

## **Complaints and appeal procedures (History Graduate Office)**

The University, the Humanities Division and the History Faculty all hope that provision made for students at all stages of their course of study will make the need for complaints (about that provision) or appeals (against the outcomes of any form of assessment) infrequent.

Nothing in the University's complaints procedure precludes an informal discussion with the person immediately responsible for the issue that you wish to complain about (and who may not be one of the individuals identified below). This is often the simplest way to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

Students who wish to have impartial help and advice about the possibility of making a complaint should contact their college Tutor for Graduates (Senior Tutor in graduate colleges) or their college advisor, their Programme Convenor (master's programmes) or Board Interviewer (research programmes), the Director of Graduate Studies in the History Faculty, bodies with extensive experience in advising students like Student Advice Service provided by OUSU or the Counselling Service, or staff in the History Graduate Office. The appropriate person to contact will depend to some degree on the nature of the complaint.

General areas of concern about provision affecting students as a whole should be raised through the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee and/or officers of the Oxford History Graduate Network, or via student representation on the Faculty's committees.

### **1. Preamble**

If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by the Faculty you may wish to resolve the matter by informal means via your period interviewer or programme convenor, or you may wish to complain formally, in writing, directly to the Director of Graduate Studies. If your concern or complaint relates to provision made by your college, you should raise it either with your tutor or with one of the college officers, Senior Tutor, Tutor for Graduates (as appropriate). Your college will also be able to explain how to take your complaint further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of its consideration.

1.1 The History Faculty reminds all students that a) informal resolution of a concern is an option at all stages of the complaints procedures; and b) they are entitled to take a concern to the University Proctors at any stage of the procedures if they wish to do so.

1.2 Every effort will be made to ensure that all complaints from students are treated seriously, positively and constructively.

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1.3. The History Faculty will also seek to ensure that complaints are dealt with in a reasonable time, with fairness and consistency, and taking account of relevant University policies.

1.4 Complainants will not be disadvantaged or suffer any recrimination as a result of making a complaint in good faith.

1.5 Every effort will be made to ensure that complaints are treated with appropriate confidentiality and that the privacy of the complainant and any individual against whom a complaint is made is respected. Where it is necessary, in the course of attempting to deal with a complaint, to disclose information to others, then the parties concerned will be informed of such a disclosure.

## 2. Informal resolution of complaints

2.1 Informal means can resolve the majority of complaints. If the complaint is with an individual, then the complaint should, if at all possible, first be raised with the individual concerned, either orally or in writing, making clear the remedy that is sought.

2.2. The complaint should normally be made within one month of the action (or lack of action) that has occasioned the complaint.

2.3. The person with whom the complaint has been raised should normally respond within two weeks, or if this is not possible, provide a reason for any delay and the likely timescale for response.

2.4 If making or responding to the complaint requires face-to-face contact between the complainant and the person with whom the complaint has been raised, then both shall be entitled to be accompanied by a friend or colleague or other member of the University.

2.5. If the person with whom a complaint has been raised rejects a complaint, they must give their reason for doing so.

## 3. Formal resolution of concerns and complaints

3.1 If an individual feels unable to approach the person with whom they have a complaint, or is dissatisfied with the response that they have received to their efforts at informal resolution, they should submit a written complaint, within three months of the original concern, to the Director of Graduate Studies.

3.2 If the Director of Graduate Studies is the subject of the complaint, then the written complaint should be made to the Chair of the Faculty Board who may depute the investigation of the complaint to another appropriate member of the History Faculty.

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3.3 The written complaint should set out briefly:

- the nature of the complaint and the remedy sought;
- any informal steps already taken;
- the response given to the complaint;
- reasons for continuing dissatisfaction;
- the remedy which is now sought.

3.5. The officer or other individual to whom the complaint has been directed for investigation shall submit a written response to the complainant normally within three weeks of the complaint, or if this is not possible, provide a reason for any delay and the likely timescale for response.

3.6. If the investigation requires face-to-face contact between the complainant and the person with whom the complaint has been raised, then both shall be entitled to be accompanied by a friend or colleague or other member of the University.

3.7. Whatever the outcome of the investigation of the complaint, the reasons for the decision must be stated in writing to the complainant and to the person with whom the complaint has been raised. If a complaint has not been upheld, then a complainant should be reminded of their right to take a concern to the Proctors.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, then you may take your concern further by making a formal complaint to the University Proctors. The procedures adopted by the Proctors for the consideration of complaints and appeals are described on the Proctors' webpage (<https://academic.web.ox.ac.uk/files/universitystudentcomplaintsprocedure2020pdf>), the Student Handbook (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/student-handbook>) and the relevant Council regulations (<https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/regulations>).

## 4. Monitoring of complaints

4.1. The Faculty will monitor, on an annual basis, all complaints which have been referred to them, and will be responsible for assessing whether changes are needed to relevant procedural and other arrangements in the light of the complaints received.

4.2 The Faculty will report the outcome of their monitoring of complaints annually to the responsible Division, which will in turn report to the University's Education Committee.

## Academic appeals (concerns and complaints about examination matters)

An academic appeal is defined as a formal questioning of a decision on an academic matter made by the responsible academic body. Such complaints about the conduct of University examinations and

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assessments do not follow the Faculty's internal complaints procedure, and students are reminded that they must not contact their examiners direct with queries or complaints.

For taught graduate programmes, a concern which might lead to an appeal should be raised with your college authorities and the individual responsible for overseeing your work. It must not be raised directly with examiners or assessors. If it is not possible to clear up your concern in this way, you may put your concern in writing and submit it to the Proctors via the Senior Tutor of your college.

For the examination of research degrees, or in relation to transfer or confirmation of status, your concern should be raised initially with the Director of Graduate Studies. Where a concern is not satisfactorily settled by that means, then you, your supervisor, or your college may put your appeal directly to the Proctors.

As noted above, the procedures adopted by the Proctors in relation to complaints and appeals are described on the Proctors' webpage (<https://academic.web.ox.ac.uk/files/universitystudentcomplaintsprocedure2020pdf>), the Student Handbook (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/student-handbook>) and the relevant Council regulations (<https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/regulations>).

Please remember in connection with all academic appeals that:

- The Proctors are not empowered to challenge the academic judgement of examiners or academic bodies.
- The Proctors can consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed; i.e. whether there was a significant procedural administrative error; whether there is evidence of bias or inadequate assessment; whether the examiners failed to take into account special factors affecting a candidate's performance.
- On no account should you contact your examiners or assessors directly.