

Cranmer Hall

Student Complaints Policy and Procedure – October 2022

INTRODUCTION AND PRINCIPLES

1. Cranmer Hall aims to provide a high standard and quality of service in respect of its academic provision and community life, but recognises that occasionally things do go wrong. As part of its commitment to enhancing the student experience, this procedure has been established to deal with academic and other complaints from students.
2. This policy and procedure sit within the wider policies of St John's College and Durham University. Where the complaint relates to bullying and harassment (including relating to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010), to student misconduct, or to academic appeals or sanctions, wider University policies will apply. Further details are in paras 14-16 below.
3. Students who have a complaint to make should follow the procedure below:
 - (i) **for minor matters in relation to module or programme design and delivery:** students should speak with the Module Coordinator or Programme Director in the first instance;
 - (ii) **for matters of significance relating to any staff member or tutor:** students should contact the Warden. (In the event of the complaint relating to the Warden they should contact the Principal of St. Johns College. The following procedure is followed, with the Principal filling the Warden's role as it is set out below.). This arrangement is implicit in the remainder of this document.)
 - (iii) **students who wish to make a complaint about a fellow student:** if the matter cannot be resolved student-to-student, the student who wishes to make a complaint should contact the Warden.
4. As matters that are dealt with informally at an early stage have the best chance of being resolved effectively, the formal stage of this procedure should only be applied if informal procedures have been exhausted and the complainant remains dissatisfied.
5. It is recognised, however, that there may be occasions when an informal approach is not appropriate. In such instances the student may wish to proceed to a formal stage in the procedure, giving reasons for doing so. In such situations the recipient of the complaint should decide at which stage in the procedure set out below the complaint should most appropriately be considered, taking account of its particular nature and circumstances.
6. In respect of particularly serious complaints, the student may write directly to the Warden without having followed the informal or formal stages of this procedure set out below. In such cases the Warden shall decide whether or not to conduct his or her own investigation into the complaint or whether it should more appropriately be referred to an earlier stage in the procedure.

7. Every reasonable effort will be made to deal promptly and efficiently with all complaints, to investigate them thoroughly, objectively and independently and to seek to resolve them satisfactorily. If a complaint is upheld, Cranmer Hall will seek to provide an appropriate response and will correct any mistakes or misunderstandings and will take any other action as appropriate. If a complaint is not upheld, reasons for that decision will be given in a timely manner.
8. All complaints will be dealt with in confidence with the proviso that enquiries will have to be made to investigate the matters that are the subject of the complaint. An individual against whom a complaint is made has the right to be supplied with a copy of the complaint and to comment on it. A complaint cannot be investigated if the student does not wish the substance of the allegation to be made known to the individual concerned.
9. Cranmer Hall will treat complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination.
10. Where a complaint is shown to be frivolous, vexatious or motivated by malice, it will be dismissed and disciplinary action may be taken against the student.
11. The time limits set out in this procedure will normally be followed. However, where, for good reason, this is not possible, the complainant will be kept informed of progress.

SCOPE OF THE PROCEDURE

12. The procedure is designed to encompass complaints from students concerning their experience as a Cranmer Hall student, from an academic, formational and community perspective.
13. Complaints can relate to any aspect of the approved academic and formational provision including (but not restricted to) complaints from students concerning their experience of:
 - a. the arrangements for, or delivery of, teaching or assessment for the academic programme;
 - b. the adequacy of supervision for modules that are a formal and assessed part of the academic programme;
 - c. the academic support that is part of the academic programme;
 - d. assessed placements that are a formal part of the academic programme;
 - e. administrative or support services that relate to the academic programme;
 - f. information or publicity in relation to the academic programme;
 - g. the infrastructure for academic programmes, including learning resources and teaching spaces.
 - h. the formational support given through tutorials and other provision
 - i. the arrangements for, and delivery, of formational training and teaching which is not part of the academic programme
 - j. the community life of Cranmer Hall and the leadership exercised by staff and student leaders

The above is not a definitive or exhaustive list; complaints may relate to other areas of provision or support where these are perceived to have had a negative impact on the student's academic and/or formational programme or progress.

14. This procedure does not extend to '**academic appeals**' (i.e. appeals relating to examinations or assessments or to academic progress or against expulsion or exclusion on academic grounds). Information on the University's approach to academic appeals is available in [Curriculum, Learning and Assessment : Academic Appeals and Academic Misconduct - Durham University](#)
15. Equally, the procedure does not cover the following, for which separate procedures exist:
 - a. complaints involving a decision that a student has failed to meet his/her academic commitments (see Durham University's Academic Progress procedure) [Learning and Teaching Handbook : 8.2.1: Academic Progress - Durham University](#)
 - b. complaints involving an allegation of misconduct by a student (see the Non-Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Procedure [NAMP2021PolicyTemplate.pdf \(dur.ac.uk\)](#))
 - c. complaints involving an allegation of bullying and harassment, including those related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010¹ (see the University's [Bullying and Harassment Procedure 11BullyingHarassmentPolicyandProcedureforStudents.pdf](#))
16. It is also open to all students to use the University's Report and Support tool to report any unwanted behaviour, either anonymously or by providing details. [Report - Report + Support - Durham University](#)
17. It is expected that the student concerned will pursue the complaint personally; complaints submitted by a third party will not normally be accepted.
18. The effectiveness of any complaints procedure depends on Cranmer Hall being able to collect appropriate information from the parties involved in order to investigate the matter properly. For this reason, anonymous complaints will not be dealt with under this procedure.
19. Complaints by a group of students are often of a general nature where it is usually more appropriate for the students to raise the matter with a student representative in the first instance. Complaints may then be made by a group of students if the relevant representation system has not achieved a satisfactory outcome, or this is not thought to be an appropriate route.
20. If the complainant remains dissatisfied once Cranmer Hall's informal and formal procedures are exhausted, the student will have the right to request a review by Durham University. The University will determine whether to review the complaint to ascertain whether the TEI's policy and processes had been implemented correctly.

¹ These protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

21. It is Cranmer Hall's practice to review its policies and procedures on an annual basis in order to identify any areas of practice or provision for enhancement.

STAGES OF THE PROCESS

Overview

22. The complaints process has 3 Stages:

LEVEL 1: Investigation of the complaint at Cranmer Hall

STAGE 1: Informal resolution (Cranmer)

STAGE 2: Formal resolution (Cranmer)

LEVEL 2: Referral to the University (if the complaint cannot be resolved within Cranmer)

STAGE 3: University review (Durham University)

Stage 1: Informal Stage

23. Most complaints can be resolved informally and, where practicable, a complaint should be dealt with as close as possible to the point at which it arises. A student who wishes to complain should, therefore, initially discuss the matter with those directly responsible. If the student is unhappy about approaching the person directly responsible, they may seek counsel from their personal tutor, their Director of Studies, or, in exceptional circumstances, another Cranmer tutor.
24. Students should raise a complaint no more than 28 days after the event that the complaint concerns unless there is good reason for the delay.
25. The Warden, or designated officer, should if, possible, have a face-to-face discussion with the student concerned, to come to an understanding of the exact nature of the student's dissatisfaction and to explore what outcome the student seeks.
26. If appropriate, the Warden, or designated officer, should initiate mediation as part of the informal resolution.
27. Wherever possible, student complaints should be resolved at this informal level, without the need to resort to formal proceedings. A student should normally expect to receive a written or verbal acknowledgement within five working days and a full response within fifteen working days of receipt of the complaint.
28. At the conclusion of any informal resolution attempts, the student will be informed of the formal complaint procedure (Stage 2).

Stage 2: Formal Stage: Cranmer

29. If the Stage 1 procedures have been exhausted, and the student is not satisfied with the response, he or she may initiate a formal complaint to the Warden, who will either deal with the complaint or nominate a member of staff to do so on his or her behalf.

30. If a complaint is received at Stage 2, without prior consideration at Stage 1, Cranmer Hall will normally try to resolve the complaint using informal mechanisms in the first instance where appropriate.
31. The information to be included in the complaint by the student is as follows:
 - a. details of the complaint;
 - b. a statement of the action already taken to try and resolve the complaint informally and why the response given is considered unsatisfactory;
 - c. any supporting information or evidence;
 - d. the form of resolution or redress sought
32. Cranmer Hall will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days.
33. The person dealing with the formal complaint must be independent of the source of the complaint and will either investigate the matter him or herself or will delegate responsibility to another appropriate person to undertake the investigation on his or her behalf.
34. The person dealing with the formal complaint will seek resolution of the complaint by a means appropriate to its nature and circumstance. Such means may include:
 - a. correspondence between the parties;
 - b. negotiation with the student or with appropriate members of staff or with both;
 - c. facilitation of a conciliation meeting between the student and student/staff concerned;
 - d. facilitation of a mediation meeting between the student and student/staff concerned.
35. If the person dealing with the formal complaint decides to investigate the complaint via correspondence, the student bringing forward the complaint will be sent a copy of any comments obtained during this process and will be invited to submit a response. This will be done prior to a decision being reached in relation to the complaint.
36. In very exceptional circumstances (for example, in particularly complex cases, or those involving disciplinary issues), provisions may be made for hearings.
37. Hearings. The student involved will be informed in advance about the date, time and location of the hearing and provided with any relevant documentation. He or she may be accompanied at the hearing by a fellow student or a member of Cranmer staff. The hearing will be chaired by the Warden of Cranmer Hall, the Deputy Warden, the Academic Dean or, in exceptional cases the Principal of St. John's College. It will be attended by two members of the senior team (the Warden, Deputy Warden, and Academic Dean) and another member of the Cranmer staff. The chair will ensure that due procedure is followed such that all parties concerned have the opportunity to express their concerns, to relate their account of an event or to respond to questions and

comments. It is expected that the panel will give its verdict or guidance at the end of the hearing. The student should be made aware of their right to request a review as noted in point 39.

38. The Level 1 procedures (Stages 1 and 2 combined) should normally be completed, and a written response sent to the student, within eight weeks of the complaint being received.
39. The possible outcomes from the Stage 2 process include:
 - a. a resolution, reached in co-operation with the student, following conciliation or mediation if appropriate;
 - b. if the complaint is upheld, a recommendation will be made outlining how the issue(s) identified in the complaint should be addressed including, if applicable, appropriate redress to the student;
 - c. dismissal of the complaint with reasons given to the student in writing.
40. The response will also inform the student of their right to request a review of the complaint by Durham University (i.e. Stage 3 of the process).
41. A copy of the letter to the complainant informing them of the outcome of their complaint will be retained in accordance with Cranmer Hall's Data and Record Retention Policy.

Stage 3: Review Stage: University

42. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, and believes that the complaint has been handled improperly or unfairly according to this policy, the student may request that the complaint is reviewed by Durham University.
43. The student can request a review by writing to Durham University no later than 10 working days after the date of the Stage 2 response.
44. The student must provide the following information:
 - a. details of the complaint (including relevant correspondence from Stages 1 and 2, and any further new supporting documentation);
 - b. details of why the student remains dissatisfied;
 - c. details of the form of resolution or redress sought.
45. Receipt of the request for a review will be acknowledged by the University within five working days. This acknowledgement will advise students that they may seek advice from the Durham Students' Union (DSU) throughout the Stage 3 process.
46. The University will determine whether to review the complaint to ascertain whether Cranmer Hall's policy and processes had been implemented correctly.

47. The possible outcomes include:
- a. if procedural irregularities are identified: the complaint will normally be referred back to Cranmer Hall for re-investigation;
 - b. if the complaint is deemed to be outside the parameters of an 'academic complaint' (as defined in para. 13, above): the complaint will be referred back to Cranmer Hall for investigation as a complaint that is outwith the Common Awards provision;
 - c. if Cranmer Hall's policies and processes had been implemented correctly: the review will normally be dismissed; the reasons for dismissal will be provided to the student in writing, and a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued.
48. The student will be notified of the University's decision within 28 days of the University's receipt of the request for a review.
49. If the University dismisses the review request there shall be no further opportunity for the complaint to be pursued within the University.
50. The University's formal response at the completion of Stage 3 will advise the student that they can refer their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR (OIA)

51. If Stages 1-3 have been completed and the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome, the student may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within 12 months of the issue of a Completion of Procedures letter by the University.
52. Information about the OIA and the procedure for submitting complaints can be obtained from Durham University's Academic Support Office, the Durham Students' Union website, or from the OIA website: www.oiahe.org.uk.

Reviewed and approved by Cranmer Committee – 14 October 2022