investigation relating to the student's own conduct or behaviour;
- the management of appeals against academic decisions made by examiners;
- changes made to a student's registration without his or her explicit consent (including decisions to reject requests for extensions to registration and thesis submission deadlines, as well as decisions to suspend or terminate his or her registration early).

b. Concerns about general health, safety or environment within the University

There is a 'Health & Safety Alert' form for 'whistle blowing' or complaints: the University's Safety, Health and Environment Office has a communications and complaints procedure, which is part of the ISO 14001 quality management system.

c. Complaints about the Cranfield Students' Association (CSA)

The CSA is a separately-registered charity, and as such outlines its own internal complaints procedures.

d. Concerns about student services not provided directly by the University

- **the NHS and other healthcare providers** have their own comments/complaints procedure.
- the **Pre-School** is monitored and overseen through Ofsted. See posters in the Pre-School or go to www.ofsted.gov.uk
- the **Counselling Services** are monitored and overseen by BACP (see www.bacp.co.uk/prof_conduct/)

Appendix B

Examples of potential complaint remedies

When a student's complaint is upheld, it is the responsibility of the University to make appropriate and proportionate reparations. Lead Investigators have the authority on behalf of the University to approve recommended remedies made by the investigators they have appointed, and to act upon them on behalf of the University Executive as a whole.

The appropriate remedy or remedies should, wherever possible, aim to return the student to the position they would have been in had the circumstances they have complained about not occurred. There are a number of suggested options, which are outlined below. ***Please note that these are suggestions and should not be viewed by investigators or staff as the required or expected remedies: each case should be considered on its own merits and in the full context of the investigation.***

a. An apology

It is recommended that a written apology, on behalf of the University, is included in any complaint which is either fully or partially upheld, as it has been concluded that something has been deemed to have gone wrong for which the University is responsible.

The Lead Investigator can apologise on behalf of the University. He or she may also require a specific senior manager (e.g. Director of Professional Unit, Head of Department, Director of Education/Research, line manager, individual member of staff) to apologise additionally for specific elements of the complaint.

Where apologies are made, they should be genuine and reflect the nature of the complaint and the findings of the investigation. An apology does not amount to an admission of liability in a legal sense.

b. Change of academic adviser, or similar arrangement

c. Change of environment (e.g. office, lab, accommodation)

d. Change of support arrangements (e.g. learning support)

While Schools usually have internal mechanisms to manage such requests, a complaint outcome may prejudice a particular outcome of that process, or overturn where such a mechanism has been used with an unacceptable outcome for the student. Where such changes are agreed, the Lead Investigator must take care to ensure that they are reasonable for all affected parties (i.e. not only the complainant). For example, a change of supervisor should take into consideration the existing workloads of potential nominees.

Similarly, the Lead Investigator needs to ensure that the proposed change does not negatively affect other staff and students. For example, forcing a third party student to move from an office or lab to his or her personal detriment is not recommended. Any complaint outcome should be phrased flexibly enough to guard against such possibilities.

In such cases, any financial implications for implementing such changes should be met from the appropriate School or Professional Service Unit budget (see also (i) financial compensation below).

e. Reversal of a process decision

f. Removal of personal data

g. Access (or repeated access) to a University process

Some examples of this are:

- removal of records of previous decisions overturned by the complaint;
- the right to repeat a module or assessment, with a previous instance being “forgotten”;
- refund of tuition fees or other costs erroneously charged;
- review of a previous decision made by a disciplinary hearing, examination board, or a member of staff

It should be stressed that the outcome of a complaint should not compromise the University’s academic standards, or processes which lead to maintain them. (For example, a complaint outcome may be for assessed work to be re-submitted, or re-assessed, but should not result in a mark or award outcome being changed.) Such outcomes should result from recognition of a procedural error, and not one of academic judgement.

h. Extensions to registration (and/or assessed work submission dates)

This is a likely outcome where it has been deemed that periods of registration represented “time wasted” for the student as a result of actions or inactions of the University. In most cases, any proposed remedy of an extension to registration would include a full fee bursary for that period of time (see (i) financial compensation).

In some cases, it may be appropriate to offer a period of extension which will require the student to pay a tuition fee. For example, this may be appropriate if the complaint is not upheld, but a clear recommendation to allow the student to continue to complete his or her degree forms part of the complaint outcome.

i. Financial compensation

There are two main areas where financial compensation is considered an appropriate outcome, to be paid out from the appropriate School or Professional Service Unit budget:

- i. material loss to the student for which the University is liable, and for which evidence has been presented: e.g.-
 - full or partial refund of tuition fees for time lost (which may include a fee waiver for any proposed periods of extension of registration);
 - lack of access to facilities paid for in advance;
 - personal costs incurred as a direct result of the deficiency of the University.
- ii. reparations as a result of willful negligence of one or more members of staff of the University (or its contracted services): e.g.-
 - time wasted during the student’s period of registration.

In the case of reparations, the National Union of Students (NUS) provides a full-time student living cost annually. This figure can be used as a guide to determine an appropriate level of reparation costs. Any proposed figure may need to be adjusted taking into account the student’s mode of attendance and the relative engagement of the student both before and during the complaint process.

Financial compensation should not normally be considered for:

- i. speculative or potential material losses proposed by the student, which cannot be linked directly to the deficiencies of the University (e.g. “I would have had a job with salary of £xxxxx by now if I’d completed my degree on time”)

- ii. deficiencies of the University caused as a result of human error and/or differences of opinion, where it is reasonable to conclude that staff of the University acted professionally and/or in good faith to support the student or resolve his or her concerns.

Owner	Academic Registrar
Department	Education Services
Implementation date	September 2019
Approval by and date	Academic Registrar, September 2019
Version number and date of last review	Version 3.2; September 2019
Next review by	July 2021