London College of Business Studies

STUDENT COMPLAINT POLICY & PROCEDURE

Final Review Date: September 2026
Next Standard Review Due: September 2028

277 Cranbrook Road
Ilford, IG1 4TG
Tel: 02089883460
Email: info@londoncbs.ac.uk
Web: www.londoncbs.ac.uk

1. **Introduction**
2. The London College of Business Studies is committed to providing all its students with a positive and successful experience throughout their studies with us.
3. Students are seen as partners in the college's educational provision and as such their views are sought through numerous sources and where possible enhancements are made. There are numerous ways in which students may put across their views about their learning experience and the services provided by the College. These include direct contact with members of academic or professional services staff, a system of student representation at course level, student membership of College committees, the Student Forum, student feedback surveys at course and module levels and in relation to the College's services and anonymously by using the QR code displayed on the college notice boards.
4. Occasionally, an individual or a group of students may feel dissatisfaction with their learning experience or with the services provided by the College and will want to bring this to the attention of the College. It is expected that students would try to resolve such dissatisfaction through the mechanisms outlined above in paragraph 2 before calling upon the formal Student Complaint Policy.
5. The College defines a complaint as: 'An expression of concern about the College's academic provision or a related services, or about the actions or a lack of action by the College, its partners or its staff.' Further guidance as to what would be considered under this policy is outlined in the procedure below.
6. This policy applies to students currently registered at the College or who have completed their course/module in the last month and prospective students who have submitted and application to the College.
7. In the first instance, all complaints should be directed to the London College of Business Studies, and not the partner or awarding organisation with whom the college operates to award the final qualification.
8. The College will ensure that all student complaints will be:
    - treated seriously, fairly, transparently and with impartiality;
    - dealt with sensitively, in confidence and without fear of recrimination;
    - fully investigated;
    - addressed within a reasonable timescale;
    - considered within the framework of the College's policies and practices; and
    - dealt with having due regard to UK legislation.
9. The aim of the Student Complaint Policy is to reach a fair conclusion based on the circumstances which ideally all parties find reasonable.
10. Complaints must be made in a timely manner, usually within a month of the incident/event. Where a complaint is received outside of this timeframe, students will be required to provide an explanation as to why they did not raise their concerns at the appropriate time. Consideration of a complaint received outside of the deadline will be at the discretion of the Head of Academics (or nominee).
11. The College will not normally accept complaints by a third party on behalf of a student. However, we may make an exception if a student is deemed incapable of managing their

own complaint, and we have clear, informed consent in writing from the student to communicate with the third party. There must be clear evidence to demonstrate that the student is incapable of handling the complaint on their own behalf.

12. Where a group of students wish to make a collective complaint, a spokesperson must be nominated as the point of contact and main representative of the group.
13. Where a matter raised under the Student Complaint Procedure needs to be referred to an alternative College policy or procedure (e.g. a serious complaint alleging misconduct of a member of staff may need to be dealt with under the College Staff Disciplinary Procedure) the student will be advised.
14. Where the College receives a historical complaint of serious concern against a current member of staff, the College will investigate the allegation unless it determines that the allegation cannot reasonably be investigated. Examples of a serious concern are likely to fall under one of the following headings: sexual misconduct, safeguarding, prevent, harassment or discrimination. Historical complaints will be investigated under a staff disciplinary procedure and not the Student Complaint Procedure.
15. Where a complaint is upheld, the College will seek to resolve the issues raised and put in place any measures necessary to ensure that the student is not disadvantaged.
16. In determining whether a complaint is justified or not the standard of proof is on the 'balance of probability' rather than 'beyond all reasonable doubt'.
17. This policy is based on the concept of reasonable behaviour and expects students to submit any complaint in a responsible manner. Where the College receives a frivolous or vexatious complaint, the College will terminate consideration of the matter and inform the student of the reasons for doing so and any right of appeal against that decision. Examples of such complaints include:
    - complaints which are obsessive, harassing, or repetitive;
    - insistence on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and/or unrealistic, unreasonable outcomes;
    - insistence on pursuing what may be meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
    - complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
    - demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value;
    - malicious or knowingly untrue.
18. Where a complaint is found to be malicious or knowingly untrue the College will consider whether it is appropriate to progress the matter under the Student Disciplinary Procedure.
19. The College recognises and values the fundamental importance of protecting freedom of speech in both academic life and the wider community recognising the College's strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity. The College is committed to upholding and promoting the right of the freedom of speech for its students, staff and visiting speakers within the law.
20. **Freedom of speech** means everyone has the right to express lawful views and opinions freely, in speech or in writing, without interference.
21. **Academic freedom** means protecting the intellectual independence of academics to question and test received views and wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and

controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in danger of losing their jobs or privileges or reducing the likelihood of them securing promotion or different roles at the College.

22. Any complaints submitted will be considered within the right to Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom.
23. An overview of complaints received, along with the outcomes will be presented to the Academic Board annually. Summaries of suitably redacted appeal and complaint outcomes, together with any decisions of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, will be circulated to appropriate staff within the College for further dissemination, reflection and action as appropriate.
24. When a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the College's investigation and review of their complaint on conclusion of the College's procedure, the student may follow the complaints procedure of the awarding organisation for their award, where the circumstances fall within the awarding body's policy. Or students may be wish to follow the procedures to raise the issue with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education who fulfil the role of ombudsman for Higher Education and further details of their role and processes can be found here.
25. The Student Complaints Policy and Procedure aligns with the Good Practice Framework published by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, the Consumer and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance and Office for Students Conditions of Registration C1.
26. For help and advice in resolving or making a complaint please contact your student support officer, or the student support manager via the College reception.

Student Complaint Procedures

Scope

1. Examples of matters that would be considered under this procedure include:
    - Concerns about the academic delivery of courses (e.g. standard of supervision and tuition received, assessment arrangements).
    - Shortfalls in standards of support services and/or failure to apply procedures in relation service departments of the College.
    - Failure to meet obligations including those outlined in marketing material, the website, course/student handbooks and correspondence from the College.
    - Misleading information in advertising or promotional material.
    - Complaints concerning discrimination in contravention of the College's equality and diversity policies.
    - Complaints about the processing of an application to study at the college.
2. The Student Complaint Procedure does not cover complaints that relate to:
    - Assessment outcomes - Refer to the Academic Appeals Procedure.
    - Complaints against another student – refer to the Student Disciplinary Policy.
    - Complaints about the local community - In such instance's students should communicate with the relevant local public authorities.

Making a Complaint

3. This procedure applies to students currently registered at the College or who have completed their course/module in the last month.
4. Complaints should be submitted using the Student Complaint Form provided as an annex to this procedure.
5. Complaints must be made in a timely manner, usually within a month of the incident/event. Where a complaint is received outside of this timeframe, students will be required to provide an explanation as to why they did not raise their concerns at the appropriate time. Consideration of a complaint received outside of the deadline will be at the discretion of the Head of Academics (or nominee).
6. The College will not normally accept complaints by a third party on behalf of a student. However, we may make an exception if a student is deemed incapable of managing their own complaint, and we have clear, informed consent in writing from the student to communicate with the third party. There must be clear evidence to demonstrate that the student is incapable of handling the complaint on their own behalf. In such cases students are encouraged to seek support from their Student Support Officer.
7. Anonymous complaints will not normally be considered as this can impede investigation and prevent a resolution, as well as potentially creating unfairness in relation to any allegations made in the complaint against other individuals, such as members of staff. Exceptionally, such a complaint may be considered if we accept there is a compelling reason, supported by sufficient evidence, for it to be brought anonymously.

8. The College treats all complaints with due consideration and discretion. However, students may request that their complaints or elements within it remain confidential, e.g. a witness statement or medical evidence. Where such a request would obstruct a fair investigation, or the conclusion of the investigation in line with natural justice, the student will be advised and given the option to withdraw the confidentiality request or that the evidence will become inadmissible.
9. Where a complaint is made about the conduct of another student, this will be investigated under the Student Disciplinary Procedure. Any concerns should raised with the Head of Academics.
10. Where a complaint is made about a member of staff, the College will determine whether this should be investigated under the Student Complaint Procedure, or whether the matter should be considered under the staff disciplinary policy.
11. The College will ensure that student complaints will be:
    - treated seriously, fairly, transparently and with impartiality;
    - addressed within a reasonable timescale;
    - fully investigated;
    - dealt with sensitively, in confidence and without fear of recrimination;
    - considered within the framework of the College's policies and practices; and
    - dealt with having due regard to UK legislation.
12. The aim of the Student Complaints procedure is to reach a conclusion which all parties find reasonable in the circumstances, based on the evidence available.
13. Where students have disclosed a disability to the College, requests for reasonable adjustments will be considered by the Head of Academics. The student would not be required to provide evidence of a disability where they have previously disclosed this to the College.

Informal Complaint Resolution

14. Before making a Stage 1 complaint, students should attempt to resolve their issue(s) informally. This attempt may involve the student in either addressing the issue(s) directly with the staff concerned, their Programme Leader or Student Support Officer to help them resolve the issue(s).
15. Where a formal stage 1 complaint is received and it is considered that the issues raised may still be resolved informally, the Head of Academics will discuss this with appropriate staff members. If it is considered that an informal resolution can be reached, the student will be informed and the relevant staff members will follow up the issue directly with the student(s) to reach an informal resolution.
16. Where a complaint is submitted directly to the Principal, a member of the Governing Body or a member of the Senior Management Team, the matter will be delegated to the Head of Academics to direct the student to the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure, and inform them that they should follow these established procedures.

Stage one Complaint

17. If after attempting to resolve their issue informally the student is still dissatisfied and wishes to raise a Stage 1 complaint, they must complete a Student Complaint Form (see annex 1) and submit it to the Head of Academics.
18. In completing the Student Complaint Form the following will be required:
    - Student details;
    - Details of the complaint with supporting evidence where appropriate;
    - A summary of the attempts made by the student to resolve the issue informally; and
    - The outcome of the complaint that the student is looking for.
19. Appropriate evidence must be submitted with the complaint form. This may include, among other things, emails, course documentation or witness statements.
20. The completed Student Complaint form will then be reviewed by the Head of Academics (or their nominee) who will consider:
    - Whether the complaint should be referred to another procedure?
    - Was early resolution attempted? If not, can the matter be referred back to that stage?
    - Has the student set out clearly what the complaint is about and which area(s) of the College is /are involved?
    - Has the student provided evidence in support of the complaint?
    - What outcome is the student hoping for and can it be achieved?
    - Is the complaint suitable for mediation or conciliation?
    - What assistance or support can be provided to the student in taking the complaint forward?
21. If a complaint cannot be progressed at this stage, then the student will be referred to an advisor in the Student Support Team for further help and guidance in completing the form.
22. The receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged, normally within five working days. The letter of acknowledgement will also summarise the complaint and identify the investigating manager who will be conducting the investigation. The acknowledgment letter will also summarise the student's desired outcome and advise whether this is realistic and practicable. Where the student has not expressed a desired outcome, this will be explored with them as part of the stage 1 investigation.
23. The Head of Academics (or their nominee) will appoint an investigating manager who will have no previous involvement in the complaint.
24. The investigating manager will normally meet with the student to discuss their complaint. Where the investigating manager does not consider a meeting necessary, they should explain their reasoning for this and give the student the opportunity for a meeting if they wish to do so.
25. When the investigation is concluded the investigating manager will produce a written report outlining the complaint, their findings and any proposed action. The Head of Academics (or their nominee) will provide a copy of the report to the student together with information on any further process.
26. The report will normally be sent to the student within twenty-five working days of receiving the Student Complaint Form.

27. If the investigation and completion of the report will take longer than twenty-five working days the student will be informed of any revised timeframes.
28. Most complaints should be resolved at this point. However, if the student is not satisfied with the investigation or its outcome including any proposed actions, they may proceed to Stage 2 of the Student Complaints Procedure.
29. Where a student does not progress a complaint to stage 2, the College will close the matter in writing and issue a Completion of Procedure letter if the student asks the College to do so. The letter will make clear that the student has not completed the College's internal procedures.
30. To make a Stage 2 complaint the student should complete the Stage 2 Student Complaint Form and submit it to the Head of Academics within ten working days of receiving the written report of the Stage 1 investigation, explaining the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 process.
31. Where the stage 1 complaint was a group complaint, the stage 2 should normally be submitted as a group complaint by those members of the group wishing to escalate the complaint. In doing so, it is essential that all students' views are represented in the stage 2 complaint and that they agree on the basis on which the stage 2 complaint is being made.

Group Complaint

32. Where a group of student wish to make a collective complaint, a spokesperson must be nominated as the point of contact and main representative of the group. The names of all students who are part of the complaint should be listed in the complaint submission.
33. Where an outcome of a group complaint is made, students can decide individually or as a group whether or not they accept the outcome and any recommendations.

Representation

34. The student is expected to represent themselves in any meetings or other communications related to the complaint.
35. The student making the complaint will have the right to be accompanied by a fellow student, if they wish, at any meetings held to investigate the complaint.
36. The College will only accept legal representation exceptionally where a student is unable to represent themselves and legal representation has been agreed in advance. In such circumstances the College reserves the right to legal representation.

Recording of Meetings

37. It is not the College's normal procedure for meetings or hearings to be recorded by either party unless there are exceptional reasons why this should be considered, for example where a verbatim record is required or to accommodate a disability.

38. The decision to do so will be taken by the Head of Academics (or nominee) in advance of the meeting. A recording may be made only where all parties agree to the use of recording.

Stage 2 complaint

39. To make a Stage 2 complaint the student should complete the Stage 2 Student Complaint Form (see Annex 2) and submit it to the Principal within ten working days of receiving the written report of the Stage 1 investigation, explaining the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 process.
40. Where the stage 1 complaint was a group complaint, the stage 2 should normally be submitted as a group complaint by those members of the group wishing to escalate the complaint. In doing so, it is essential that all students' views are represented in the stage 2 complaint and that they agree on the basis on which the stage 2 complaint is being made.
41. Stage 2 complaints will only be accepted where the Stage 1 process has been completed and where:
    - There is evidence that Stage 1 investigation has not been carried out as described above; or
    - The outcomes and/or proposed actions may not be appropriate given the Stage 1 investigation and its findings.
    - There is new material evidence which the student was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.
42. The Stage 2 complaint will be considered by the Principal (or Nominee) who will decide what action to take. The decision will include one of the following:
    - Referring the matter back to the student for clarification;
    - Offering the student non-binding internal or external mediation ('non-binding' meaning that the student and/or College does not have to accept the outcome of the mediation; mediation meaning a chance to resolve the dispute by agreement and that is undertaken by someone who is impartial);
    - Proceeding to an internal review;
    - Issuing a 'Completion of Procedure' letter;
43. The student will be informed of the proposed action within ten working days of receiving the Stage 2 part of the Student Complaint Form. The response will also clarify the purpose and scope of the review and the student advised.

Internal Review

44. The Stage 2 complaint will be considered by the Principal or an appointed senior member of staff who will act as the Complaint Review Manager. The Complaint Review Manager will have had no involvement in stage 1 of the complaint.
45. The Complaint Review Manager will seek to establish if:
    - There is a basis for the complaint and it is supported by evidence;

- The complaint has been dealt with in accordance with the scope and principles of the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure;
- The outcome is fair and appropriate;
- Where new material evidence has been provided, has the student given valid reasons for not supplying this earlier.

46. As part of the investigation, the Complaint Review Manager may ask to meet with the student to discuss their complaint, and to clarify why they are dissatisfied and what outcome they are seeking. If the Complaint Review Manager is not able to meet or communicate with the student then they may decide either to extend the deadline by which their report should be completed, or to continue with their review using the information that has already been provided.
47. The final report and a letter confirming what actions, if any, the College proposes, will be issued to the student and copied to relevant staff within twenty-five working days of the receiving the Stage 2 complaint.
48. If the investigation and completion of the report requires longer than twenty-five working days the student will be informed of any different timeframes.
49. In order to complete the internal review part of Student Complaints Procedure, students should acknowledge that they have received the letter and report and should confirm their agreement, or otherwise, with any proposed actions, within ten working days.
50. Where the internal review does not uphold the complaint or where the student does not accept the proposed resolution, the College will issue a 'Completion of Procedure' letter.

Mediation

51. Where the Principal (or nominee) considers that mediation might offer an opportunity to resolve the complaint, the student will be offered a choice of mediation or a review of their complaint by a Complaint Review Manager. The student will have ten days to decide which approach they would prefer, otherwise a Student Complaint Review Manager will be appointed.
52. Where a student decides to accept the offer of mediation, the principal will appoint either an internal mediator or an external independent mediator, depending on the circumstances of the complaint.
53. Mediation is a way of resolving differences and is designed to find a solution acceptable to everyone without blaming anyone in particular. Mediation is voluntary and for it to succeed all those involved must be willing to participate in a positive and helpful discussion. It involves helping those involved focus on the issues and on achieving a resolution. The mediator will meet with the student and staff from the College (note, the student may be accompanied by a friend or colleague). At the end of the mediation discussions, the mediator will produce a statement of the outcome of the process and the suggested resolution, or they may confirm that the mediation process has failed.
54. The suggested resolution from the mediator is non-binding on either the student or the College and either party can withdraw from the mediation process at any time.

55. The resolution statement will be sent to the Principal for approval by the College and to the student for agreement.

56. In order to complete the internal process, the student must acknowledge that they have received the resolution statement and their agreement to any proposed resolution within ten working days, otherwise it will be assumed that the student does not agree with the proposed resolution and the complaint will be referred to internal review.

57. Where mediation fails to produce a resolution or where either party does not agree with the proposed resolution, the complaint will be referred for internal review. The timescales for any resumed formal process will begin at the point the mediation has failed and the student wishes to proceed to the stage 2 internal review.

Compensation

58. Whilst there are several non-financial remedies that may resolve a complaint, the College recognises that there will be occasions where a student may need to be awarded compensation or where the Student Protection Plan needs to be implemented as continuation of study cannot be preserved. In these circumstances, the College will seek to apply the current guidance published by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education who fulfil the role of ombudsman for Higher Education and further details of their role and processes can be found here.

Completion of Procedure

59. If a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaints process or fails to acknowledge the letter of outcome within ten working days, a 'Completion of Procedure' letter will be sent to the student confirming that they have completed the College's internal Student Complaints Procedure and advising them that they may be able to follow the complaints policy of the Awarding Body for their award, where the circumstances fall within the scope of that policy or raise the issue with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

Annex 1

Student Complaint Form
Stage One

Name(s):	Course:	Student Number :
Contact email address:	Contact Phone Number:	
Details of the Complaint:		
Evidence being provided to support the complaint: 1. 2. 3. 4. Add as required.		
A summary of the attempts already made to resolve the issue:		
The outcomes that is sought as a result of this complaint:		

Annex 2

Student Complaint Form
Stage Two

Name(s):	Course:	Student Number :
Contact email address:	Contact Phone Number:	
Summary of the Complaint:		
Details of the reason for escalating the complaint to stage two:		
Additional evidence being provided to support the complaint at stage two (do not resubmit evidence provided at stage one): 1. 2. 3. 4. Add as required.	Reason the evidence was not provided at stage one: 1. 2. 3. 4. Add as required.	
The outcomes that is sought as a result of this complaint:		