

# **CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

## **STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The College is committed to high quality educational and other provision for students, and encourages students to say where there is cause for concern in individual or general matters. It undertakes to take such representation seriously.

The College aims to handle complaints in a way which is sympathetic, fair and efficient, which encourages informal conciliation, facilitates early resolution, maintains individual privacy and confidentiality, and permits useful feedback.

This procedure is for all College members in statu pupillari (undergraduates and graduates).

A complaint will normally be about a problem encountered by a student in connection with educational or other activities or services provided by the College. It will not necessarily be against anybody, whether a person or an institution, although some complaints may be against individuals or the College. Complaints principally arising about matters covered by other specific procedures (such as the University complaints procedure, University procedures for the review of graduate or undergraduate examination results, the College's disciplinary procedure as laid down in the Staff Handbook, the College's student disciplinary procedure, or the JCR constitution) should be raised under those procedures.

Because the purpose of the complaints procedure is, whenever possible, to resolve problems, a complaint should be made promptly, and an attempt made to deal with it quickly and informally. The procedure, therefore, has three stages, and the College hopes that most problems will be solved in the first two stages of advice and informal process.

The three stages are:   Discussion and Advice  
                                  Informal Process  
                                  Formal Process

Each stage is described in a later section.

## **GENERAL POINTS ABOUT THE PROCEDURE**

The student is entitled to fair and independent consideration of a complaint. The rights of the student and the rights of any person complained against are both important and must be kept in balance. Every effort will be made to ensure that both are treated appropriately, with fairness and dignity. Complaints will not be treated as though lodged against the College unless that is stated to be the case. There will be a separation between the provision of advice and the provision for dealing with, or adjudicating, on a complaint. The student should not suffer any retaliation for making a complaint in good faith and a student who believes that he or she has suffered a reprisal should raise the matter. If a complaint which is not upheld is found to have been made maliciously, the student may be subject to disciplinary procedure.

The student may withdraw a complaint, or stop the process, at any time in Stage 1 or 2 and, in Stage 3, with the consent of the Chair of the panel (identified below). Personal privacy will be respected. Confidential information will not be communicated without the consent of the student, other than in exceptional circumstances (for example in reporting an alleged criminal offence to the Police). The student has a free choice of adviser and of representative, who need not be the same person. Normally this would be a College Tutor, but students are free to go to another member of College if they prefer.

Complaints will be dealt with promptly to ensure that delay does not hinder fair resolution. Minor complaints will normally be resolved at an early stage.

A complaint can only be brought by the student affected, although several affected students may act together. A particular complaint cannot normally be pursued under both University and College procedures.

If a complaint is upheld there should be a satisfactory remedy or outcome, which may include:

- a full explanation
- an apology (which is not an admission of liability)
- the matter put right, if possible
- if appropriate, some kind of financial recompense (for example if the student had paid for something which he or she did not receive)
- if appropriate, the case may be remitted to the relevant authority to take disciplinary action. The appropriate authority is the Dean of College or College Disciplinary Tribunal (students), the Bursarial Office (staff) or the Master (Fellows).

Written records will be kept of complaints using a procedure compliant with data protection requirements. The student will have access to the documents submitted about his or her case, and those taking part in the complaint will be informed that this is so. Otherwise, the records will be confidential. An annual report will be made to the Executive Body by the Senior Tutor or the Tutor for Advanced Students; if references are made to individual cases they will be made anonymously.

### **STAGE 1: DISCUSSION AND ADVICE**

1.1 It is very important to get early advice about problems. Often, this can resolve the matter quickly and informally.

1.2 Normally, a student would seek the advice of a College officer such as a Tutor, Graduate Advisor or Director of Studies. Other possibilities include:

- other relevant members of the academic staff of the College
- the Chaplain
- officers of the JCR or MCR
- other relevant bodies such as the University Counselling Service or the Disability Resource Centre
- officers of CUSU, or officers of the Graduate Union.

1.3 The student can expect to be given advice on how to proceed and on an appropriate course of action, advice about what would constitute an appropriate remedy, and an opportunity to consider whether there is indeed a complaint to be addressed. The student will then be in a position to decide whether to proceed further, and how.

### **STAGE 2: INFORMAL PROCESS**

2.1 It is in the interest of the students that a complaint to be dealt with informally should be raised at the appropriate level as soon as possible. If there has been a delay, the student should explain the reason. The student should, if possible, record the complaint in writing (the advice about a written statement in Stage 3 may be helpful).

2.2 The student should raise the matter with an appropriate person: Bursarial Office (complaint against a member of staff); Senior Tutor (complaint against an undergraduate); Tutor for Advanced Students (complaint against a graduate); the Master (complaint against a Fellow). If a complaint is made against the Master, the Senior Fellow will take his role.

2.3 If possible, a suitable solution to the problem will be agreed and implemented.

2.4 If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of such an informal process, he or she may consider whether to raise the matter formally through Stage 3.

### **STAGE 3: FORMAL PROCESS**

3.1 Students must exhaust informal routes before making a formal complaint, or give a good reason for not doing so. A good reason might be that the problem is particularly serious, or that when it was raised informally there was a refusal to deal with it. Informal processes are suitable for dealing with many problems, but if a complaint includes very serious allegations, and especially where a person complained against must have an opportunity to give his or her side of the matter, it may be necessary to refer straight to Stage 3. If informal routes seem not to have been exhausted, a formal complaint may be referred to informal resolution.

3.2 A student wishing to make a formal complaint must do so in writing. The written statement initiates the formal process and must include a description of what has been alleged to have happened to give rise to the complaint including dates, times, any other details, and the detriment or disadvantage which the student has suffered as a result. The statement should include:

- the name of the person or College department against whom/which the complaint is made (but a complaint need not necessarily be against a person or department)
- the name of any witnesses who will corroborate the complaint, including a written statement from each to say that they have given their consent
- documentary evidence, together with a list of contents and numbered pages
- if they wish, an outline of what action a student would like to be taken, or what remedy he or she is seeking
- if desired, the name of the person who has agreed to accompany, support, or represent the student at any meeting or hearing.

It would be sensible for the student to discuss the written statement of the complaint with an appropriate advisor (for example those listed in paragraph 1.2). The complaint should be addressed to the Master.

3.3 The complaint will be referred to a Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three members:

- a Chair, who will be a senior member of the College
- at least one other senior member of the College
- one student member of the College.

3.4 The members of the Panel for a particular complaint will be appointed by the Master (or an officer designated by him). Either complainant or complainees will have an opportunity to object, for good cause, to a person designated, and the Chair of the Panel will rule on such objection (or the Master will rule if the objection is to the Chair). Either complainant or complainees will have an opportunity to request, for good cause, that the student member be replaced by a third senior member, and the Chair of the Panel will rule on such objection. There will normally be at least one member of each gender on the Panel.

3.5 Normally, the Chair of the Panel will arrange for the Panel to hear representations about the complaint. The Panel shall determine its own procedure. At such a hearing the student will present his or her case, and any person or department complained against will have a right to reply. Witnesses or others making statements will be heard at the discretion of the Panel. The student (and any person or institution concerned) may speak in person or be represented. Notice of the hearing shall be given to the student, and any person to whom notice of a complaint has been given. At the end of the hearing the Panel shall consider their decision in private, and shall notify it in writing as soon as possible, with reasons.

3.6 The Panel may make recommendations as to the remedies, if any, to be adopted.

3.7 The Panel shall have the power to terminate the proceedings, to determine that a complaint is vexatious or frivolous, or to refer the complaint for informal resolution as in Stage 2. The panel will give reasons for its decision.

3.8 No documents should be taken into consideration which are not available to the student, the Panel, and any other person or institution concerned. The Chair of the Panel may request the disclosure of documents requested by the student or any person or department concerned. The Chair must seek to ensure that appropriate safeguards are made for confidentiality of disclosed documents.

3.9 The Master shall nominate an administrative officer to act as secretary of the Panel. Either complainant or complainee will have an opportunity to object, for good cause, to a person designated, and the Chair of the Panel will rule on such objection. The officer shall be present throughout the whole proceedings of the Panel, and shall draft the reasoned decision of the Panel and a report on the proceedings, for use in connection with monitoring and the preparation of the annual report on complaints.

#### **TIMING**

4 Exceptional circumstances apart, a complaint shall be made under Stage 2 or Stage 3 within three months of the occurrence of the matter complained about.

#### **APPEALS**

5 If any party wishes to lodge an Appeal they should state the reason in writing to the Master who will refer the matter to the GB. No person involved in the formal procedure should sit on the GB as it discusses the issue.

If you have been unable to resolve a complaint to your satisfaction via the College's own internal complaints procedures, you have a right to apply to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. This official body will conduct an independent review without any charge of the Student. For details of the OIA Student Complaints Scheme, including the remit of the scheme and the time limits for application, please see the website: [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)