

Preston's College

**HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT COMPLAINTS**  
Guidance Notes for Students

## Higher Education Student Complaints - Guidance Notes for Students

**Policy/Procedure Owner:** ELT

**Date Approved:** 11 May 2021

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**Responsibility for Review:** Head of Quality

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Applicable to students: Yes

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Undertaken with:	Yes/No:	Date:
Board/Committee		
ELT	Yes	11 May 2021 August 2019
CMT		
Unions		
Students		
Employees		
Employers/Stakeholders		

**Any Associated Documentation, for Reference:**

Complaints Policy and Procedure, Student Protection Plan, Access and Participation Statement

## Higher Education Student Complaints - Guidance notes for students

These notes offer guidance as to what to do if you wish to complain about courses or services provided by the College or about certain other College-related matters. They tell you who to contact and how to seek further advice. Information is available separately about other specific procedures (eg on harassment, academic appeals).

To access the detailed description of the Student Complaints Policy and Procedures and the formal Student Complaint Form, please use the following link: [www.preston.ac.uk](http://www.preston.ac.uk)

**It is really important that you read the College Complaints Policy and Procedure as it will give you a more detailed description of what you need to do and what to expect.**

Before you decide to make a formal complaint, you should bear in mind:

1. Informal resolution of the complaint should always be the preferred option:
  - Matters can frequently be resolved quickly and informally by talking directly to the person providing the service. If this is not possible or if you fail to receive a satisfactory response, then discuss the issue(s) with the person with overall responsibility for the service concerned (usually a Head of Area or Head of Service, or Office).
2. If you decide to submit a formal complaint it must be in writing and signed either by the person making the complaint or on their behalf by a person recognised as having a legitimate interest.
  - A frivolous, malicious, libellous or vexatious complaint can jeopardise the effective use of the procedure and may not be considered. Nor may a complaint be considered if it is in, or accompanied by, an unacceptable form of behaviour.
  - If after reading these notes you are still unsure about how to make your views known, please consult a member of staff in Learner Support, or the HE Manager for further advice.

### Who can submit a complaint under these procedures?

This procedure applies to all Higher Education (HE) students who are studying a course at the College. The related procedures are relevant to these HE students and the College staff administering them.

If the course is delivered by the College but is in partnership with a university, then student complaints need to be directed to the College in the first instance, if the complaint is directly related to the College. If the complaint is directly related to the partner university then please inform your course leader that you have a complaint against the university, as they may be able to help or advise. **In the first instance, speak with the course leader to try and resolve the matter informally.**

For the **University of Derby**, please refer to their policies and procedures:  
<https://www.derby.ac.uk/about/academic-regulations/>

For the **University of Central Lancashire**, please refer to their policies and procedures:  
<https://www.uclan.ac.uk/students/support/complaints.php>

If your complaint is about services provided by the College, you should complain to the College using its procedures. If your complaint is about services provided by the partner University, you should complain using the partner university's procedures.

### **Why should I want to make my views known?**

As part of its quality assurance processes, the College is keen to ensure that the courses, information, services and facilities which it provides meet the needs of students and other interested parties, eg employers and members of the general public. We welcome comments and suggestions about how things can be improved.

### **How can I make my views known?**

If you wish to comment about any general aspect of the College's activities, please make contact with the appropriate part of the College:

- In person, at the Student Services desk
- By letter: Customer Relations  
Student Services  
Preston's College  
St Vincent's Road  
Preston  
PR2 8UR
- E-mail: [complaints@preston.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@preston.ac.uk)

### **How do I make a complaint?**

Whilst we always welcome comments and suggestions about how things might be improved, we also recognise that students and others with a legitimate interest have a right to complain if they feel something is wrong.

Please remember that circumstances are sometimes determined outside the College by the Government, legal provisions or other regulations – you should receive an explanation if this is the case. Similarly, there can sometimes be a problem because the resources available to the College are restricted – you should be told how these constraints relate to your comment or complaint.

Student Services and/or the HE Manager can help advise you on the procedure for making a formal complaint, including whether other procedures are more appropriate. You can also contact the National Union of Students for help and advice: <https://nus.org.uk/>

The College will maintain a confidential record of all formal complaints to monitor their handling and to record the outcomes. The Vice Principal Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support produces an annual report which highlights anonymously any major issues for the College.

### **Who can complain?**

The complaints procedure is open to current and prospective higher education learners. Former learners may complain within a reasonable time period, normally 3 calendar months from leaving the College.

### **What happens if I formally complain?**

When you make a formal complaint this is recorded and you should receive an acknowledgement within 5 working days. It is the College's aim that most complaints will be resolved within 20 working days. You will be informed if there is likely to be any delay in the process.

You may be asked to provide further information in person or in writing. You may also request to attend a meeting, if further discussion is required. Unless you agree to an informal resolution of your complaint, you will receive a written response, which will address the issues raised.

**What if I am unhappy with the result?**

If you feel that the complaint has not been handled properly, or the decision is unreasonable or unfair then you will be able to place an appeal (stage 2 of the College's complaints procedure), but this must be made in writing within 15 days of the date of the College's written response.

You can obtain guidance and advice from Learner Services and/or the HE Manager, or HE Student Rep, or the NUS.

**Independent Review for Higher Education Students**

A Completion of Procedures letter or referral to a partner university's procedure, will be issued within 10 working days of the decision and outcome of the stage 2 complaint, or the decision of the Appeal Manager to dismiss the stage 2 complaint.

Higher Education students studying one of Preston's College's Higher Education Institution accredited courses, will be made aware that you have now exhausted Preston's College's complaints procedure. Should you wish to appeal the College's decision, you will need to follow the complaints/review procedure of the relevant partner university.

Preston's College subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint you may be able to apply for a review of your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provided that the complaint you take to the OIA is eligible under its Rules. You can check whether your complaint is eligible by visiting [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)

Higher Education students studying one of Preston's College's externally accredited courses will be informed that in the event of dissatisfaction with college delivery at the stage 2 outcome, that the complainant is not reasonably satisfied with the outcome at the Complaint Review Stage, they may request an independent review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). In order to do so the complainant must obtain a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter from the College. This confirms that the institution has completed consideration of the case through local procedures.

Should you decide to make a complaint to the OIA, your OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA within 12 months from the original complaint date.

You can fill in the OIA's complaint form online or download a copy from the OIA website. <http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/oia-complaint-form.aspx>. The OIA also publishes An Introduction to the OIA Scheme for Students, which can be downloaded from [http://oiahe.org.uk/media/42715/oia\\_intro\\_leaflet\\_16pp.pdf](http://oiahe.org.uk/media/42715/oia_intro_leaflet_16pp.pdf). Alternatively, you can telephone or write to the OIA for a form.

Guidance on submitting a complaint to the OIA and the OIA Complaint Form can also be found on the OIA's website <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia.aspx>. You may also wish to seek advice from the Students' Union about taking your complaint to the OIA.

Please note that the OIA will normally only review issues that have been dealt with through the provider's internal procedures.

**Am I risking my results or services by complaining?**

No – please be reassured that you will not be disadvantaged in any way. The College welcomes complaints as a positive aspect of service monitoring and improvement and as an important aspect of student welfare.

## HE Student Complaints Procedure Summary Flowchart

