



ST JOHN'S
COLLEGE

Student Complaints Procedure

St John's College, Durham

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1. Purpose

St John's College, including Cranmer Hall, is committed to providing a high-quality student experience, rooted in our values of kindness, curiosity and gratitude. We recognise that, despite everyone's best efforts, things can sometimes go wrong.

We encourage students to raise concerns so they can be resolved fairly, promptly and, wherever possible, informally. We also use feedback and complaints to improve our services, strengthen the student experience and help ensure that we continue to meet the high standards we set ourselves.

This Procedure explains how students can raise a complaint about services or academic provision delivered by St John's College, including Cranmer Hall, and how those complaints will be considered. It provides a single complaints procedure for all St John's and Cranmer Hall students. The Procedure intersects with the **University's Student Complaint Procedure** and, for students studying on Common Awards programmes, reflects the requirements of the **Common Awards Complaints Procedure**. It also takes account of the **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) Good Practice Framework: Handling complaints and academic appeals**.

This Procedure should be read alongside other relevant College and University policies. Some concerns, such as allegations of bullying or harassment, sexual misconduct, student misconduct and academic appeals, are managed under separate procedures. If a concern falls outside the scope of this Procedure, the College will explain the appropriate process and how to access it.

2. Guiding principles

The College is committed to handling complaints in a way that is fair, transparent and proportionate. Throughout this Procedure, the following principles apply:

- **Early resolution:** Wherever possible, concerns should be resolved quickly and informally at the point they arise.
- **Fairness:** Complaints will be considered objectively and without bias. Everyone involved will have the opportunity to explain their perspective before a decision is reached.
- **Independence:** Formal complaints will normally be considered by a member of staff who has had no prior involvement in the matter.
- **Timeliness:** Complaints will be handled as promptly as possible. Where it is not possible to meet the timescales set out in this Procedure, the student will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with a revised timeframe.
- **Respect and confidentiality:** Complaints will be handled sensitively and information will only be shared with those who need it to consider or respond to the complaint. Absolute confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed where a fair investigation requires information to be shared.

- **Support:** Students may seek advice or support from an appropriate member of College staff, the Students' Union or another supporter of their choice throughout the complaints process.
- **No disadvantage or reprisal:** A student will not be disadvantaged or subject to reprisal for raising a complaint, or participating in the complaints process, in good faith. Students should be able to raise concerns without fear of adverse consequences as a result of doing so. However, where information comes to light during a complaint which indicates that another College or University policy may have been breached, that matter may be considered separately under the appropriate procedure.
- **Learning and improvement:** The College will use complaints, where appropriate, to identify opportunities to improve its services, practices and the wider student experience.

3. Scope

This section explains who can use this Procedure and the types of concerns that may be raised under it.

Who can use this Procedure?

This Procedure applies to all registered students of St John's College, including students of Cranmer Hall.

Complaints may be made by an individual student or by a group of students where they are raising the same concern. In such cases, the College may ask the group to nominate one student to act as the main point of contact.

Students may be accompanied or represented throughout the complaints process by a current member of the College or University community, a Durham Students' Union representative, or another supporter of their choice.

What can I complain about?

This Procedure may be used to raise concerns about the quality, standard or delivery of services or academic provision provided by St John's College (including Cranmer Hall). This may include, but is not limited to:

College services and student experience

- accommodation and housekeeping
- catering and hospitality services
- College facilities and learning spaces
- student support and wellbeing services
- College administration and communication
- information provided by the College
- other aspects of the wider College experience.

Cranmer Hall academic provision

- teaching and learning
- supervision and academic support
- arrangements for teaching or assessment
- assessed placements
- formation and worship provision
- administrative or support services relating to academic programmes.

This list is intended as a guide and is not exhaustive.

Where a complaint relates to College-managed accommodation or associated services, the College will consider the complaint with reference to the standards set out in the [UUK/GuildHE Student Accommodation Code \("The Student Accommodation Code"\)](#), to which the College subscribes.¹

Matters covered by other procedures

Some concerns are managed under separate College or University policies because they require specialist processes or are subject to statutory or regulatory requirements.

This Procedure does not apply to:

- allegations of bullying or harassment
- allegations of sexual misconduct or sexual violence
- allegations of misconduct by another student
- student disciplinary matters
- academic appeals
- academic misconduct
- admissions decisions relating to programmes other than Cranmer Hall programmes
- teaching and learning relating to programmes other than Cranmer Hall programmes
- employment matters involving members of staff
- whistleblowing or protected disclosures
- incidents elsewhere in the University that are not the responsibility of the College
- safeguarding concerns requiring immediate intervention.

If a concern falls outside the scope of this Procedure, the College will explain the appropriate process and how to access it.

Where appropriate, students may instead be directed to one of the following:

¹ <https://www.accommodationcode.ac.uk/>

Concern	Procedure
Concern about a University service or academic provision	Durham University Complaint Procedure for Students https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/student-support-and-wellbeing/student-conduct/student-complaints/
Bullying or harassment by a member of College staff	St John's Student Bullying and Harassment by Staff Policy and Procedure
Sexual misconduct or sexual violence by a member of College staff	Procedure for Managing Disclosures or Reports Involving Allegations of Staff Sexual Violence and Misconduct
Sexual misconduct or sexual violence by another student	Durham University Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/student-support-and-wellbeing/student-conduct/sexual-misconduct-violence/policy-procedure/
Bullying, harassment or misconduct by another student	Durham University Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure and, where appropriate, the Durham University Non-Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Procedure https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/student-support-and-wellbeing/student-conduct/bullying-harassment/ https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/student-support-and-wellbeing/student-conduct/non-academic-misconduct-discipline/
Academic appeals	Durham University Academic Appeals Procedure or, for students studying on Common Awards programmes, the relevant Common Awards Academic Appeals Procedure https://www.durham.ac.uk/about-us/professional-services/academic-appeals-misconduct/academic-appeals/ https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/policies-processes/student-support/complaints-appeals/appeals-procedure/
Academic misconduct	Durham University Academic Misconduct Procedures https://www.durham.ac.uk/about-us/professional-services/academic-appeals-misconduct/academic-misconduct/

Concern	Procedure
Concern about a University service or academic provision	Durham University Complaint Procedure for Students https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/student-support-and-wellbeing/student-conduct/student-complaints/
Safeguarding concerns	St John's Safeguarding Policy https://www.stjohnsdurham.ac.uk/discover/policies-information/safeguarding/

Freedom of speech

St John's College is committed to protecting lawful freedom of speech and academic freedom in accordance with its [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#). The lawful expression of views, respectful disagreement or participation in academic debate will not, in itself, constitute grounds for a complaint under this Procedure. Where concerns relate to freedom of speech, this Procedure should be read alongside the College's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

4. Raising a concern informally

The College encourages students to raise concerns as soon as possible so that they can often be resolved quickly and informally. Many issues can be addressed without the need for a formal complaint.

Depending on the nature of the concern, informal resolution may include:

- discussing the matter with the member of staff or service concerned;
- raising the issue with an appropriate member of College staff, such as the Student Support team, Reception, a relevant manager or another relevant member of staff they trust;
- a meeting with the relevant parties to discuss the concern and explore a resolution;
- a facilitated conversation or mediation, where appropriate and agreed by those involved;
- the College raising feedback on a student's behalf with the relevant department or member of staff;
- an explanation, apology or practical action to resolve the concern.

Students are encouraged to seek informal resolution within one month of the matter arising, where this is appropriate. However, there may be circumstances where this is not possible or appropriate, particularly where the matter is serious or where a student does not feel able to raise the concern informally.

Students are welcome to seek advice from the Student Support team or another appropriate member of College staff before deciding whether to raise a formal complaint. College staff can

help students understand the available options, discuss the most appropriate way to raise their concern and explain what outcomes may be possible. Seeking advice does not commit a student to making a formal complaint.

Students are not expected to seek informal resolution where this would be inappropriate. This may include situations where:

- the matter is particularly serious;
- the student does not feel comfortable or safe raising the concern informally;
- there is a significant imbalance of power between those involved;
- previous attempts at informal resolution have been unsuccessful; or
- the student has another reasonable justification for requesting that the matter be considered formally.

5. Making a formal complaint

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, or if informal resolution is not appropriate, students may submit a formal complaint under this Procedure.

A formal complaint should normally be submitted within one month of the matter giving rise to the complaint. Complaints received outside this timescale will normally only be considered where the student can demonstrate reasonable justification for the delay.

Formal complaints should be submitted using the **Student Complaint Form**, together with any supporting evidence.

- **St John's students** should submit their complaint by email to johns.secretary@durham.ac.uk.
- **Cranmer Hall students** should submit their complaint by email to cranmer.warden@durham.ac.uk.

A formal complaint should include:

- a clear description of the concern;
- the events giving rise to the complaint, including relevant dates where possible;
- details of any steps already taken to resolve the matter informally, where applicable;
- any supporting evidence the student wishes the College to consider; and
- the outcome or resolution the student is seeking.

Where a complaint is submitted without sufficient information, the College may ask the student to provide further details before the complaint can be considered.

Formal complaints cannot normally be considered if they are submitted anonymously, as this would prevent the College from investigating the matter fairly or providing an outcome. Students who have concerns about identifying themselves are encouraged to seek advice from the Student Support team or another appropriate member of College staff before submitting a complaint.

The College recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances, particularly where there are concerns about safety or wellbeing, in which anonymous information may need to be

considered. In such cases, the College will decide whether any action can reasonably be taken based on the information provided.

The College will normally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within five working days and will explain the next steps, including who will be responsible for considering the complaint.

Unreasonable behaviour in pursuing a complaint

The College is committed to considering complaints fairly and will not disadvantage a student because they have raised a complaint in good faith.

In a small number of cases, the way in which a complaint is pursued may become unreasonable, for example through persistent repetition of matters that have already been considered, excessive or inappropriate contact, abusive behaviour, or refusal to engage reasonably with the Procedure.

Where this occurs, the College may take proportionate steps to manage the process, including setting reasonable limits on the frequency or method of communication, identifying a single point of contact, or bringing consideration of matters that have already been fully addressed to a close. The student will be told the reasons for any such arrangements.

A complaint will not be regarded as unreasonable simply because it is unsuccessful, challenging or critical of the College.

6. What happens next?

Once a formal complaint has been received, an initial review will be carried out by the Vice Principal's Office for St John's students or the Warden's Office for Cranmer Hall students to determine how the complaint should be handled.

This review will consider whether:

- the complaint falls within the scope of this Procedure;
- another College or University procedure is more appropriate;
- sufficient information has been provided to understand the complaint; and
- there remains an opportunity to resolve the matter informally, if appropriate and with the agreement of those involved.

Where the complaint falls outside the scope of this Procedure, the College will explain the appropriate process and, where possible, direct the student to the relevant policy or procedure.

If the complaint is accepted under this Procedure, the College will appoint an appropriate member of staff to consider the complaint. Wherever possible, this will be someone who has had no prior involvement in the matter.

The College may also appoint an appropriately experienced person from outside the College to investigate the complaint, or seek external assistance with the investigation, where this would support the fair and effective consideration of the complaint.

The person considering the complaint may:

- meet with the student making the complaint;
- meet with the member of staff or others involved;
- request further information or evidence from those involved;
- seek advice from other members of staff where appropriate; and
- consider any relevant documents, records or policies.

The complaint will be considered on the balance of probabilities, based on the information available.

The College aims to provide a written outcome within 20 working days of acknowledging the complaint. Where this is not possible, the student will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with an updated timescale.

7. Outcome of the complaint

Following consideration of the complaint, the College will provide the student with a written outcome explaining:

- the complaint that was considered;
- how the complaint was investigated;
- the findings reached;
- the reasons for the decision; and
- any action the College will take, where appropriate.

A complaint may be:

- **Upheld**, where the complaint is found to be justified.
- **Upheld in part**, where some aspects of the complaint are upheld and others are not.
- **Not upheld**, where the evidence does not support the complaint or where there is insufficient evidence to conclude, on the balance of probabilities, that the complaint is justified.

Where a complaint is upheld or upheld in part, the College will consider what action is appropriate to resolve the matter and, where possible, prevent similar issues arising in future. This may include, for example:

- an explanation or apology;
- changes to College processes or practices;
- practical steps to address the student's concerns; or
- other actions considered appropriate in the circumstances.

Regardless of the outcome, the College may identify wider learning or service improvements arising from the complaint where appropriate.

The outcome letter will explain the reasons for the decision and advise the student of any right to request a review under this Procedure.

8. Requesting a review of the outcome

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they may request a review of the decision. A request for review should normally be submitted within 10 working days of the outcome letter and should explain the grounds on which the review is requested. A review is not a rehearing of the complaint or an opportunity to present the same arguments again. It will normally only be considered where there is evidence that:

- the Procedure was not followed correctly and this may have affected the outcome;
- new evidence has become available which could not reasonably have been provided during the original investigation and which may have affected the outcome; or
- the decision reached could not reasonably be supported by the evidence available.

A request for review should be made by email and should include:

- the date of the original complaint;
- the date of the outcome letter;
- the grounds on which the review is requested;
- any new evidence being relied upon, where applicable; and
- the outcome the student is seeking.

Requests for review should be submitted to:

- **St John's students:** johns.secretary@durham.ac.uk
- **Cranmer Hall students:** cranmer.warden@durham.ac.uk

The review will be carried out by a senior member of the College, or another appropriately experienced person appointed by the College, who has not previously been involved in the complaint. This may include an independent person from outside the College. The reviewer may:

- uphold the original decision;
- amend the original decision;
- refer the complaint back for further investigation; or
- recommend other appropriate action.

The College will normally provide the outcome within 20 working days. Where this is not possible, the student will be informed of the reason for the delay and given a revised timescale.

Students studying on Common Awards programmes

Students studying on Common Awards programmes who have made a complaint regarding academic matters should not request a review under this section. Instead, following the outcome of the College's formal complaints procedure, they have a right to request a review under the [Common Awards Complaints Procedure](https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/policies-processes/student-support/complaints-appeals/complaints-procedure/)². Information about how to request a review will be provided with the outcome letter.

² <https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/policies-processes/student-support/complaints-appeals/complaints-procedure/>

9. Completion of the Procedure

Students using the College Review process

The review outcome represents the completion of the College's internal complaints procedure. Once the College's internal procedures have been completed, the student will receive a *Completion of Procedures* Letter confirming that there are no further stages of review within the College.

Students who remain dissatisfied may be able to refer their complaint to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education \(OIA\)](#), provided the complaint falls within the OIA's remit. Information about the OIA and how to make a complaint will be included with the *Completion of Procedures* Letter.³

Students studying on Common Awards programmes

The outcome of the College's formal complaints procedure does not represent the end of the Common Awards complaints process, for students on a Common Awards programme whose complaint relates to academic matters. Students who remain dissatisfied may request a review by Durham University under the [Common Awards Complaints Procedure](#). Information about how to request a review, including the applicable timescales and grounds for review, will be included with the College's outcome letter.

Once Durham University's review process has been completed, Durham University will issue a **Completion of Procedures Letter**, where appropriate, confirming that there are no further stages of internal review. Students who remain dissatisfied may then be able to refer their complaint to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education \(OIA\)](#), provided the complaint falls within the OIA's remit.

10. Records, confidentiality and continuous improvement

The College will maintain appropriate records of complaints raised under this Procedure in accordance with data protection legislation and the College's records management requirements.

Complaints will normally be handled confidentially. Information will only be shared with those who need it in order to consider, investigate or respond to the complaint. Students should be aware that, in the interests of fairness, the person or service that is the subject of a complaint will normally be informed of the complaint and given an opportunity to respond. Complete confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed where information must be shared to ensure a fair investigation or to meet legal, safeguarding or regulatory obligations.

The College will monitor complaints to identify themes, trends and opportunities to improve services, policies and the wider student experience. Where appropriate, learning arising from complaints will inform future policy, practice and staff training.

³ <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

This Procedure will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains effective, reflects sector good practice and continues to meet the requirements of Durham University, the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#), the [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#) and, where applicable, the [UUK/GuildHE Student Accommodation Code](#).