

Students' Complaints Procedure – Staff behaviour

Any student wishing to raise a complaint about the behaviour of a member of the College staff towards them, another member/s of College or any visitor/s to the College should do so under this procedure. No student will be disadvantaged or victimised for raising a complaint.

Note that complaints related to a student's accommodation and the servicing and maintenance thereof should be raised under the [Student and Staff Accommodation Complaints Procedure](#).

Raising a complaint

Any student who suffers or witnesses behaviour from a member of staff that they believe to be unreasonable or unacceptable should take that complaint in the first instance to the Senior Tutor. This may be done in the following ways:

- The student may approach the Senior Tutor directly by email (senior.tutor@cai.cam.ac.uk) or arrange to meet him/her to explain the nature of the complaint. In any meeting with the Senior Tutor, the student/s raising the complaint may be accompanied as a supporter by their Tutor or by another student otherwise unconnected to the complaint including a member of the GCSU Committee.
- The student may first raise the case with their own Tutor who will then pass on the details of the complaint to the Senior Tutor. In meeting with their Tutor, the student may be accompanied if they wish by another student as above. The Senior Tutor may *either* request a meeting with the student concerned at which the student may be accompanied as above *or* the Senior Tutor may decide that no further meeting is necessary at this stage and instigate the complaint procedure.
- The student may raise the case with either of the [College Discrimination and Harassment Contacts](#). This can be done by email (cdhc@cai.cam.ac.uk) or by meeting with them during their advertised tutorial hours. A complaint raised in this way will be handled in the same way as if raised with the Tutor.

Once a complaint has been raised with the Senior Tutor, s/he will agree with the student whether the student wishes the complaint to be dealt with informally or formally. In either case, this will be reported to the Head of Department of the staff member about whom the

complaint has been made or, if the complaint is about the Head of Department, with their line manager. It is important that as the matter proceeds the complainant respects the confidentiality of those involved.

Process for dealing with an informal complaint

Informal processes will be applied where appropriate in line with best practice to resolve minor issues without the need for further escalation. An informal complaint will be addressed early between the parties involved and should normally be resolved within 7 to 14 days of the matter being raised.

Process for dealing with a formal complaint

Formal complaints concerning staff, whether by students or others, are dealt with under a code of practice developed by the Arbitration and Conciliation Service ([ACAS](#)) which forms the basis for the disciplinary policy for staff set out in the College's Staff Handbook. Employment law requirements also apply. Fairness and transparency for the member of the staff underlie the disciplinary policy and its processes. The next two paragraphs summarise the Staff Handbook disciplinary policy.

A formal process may be implemented if a) an informal concern is inappropriate given the nature of the issue or b) a student does not feel a satisfactory outcome has been reached under the informal process. This starts by establishing the facts and an investigation would be carried out by a member of staff with experience in this process. If the investigation establishes that there is a case to answer a disciplinary hearing will normally follow, heard before a panel who have not been involved in the investigation. Information, documents and any relevant statements are provided to the member of staff complained about to ensure fairness and transparency.

At a hearing the member of staff complained about has the right to be accompanied by a companion, who may be a representative of a trade union. Before reaching a decision the hearing panel may require further investigation. The decision of the panel may, on the one hand, dismiss the complaint or, on the other, apply any of a range of sanctions from an oral warning, through written warning to final written warning or dismissal. Some actions may constitute 'gross misconduct' and be so grievous as to merit summary dismissal without warning. The member of staff may appeal against a decision. Any appeal would be heard by a panel that was not conflicted by earlier involvement in the process.

Once the complaint process has been completed in accordance with the Staff Handbook, the Head of Department will inform the Senior Tutor who will then inform the complainant that the process is complete. Employment law prevents the disclosure to a third-party complainant of specific personal details of individual members of staff, including when disciplinary action has been taken.

Unresolved complaint

If a student feels that their complaint has not been handled in accordance with the process described above or the principles laid out in the appendix then they can raise the issue with the Master (master@cai.cam.ac.uk) who will investigate further. If the student remains unhappy after this stage then they can contact the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education](#).

Appendix

Principles

The College is committed to investigating complaints fairly, quickly and courteously using the procedure below. As part of this the College undertakes to act in accordance with the following principles:

- There is an expectation that all parties involved will respect each other. That is part of the community ethos of the College.
- Students will not be disadvantaged or victimised for making a complaint.
- Any complaint should normally be brought within one calendar month of the incident which is the subject of the complaint except in cases where circumstances are involved which might legitimately delay the bringing of a complaint.
- Details of any complaint will need to be shared with staff in order to give them the right to respond.
- Occasionally, the College may need to suspend an investigation on health grounds which may affect the timeframes involved.
- Where the complaint is of a criminal nature the College may halt proceedings and refer the matter to the police.
- The standard of proof in any investigation involving employees is the balance of probabilities.
- Information received during the process will remain confidential to those involved and those who may need to be consulted to reach an outcome (except in the event of disclosure requirements e.g. safeguarding, PREVENT)