

STUDENT COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Scope and Purpose	This Student Complaints Policy is for all students at BST who may have a complaint
Implication of non-adherence	Potential discrimination
Compliance and Regulatory requirements	NI Act 1998
Policy Owner	Head of Education (with coordination from Head of Operations)
Roles and Responsibilities	Principal will oversee the process
Policy approval and review	This Policy is approved by the Board and will be reviewed at the end of each academic year or more often as required.
Date last reviewed	June 2026
Date of next review	June 2027

When a student has a complaint, it is usually best to try to resolve it verbally and informally with a member of staff or with the Belfast School of Theology (BST) Student Committee. However, a formal complaints process exists to deal with formal complaints where that becomes necessary. The process followed depends on the nature of the complaint and is set out in the flow charts (pp5-7).

Notes

- The Student Complaints Committee should comprise three members of staff - the first is the person to whom students are required to direct their complaint i.e. Head of Education who will oversee the process. They will then identify a member of staff to investigate the complaint. The Investigating Officer will have no material interest in the complaint and will not have been involved with the matter under consideration. The Investigating Officer will ordinarily work with another member of staff. Where the

complaint directly relates to a member/s of staff, the Investigating Officer will normally be the Head of Education. Where the complaint involves the Head of Education or the Principal, the Principal or members of the ALC should be asked to investigate.

- Where resolution proves difficult (and this is usually at the informal stage), an external mediator may be solicited to bring independent expertise.
- Academic appeals should be made direct to UoC (see C2 below)

A. GENERAL STUDENT COMPLAINTS

Any student may raise a complaint, verbally and informally, with a member of BST staff, or with the BST Student Committee. Should the student wish to pursue the matter, the student should submit his/her complaint in writing to the Head of Education using the Student Complaint Form below (see Appendix).

Whatever your concerns, please raise them as soon as possible and no longer than 3 months after your concerns first arise. The sooner they can be considered - early resolution - the better for everyone. Complaints dating further back than 3 months are not easy to consider because of the length of time that has elapsed. You would need to offer a strong reason why you could not raise your concerns sooner if your concerns date back later than 3 months. BST reserves the right not to progress your complaint if your concerns do date back further than 3 months and we do not believe you have offered good reason.

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing within two working days of receipt and an indication will be given as to how the complaint will be processed. ¹

B. THE STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE IS AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Belfast School of Theology (BST) Student Complaints Committee will meet to address the complaint as soon as possible and normally not more than 5 working days following receipt of the complaint. The student MAY be invited to a meeting to discuss

¹ Outside of the semesters, and particularly at peak holiday times such as Christmas, Easter and the summer, BST cannot guarantee meeting the response times indicated above as key members of staff and students who may be needed for the investigation may be on annual leave.

and clarify any matter related to the complaint. If so, the student will have the right to bring with him/her one additional person who might be a student of BST, a family member or other person of the student's choosing.

2. Following the meeting of the Student Complaints Committee, a written response will be made to the student within a further period of five working days.
3. If the student is not satisfied by the Committee's response, he/she can request, in writing, within five working days of the Committee's written response², an opportunity to meet with the Committee for the purpose of achieving a resolution to the matter. The student will have the right to bring with him/her one additional person who might be a student of BST, a family member or other person of the student's choosing. No legal representation is permitted.
4. Should resolution not be achieved at this point, the student will have the right to request a meeting with the BST Principal and a member of the BST Board, preferably, but not necessarily, with the Chair of the Board. This meeting will take place within five working days of the Complaints Committee's meeting with the student.
5. Within a period of five working days following this meeting, the student will be advised in writing of the decision reached by the Principal and Board member. This decision will be final.
6. If the student's complaint has not been dealt with to his /her satisfaction, the student may
 - a. follow the guidance at C below, if appropriate **OR**
 - b. take the complaint to the NI Ombudsman. This is an external process and details are available below.

C. STUDENTS FOLLOWING UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA COURSES

C1 Formal complaints should follow BST's internal procedures; if, at the end of the BST process, a complaint is unresolved the student has the right to refer the complaint to the UOC Student Complaints Process

²Outside of the semesters, and particularly at peak holiday times such as Christmas, Easter and the summer, BST cannot guarantee meeting the response times indicated above as key members of staff and students who may be needed for the investigation may be on annual leave.



<https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/Student-Life/Support/Responding-to-your-concerns/Student-Complaints-Procedure/>.

C2 UOC Students - Academic Appeals

Where a student wishes to appeal a final mark that has been awarded, he or she should appeal direct to UoC via the UoC academic appeals process: [Academic Appeals | MyCumbria](#)

FOR FURTHER ADVICE CONTACT: Academic Office ³

³ · See BST handbook for relevant staff contact details.

**BST STUDENT GENERAL COMPLAINTS PROCESS
(but not appeals against final marks)**

1. Submit completed BST Student Complaints Form to the Head of Education



2. BST Student Complaints Committee (normally chaired by Head of Education)



3. BST Principal and Member of BST Board



If still unresolved and **the complaint is an academic matter that involves UOC provision**, go to Step 4 (See paragraph C above)

OR

If still unresolved, and the complaint **is not an academic matter with a direct link to UOC**, go to Step 5



UOC Complaints Procedure

<https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/Student-Life/Support/Responding-to-your-concerns/Student-Complaints-Procedure/>.

If still unresolved...



5. NI Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO)

<https://nipso.org.uk/nipso/>

APPENDIX

STUDENT COMPLAINTS FORM

Please read the Student Complaints Procedure (above) before completing this form.

While every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, in the interests of fairness, any available relevant information will be sought from sources additional to those identified by the student.

NB: Complaints made anonymously will not be accepted.

1.	Name of Complainant (BLOCK CAPITALS) Click or tap here to enter text.	Student No: Click or tap here to enter text.
	Programme/Course: Click or tap here to enter text.	
2.	Address for correspondence: Click or tap here to enter text.	
	Telephone/Mobile: Click or tap here to enter text.	Email: Click or tap here to enter text.
3.	*Details of Complaint: Click or tap here to enter text.	
*Please ensure all relevant details are provided e.g. The identities of witnesses and the date, time and place of the incident(s) giving rise to the complaint. You may wish to use an additional sheet if necessary		

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4.	Summary of informal action taken to resolve the complaint (if any: the student is not obliged to have taken any such action) Click or tap here to enter text.
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I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, this form contains a complete and accurate account of all the factors relevant to my complaint. I understand that a copy of this form may be provided to a member of staff who is the subject of the complaint, or who is otherwise involved and that making a complaint which is deemed to be mischievous or malicious may be deemed to be a breach of the Conduct regulations as set out in the Code of Conduct of Belfast School of Theology.

Signed: _____ Click or tap here to enter text. _____

Date: _____ Click or tap to enter a date.

For **General Complaints** the completed form should be addressed to:

The Head of Education, rkeay@bst.ac.uk