

Regent European University

Complaints and Appeals Policy

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1. Introduction and Scope

1.1 Purpose

This Policy establishes the framework for handling student complaints and academic appeals at Regent European University (REU). It ensures fair, transparent, and timely resolution of issues while maintaining high standards of academic integrity and student support.

1.2 Scope

This Policy applies to all students enrolled at REU across all programmes, levels of study, and modes of delivery, including:

- Current students
- Recent graduates (within 6 months of completion)
- Applicants who have received an offer or been rejected
- Students on placement or studying under REU programmes

1.3 Principles

REU is committed to:

- **Fairness:** Ensuring impartial consideration of all complaints and appeals
- **Transparency:** Providing clear processes and timelines
- **Accessibility:** Making procedures available to all students regardless of background
- **Timeliness:** Resolving matters promptly and efficiently
- **Learning:** Using feedback to improve our services and processes

2. Definitions

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about something REU has done or not done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of REU.

Academic Appeal: A formal request to review an academic decision, typically related to assessment outcomes, academic misconduct findings, or progression decisions.

Academic Misconduct: Any action that compromises academic integrity, as defined in REU's Academic Integrity Policy.

Working Days: Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays and university closure periods.

Student Representative: A person who accompanies and supports a student during formal proceedings, who may be another student, Student Union representative, or advisor.

3. General Principles

3.1 Accessibility and Support

REU ensures that all complaints and appeals processes are:

- Clearly explained and easily accessible
- Available in multiple formats where needed
- Supported by appropriate guidance and assistance
- Conducted with sensitivity to individual circumstances

3.2 Independence and Impartiality

All formal investigations are conducted by staff who:

- Have had no previous involvement in the matter
- Can demonstrate objectivity and impartiality
- Possess appropriate expertise and authority
- Follow established procedures consistently

3.3 Proportionality

The response to complaints and appeals is proportionate to:

- The seriousness of the issue raised
- The potential impact on the student and others
- The resources required for resolution
- The likelihood of successful resolution

3.4 Continuous Improvement

REU uses complaints and appeals as opportunities to:

- Identify areas for improvement
- Enhance student experience
- Strengthen policies and procedures
- Promote organisational learning

4. Student Complaints

4.1 Definition and Scope

A student complaint may relate to:

- Quality of teaching or learning support
- Administrative services and processes
- Facilities and resources
- Staff conduct or behaviour
- Discriminatory treatment
- Failure to follow published procedures
- Inadequate communication
- Any other aspect of the student experience

The following matters are not handled under the complaints procedure:

- Academic Appeals: Challenges to academic decisions (see Section 5)
- Academic Misconduct: Appeals against academic integrity findings

- Employment Matters: Issues related to student employment
- Third Party Issues: Matters involving external organisations
- Anonymous Complaints: Unless exceptional circumstances apply
- Vexatious Complaints: Repeated or manifestly unreasonable complaints

4.2 Student Complaints Process

The complaints process has three stages:

1. Informal Resolution: Local, informal attempts to resolve the matter
2. Formal Investigation: Independent investigation with written outcome
3. Review of Decision: Review of the formal investigation process and outcome

Students are encouraged to attempt informal resolution before proceeding to formal stages.

4.3 Stage 1: Informal Resolution

REU strongly encourages the resolution of complaints at the informal stage wherever possible, as this often provides the quickest and most effective means of addressing student concerns. Students may seek guidance and support from Student Support Services at any stage of this process to help them articulate their concerns or understand available options.

4.4.1 Process

Students should first raise their concerns directly with the relevant staff member or department as soon as possible after the event occurs. Staff will make every effort to resolve matters informally within 10 working days, working collaboratively with students to find mutually acceptable solutions.

Informal resolution may include:

- Explanation or clarification of decisions
- Apology where appropriate
- Corrective action to prevent recurrence
- Agreement on alternative arrangements
- Referral to appropriate support services

4.4.2 Escalation

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, students may proceed to Stage 2.

4.4 Stage 2: Formal Investigation

4.5.1 Submission

Students must submit a formal complaint within 20 working days of:

- The event giving rise to the complaint, or
- Completion of Stage 1 (if applicable)

The complaint must include:

- Clear statement of the issue and desired outcome
- Chronology of relevant events
- Supporting evidence and documentation
- Details of any previous attempts at resolution

4.5.2 Acknowledgement

Regent European University will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days and provide:

- Confirmation of receipt and assigned reference number
- Name of investigating officer
- Expected timeframe for investigation
- Information about support available

4.5.3 Investigation

The investigating officer will:

- Review all relevant documentation
- Interview relevant parties where appropriate
- Consider all evidence fairly and objectively
- Consult with subject matter experts if needed
- Prepare a comprehensive investigation report

4.5.4 Outcome

REU will provide a written response within 20 working days of acknowledgement, including:

- Summary of the complaint and investigation
- Findings on each aspect of the complaint
- Decision with clear reasoning
- Any remedial action to be taken
- Information about Stage 3 review rights

4.5.5 Possible Outcomes

- Complaint upheld: Issue accepted and remedial action identified
- Complaint partially upheld: Some aspects accepted, others not
- Complaint not upheld: Issue not substantiated by evidence
- Complaint withdrawn: Student chooses to withdraw the complaint

4.5 Stage 3: Review of Decision

4.6.1 Grounds for Review

Students may request a review only on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularities: Material departures from established procedures

- New evidence: Significant evidence not available during Stage 2
- Bias or conflict of interest: Evidence of unfair treatment
- Disproportionate outcome: Decision or remedy not proportionate to findings

4.6.2 Submission

Review requests must be submitted within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome, including:

- Specific grounds for review with supporting evidence
- Clear statement of desired outcome
- Copy of original complaint and Stage 2 response

4.6.3 Review Process

An independent Review Panel will:

- Consider whether grounds for review are established
- Review the investigation process and evidence
- Interview parties only if necessary
- Focus on procedural correctness rather than re-investigation

4.6.4 Outcome

The Review Panel will issue a final decision within 15 working days, which may:

- Confirm the Stage 2 decision: No procedural errors identified
- Require fresh investigation: Significant procedural flaws identified
- Substitute alternative outcome: Where evidence clearly supports different conclusion This decision is final within REU's complaints procedure.

5. Academic Appeals

5.1 Definition and Scope

An academic appeal is a formal request to review an academic decision that directly affects a student's academic progress, assessment outcomes, or academic standing.

Assessment appeals may relate to:

- Module assessment marks
- Overall module outcomes
- Degree classification
- Award recommendations
- Progression decisions

5.2 Grounds for Academic Appeal

Academic appeals may be submitted only on the following grounds:

- **Procedural Irregularity**
 - Material failure to follow published assessment procedures
 - Failure to apply approved marking criteria
 - Administrative errors in recording or calculating results
 - Improper conduct of assessment or examination
- **Extenuating Circumstances**
 - Circumstances beyond the student's control that significantly affected performance
 - Circumstances not known to the Assessment Board at time of decision
 - Medical or personal circumstances with appropriate evidence
- **Evidence of Bias or Conflict of Interest**
 - Demonstrable bias in assessment or decisionmaking
 - Undisclosed conflicts of interest
 - Discrimination or unfair treatment
- **New Evidence**
 - Significant evidence not available at time of original decision
 - Evidence that materially affects the academic judgment made

5.3 Academic Appeals Process

Academic appeals follow a two-stage process:

1. Initial Review: Administrative review of appeal grounds and evidence
2. Appeals Hearing: Formal consideration by Academic Appeals Panel

5.3.1 Submission

Appeals must be submitted within 20 working days of notification of results, including:

- Completed Academic Appeals Form
- Clear statement of grounds with supporting evidence
- Copy of relevant assessment feedback and marks
- Evidence of extenuating circumstances (if applicable)

5.3.2 Initial Review

The Academic Registrar or nominee will:

- Verify that appeal grounds are established
- Check for administrative or procedural errors
- Resolve clear-cut cases without formal hearing
- Refer complex cases to Appeals Panel

5.3.3 Appeals Panel Hearing Where a hearing is required:

- Panel comprises senior academic staff not previously involved
- Student may be accompanied by a representative
- Panel reviews all evidence and may interview relevant parties
- Panel focuses on process and procedures rather than re-marking

5.3.4 Outcomes

Appeals Panel may:

- Dismiss the appeal: No grounds established or procedures correctly followed
- Uphold the appeal: Order re-assessment, re-marking, or amended outcome
- Partially uphold: Accept some grounds but not others

- Refer back: Require fresh consideration by Assessment Board

5.4 Academic Misconduct Appeals

5.4.1 Grounds

Students may appeal academic misconduct findings on grounds of:

- Procedural irregularities in investigation
- New evidence of innocence
- Disproportionate penalty
- Bias in investigation or decision-making

5.4.2 Process

Academic misconduct appeals follow the same process as assessment appeals but with additional considerations:

- Review of investigation procedures and evidence
- Consideration of penalty appropriateness
- Possible referral back to Academic Integrity Panel

5.5 Other Academic Appeals

Students may appeal other academic decisions including:

- Admission decisions (where new evidence available)
- Progression requirements
- Programme transfer decisions
- Award of lesser qualification

6. Time Limits and Extensions

6.1 Standard Time Limits

Informal complaints should be raised as soon as possible after the event occurs, while formal complaints must be submitted within 20 working days from the event or Stage 1 completion.

Students wishing to request a review of a Stage 2 decision must do so within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 response.

Academic appeals must be submitted within 20 working days of notification of the academic decision being appealed.

6.2 Extensions

Time limits may be extended where:

- Student demonstrates good reason for delay
- Extenuating circumstances prevented timely submission
- Complex evidence gathering required
- REU contributed to the delay

Extensions must be requested in writing with supporting evidence.

6.3 Late Submissions

Late submissions may be accepted at REU's discretion considering the reasons for delay and supporting evidence, the impact on all parties involved, including considerations around public interest.

7. Support and Representation

7.1 Student Support

Throughout the complaints or appeals process, students may access support from Student Support Services for guidance and assistance; Student Union advisors for representation and advocacy; academic advisors for programme-related matters and procedural guidance; and mental health and wellbeing services where personal circumstances may be affecting their ability to engage with the process.

7.2 Representation

During formal processes, students may be accompanied by:

- Another current REU student
- Student Union representative
- Friend or family member (not acting professionally)
- Professional representative in exceptional circumstances

7.3 Reasonable Adjustments

REU will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate disability-related requirements, language support needs, cultural or religious considerations, or other access requirements.

8. Record Keeping and Data Protection

8.1 Documentation

REU maintains comprehensive records of all complaints and appeals including:

- Original submissions and supporting evidence
- Investigation notes and interview records
- Panel deliberations and decisions
- Outcome notifications and actions taken

8.2 Retention

Records are retained in accordance with REU's Records Management Policy:

- Complaint records: 6 years from resolution
- Appeal records: 6 years from final decision
- Serious misconduct cases: Permanently

- Statistical data: Indefinitely (anonymised)

8.3 Confidentiality

All proceedings are conducted confidentially with information shared only among those directly involved in the process, and with those who need to know for legitimate purposes, in line with current regulatory requirements.

8.4 Data Protection

All personal data is processed in accordance with:

- UK Data Protection Act 2018
 - General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
 - REU's Data Protection Policy
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9. Monitoring and Review

9.1 Annual Reporting

REU shall produce an annual report on complaints and appeals that documents case volumes, types, resolution timeframes, and outcomes to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and institutional standards.

The report analyse trends and patterns to inform strategic planning and risk management, and shall record actions taken and policy recommendations to demonstrate institutional accountability and evidence-based decision-making processes.

9.2 Quality Assurance

The Education Development and Student Experience Committee shall monitor procedural compliance and adherence to published timescales to ensure consistent application of this Policy, oversee decision-making processes to maintain fairness and consistency across all cases, and evaluate student satisfaction and staff competency to identify training requirements and procedural improvements necessary for effective policy implementation.

9.3 External Review

Where complaints or appeals raise serious concerns about academic standards or quality, REU shall notify relevant regulatory bodies as required by statutory obligations, and/or seek external expert review to ensure independent assessment of institutional processes.

In case of identified deficiencies, the University will implement additional quality assurance measures, and report findings and remedial actions to Senate and Council to maintain governance oversight and institutional accountability.

10. Policy Information

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