

College Complaints Procedure for Reuben Students

Agreed by Delegated GB Authority and with effect from 1 August 2021

[Reviewed, and links updated October 2024. Scope of policy clarified February 2025]

A. Introduction

This procedure covers **Complaints** about College matters, such as support and administrative or accommodation services, which are not covered by the separate procedures listed below,

Complaints may be brought by individual students, groups of students or former students.

Complaints relating to the following have separate procedures (see links for details):

- [Admissions](#)
- [Behaviour of other students or members of staff](#) (Harassment and Student Discipline)
- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Bribery and Fraud](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure](#)
- [Freedom of Information](#)
- [University matters](#)
- [Academic appeals](#)

For informal advice about the Complaints process, please contact any College Officer or info@reuben.ox.ac.uk. Advice and support are also available from Oxford University Student Union advice@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk or from Reuben Graduate Common Room Committee members.

B. General Principles

1. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially by all parties involved, except where it is necessary to disclose information to carry out a fair investigation (e.g. your identity will usually be disclosed to a person who is the subject of the Complaint).
2. All parties involved in a Complaint are required to act reasonably and fairly towards each other and to respect the College's procedures.
3. If a Complaint falls across more than one College procedure, the College will deal with the matter as flexibly, fairly and proportionately as possible.
4. Anyone involved in a Complaint may act through a representative who should usually be a member of the College, a member or employee of Oxford University Student Union (for students), or a trade union officer (for members of staff).
5. When meeting with a College Officer, the Vice-President or President under this procedure, a student may be accompanied by a member of College, Oxford University Student Union,

or another student, and a member of staff can be accompanied by another member of University or college staff or a trade union representative.

6. All Complaints will be dealt with promptly. Any time-critical factors set out in the Complaint Form or Review Request Form will be taken into account.
7. Time limits should usually be met by all parties. Time limits may only be extended by the relevant decision-maker where it is necessary to do so in order to ensure a fair outcome.
8. Anonymous Complaints will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where there are compelling reasons to do so.
9. Malicious or vexatious allegations may result in disciplinary action.
10. The College may decline to consider a Complaint where the matters in dispute are currently being considered or have been decided by an external body (such as the OIA or a court or tribunal).
11. There is no right of complaint over matters of academic judgment.
12. No one investigating a Complaint should have any conflict of interest in the matter. If all the possible decision-makers for any stage are conflicted, the President (or another member of Governing Body if the President is themselves conflicted) will appoint a substitute.

C. First Stage: Local Informal Resolution

1. Before raising a Complaint with the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker you should consider whether it is appropriate to attempt to resolve the matter by discussing with the individual(s) who is/are directly involved in the matter. If this is inappropriate, or unsuccessful, you should seek to resolve the matter locally with the relevant College Officer.
2. The relevant College Officers are as follows:
 - a. for academic matters - the Senior Tutor;
 - b. for issues involving domestic College staff, accommodation and services, or financial matters - the Bursar;
 - c. for other behavioural matters - the Dean;
 - d. for complaints about a College Officer - any other College Officer.
3. To resolve the Complaint the College Officer may take any appropriate steps including:
 - a. offering helpful and confidential advice;
 - b. finding a remedy; and/or
 - c. negotiating a reconciliation (in cases where relations have broken down between individuals, and you agree to this course of action).

D. Second Stage: Formal Consideration

1. If your Complaint is not successfully resolved locally, you should complete the Complaint Form (available [here](#)) and submit your Complaint for investigation by the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker by sending it to: info@reuben.ox.ac.uk. A group of students making a joint Complaint must nominate one student as their spokesperson on the Complaint Form.

Exceptionally, the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker may consider a Complaint that is made in another format where it is fair to do so.

2. The 2nd Stage Decision-Maker will be a College Officer who has not previously been involved in your complaint.
3. You should submit your Complaint as soon as possible and at the latest within 3 months of when the matters you are complaining about occurred.
4. The 2nd Stage Decision-Maker Office will ask for evidence that you have tried to resolve the matter locally under the First Stage and may decline to consider your Complaint if you have not done so.
5. The 2nd Stage Decision-Maker will confirm receipt of your Complaint within 5 working days.
6. The 2nd Stage Decision-Maker may decline to consider your Complaint if it is trivial or repeats a Complaint that has already been made.
7. For all other Complaints, the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker may take any steps they consider necessary to investigate, including calling on any person to provide specialist assistance.
8. The 2nd Stage Decision-Maker will usually send details of a Complaint to anyone who is the subject of it and give them up to 5 working days to respond.
9. The 2nd Stage Decision-Maker may request a meeting with you or any other relevant party. Any involved party may also ask the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker for a meeting. Anyone present at such a meeting can inspect any minutes of that meeting on request.
10. The 2nd Stage Decision-Maker will keep you and anyone who is a subject of the Complaint informed of the progress of the investigation.
11. If you withdraw your Complaint at any time the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker may nevertheless decide to continue the investigation if it is appropriate and fair to do so.
12. The 2nd Stage Decision-Maker will usually complete the investigation, make a decision and send you a decision letter, within 30 working days of receipt of the Complaint. If the time limit is extended, the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker will keep you updated about the progress of the investigation.
13. In the decision letter, the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker will explain what steps have been taken and set out the decision, including the reasons for the decision and any directions and/or recommendations. The 2nd Stage Decision-Maker will usually enclose a copy of any evidence material to the decision, unless doing so would breach any duties owed to a third party (such as a duty of confidentiality).
14. The 2nd Stage Decision-Maker will also notify the outcome to anyone who is a subject of the Complaint and any College or University bodies that need to be made aware of it.

E. Third Stage: Review

1. If you are dissatisfied with the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker's decision you may request a review of the decision on one or more of the following grounds:
 - a. there was a procedural irregularity or error in the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker's investigation;
 - b. the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker's decision was unreasonable (you must identify which aspects of the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker's decision you consider to be objectively unreasonable and explain why);
 - c. you were not provided with clear reasons for the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker's decision; or
 - d. you have material evidence which the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker has not yet seen which you have valid reasons for not having provided earlier.
2. The review will be carried out by a Reviewer, who will be the Vice-President or the President, as appropriate. The Reviewer will not have been previously involved in your Complaint.
3. You should submit a Review Request form (available [here](#)) to info@reuben.ox.ac.uk within 10 working days of the date of the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker's decision letter. Exceptionally, the Reviewer may consider a review request made in another format where it is fair to do so.
4. In the first instance, the Reviewer will consider the matter on the grounds listed above, and will decide whether or not to uphold, partially uphold or reject your grounds for review.
5. If the Reviewer upholds or partially upholds your grounds for review they will reconsider your original complaint to the extent that it is appropriate to do so having regard to those findings. In this regard, the Reviewer will have the same powers of investigation as the 2nd Stage Decision-Maker under the 2nd Stage, as set out above.
6. The Reviewer will usually reach a decision and send you a decision letter within 20 working days of receiving your Review Request. The decision letter will set out the Reviewer's decision and the reasons for that decision.
7. The Reviewer's decision represents the end of the College's procedures and the decision letter will be a Completion of Procedures letter.
8. The Completion of Procedures letter will also set out other sources of advice and support available to you and will state that you have the right to seek review by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator, and the time limit for doing so.