



# College of Osteopaths

## Complaints Procedure for Students

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### 1. Introduction

The College of Osteopaths is committed to monitoring and evaluating its services to enhance their quality and ensure that they meet the standards outlined in our [Student Charter](#) and other appropriate policies and regulations.

The College also has in place a variety of mechanisms to ensure that students have the opportunity to take part in the decision-making processes of the College at Programme Committee and Student Reps and Board of Governor meetings and we hope and expect that students will take full advantage of these in making their views known.

Regular student feedback is also gathered through a variety of questionnaires and surveys that help us to use our resources in the best way possible to meet student needs.

We recognise that there may be occasions when these information and feedback mechanisms are not sufficient to deal with problems that may occur from time to time. For this reason the College of Osteopaths has a formal complaints procedure to ensure that complaints and comments are dealt with in an efficient and professional manner.

### 2. The College of Osteopaths' Complaints Procedure aims to:

- Support students with a straightforward, appropriate and effective process for resolving complaints;
- Take complaints seriously, but also to deal with them in a way that is appropriate to the issue complained about;
- Guarantee that complaints are dealt with on the basis of evidence and proper investigation;
- Ensure that every issue raised in a complaint receives an appropriate explanation;
- Ensure that all people directly involved in a complaint have the opportunity for a fair hearing and understand each step of the process;
- Be operated in a respectful and sensitive way, value people's point of view, having due respect for confidentiality;
- Provide appropriate remedies when a complaint is upheld;
- Help us to keep on improving quality of what we do.

### 3. Student Responsibilities:

In order that the College can deal with a complaint properly and in a timely manner, we ask that students engage with the complaints process and undertake the following responsibilities:

- 3.1 Raise concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.2 Observe the College Student Charter and the Osteopathic Practise Standards, and the importance of professionalism (OPS, D) in the conduct of communications regarding a complaint.
- 3.3 Follow informal routes locally to resolve your concerns before raising a formal complaint;

- 3.4 Engage with the investigator and all Student Policy and Regulations.
- 3.5 Consider seeking support from the sources listed in section 7.
- 3.6 When submitting a complaint, provide full detail in a concise manner and provide documentary support for points made.
- 3.7 Make a considered and reasonable suggestions for remedy should the complaint be upheld and include this in your complaint submission.
- 3.8 Be aware of sensitivities where issues involve other students or staff.
- 3.9 Raise a complaint only where a genuine issue has arisen, since repeated unfounded complaints may cause distress and could amount to breaching the College Student Charter where relevant Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures would be initiated.

#### **4. How will Complaints be dealt with?**

- 4.1 Whenever possible a complaint will be dealt with swiftly and informally;
- 4.2 When formal investigation is needed, the approach will still aim to avoid confrontation and blame, but it will nonetheless be rigorous and impartial;
- 4.3 When a complaint requires speedy investigation or the complaint needs to be handled confidentially, an opportunity will be made available to do so;
- 4.4 People involved in operating the complaints procedure will make known anything that would prevent them from acting impartially and step aside if that is agreed to be the right course of action;
- 4.5 Complaints need to be decided in accordance with academic standards, the College's legal duties and our published policies and procedures. However, if a complaint highlights an inconsistency between College practices, policies and procedures and our obligations to a student, then exceptionally it may be appropriate not to apply that policy or procedure in the case of that complaint;
- 4.6 The College will make appropriate adjustments in the context of individual circumstances where those circumstances are evidenced, for example, in relation to a disability or third-party carer arrangement;
- 4.7 Anonymised complaint summaries will be reported to the Senior Leadership Team after the investigation and findings so that they can be acted upon as part of our Annual Monitoring for quality enhancement purposes;
- 4.8 The College will need to keep records of complaints and their investigation and will monitor the information relating to complaints to allow us to improve our services. Complaints are also logged and monitored by the validating university. The complaint record is separate from the student record;

4.9 Sometimes staff or the College will wish to give an apology in recognition of disappointment or hurt feelings, but that will not, in itself, constitute an acceptance of legal or moral responsibility.

## **5. What is a Complaint?**

- 5.1 A complaint arises when it is felt that an aspect of a course/programme, College service, facility or site is unsatisfactory and should be investigated.
- 5.2 The Complaints Procedure is not intended for appeals against the decision of an Assessment Board, the decision of appointed external examiners (refer to University of Derby Academic Appeals Section).
- 5.3 Complaints relating to the misconduct of a member of staff or student may be submitted initially as a complaint but may later be referred to the appropriate Grievance or Disciplinary Procedure.
- 5.4 The College will be responsible for ensuring that the Complaints Procedure operates without fear of recrimination or retribution against the complainant.
- 5.5 If a formal complaint is submitted that would more appropriately be dealt with through other College procedures, for example academic appeals, the College will pass it on to be considered by the relevant part of the College and/or validating University. The College will write to the person who makes the complaint and any other parties involved if this needs to be done.
- 5.6 Complaints should be raised within 3 calendar months of an issue occurring. Complaints submitted outside of this time period will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where evidence is provided to mitigate the delay

## **6. Who may Complain?**

- 6.1 A complaint may be made by a student, a previously registered student, a recent graduate or an applicant for a programme of study.
- 6.3 Complaints submitted by a third party or representative will not normally be formally investigated. A complaint made by a third party will however be passed to the appropriate Department as informal feedback.
- 6.4 Throughout the Complaints Procedure students are entitled to bring someone with them to any meetings held to discuss the complaint. This person, referred to as a “friend”, should be a member of the College or a Union of Students representative..

## **7. Who can help you make a Complaint?**

- 7.1 Students should refer to the following as sources of impartial help, advice, guidance and support in making a complaint.
- Year Leads

- Student Support Coordinator
- Admin & Clinical Admin Teams

## **8. THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **8.1 Step 1 Complaint**

- (i) If an issue is not resolved informally at a local level, the person making the complaint can submit their complaint to the Registrar with a completed complaint form and accompanying evidence. A form is available on the College website or by clicking [here](#). Completed forms should be returned to the [Registrar](#).

The Registrar will review the complaint and accompanying evidence. The complainant will be advised on the eligibility of their complaint or asked to provide further information where required.

An eligible complaint will then be forwarded from the Registrar to an investigator. The investigator will be impartial to the complaint and have no prior involvement. At Step 1 the investigators will normally be a member of the Middle Management Team.

- (ii) Possible outcomes for the person complaining:
- the matter is resolved or explained to the satisfaction of the person making the complaint;
  - the person making the complaint decides they do not wish to pursue it;
  - the complaint raises a valid issue that requires an appropriate remedy (see Section 10 below)
  - the matter is not resolved (or the member of staff feels that a formal investigation is required) and the complainant moves on to Step 2.
  - In addition to any of the above, the appropriate member of staff or Department may wish to issue an apology.
- (iii) Possible outcomes for the College:
- If not already completed, an anonymised summary of the complaint (whether or not pursued by the complainant) is reported to the Registrar, together with the outcome. This will be reported at the next scheduled Senior Leadership Team meeting.
  - The complaint is reviewed alongside other complaints in preparation for the Annual Monitoring processes and generic or specific action is followed through via the Curriculum & Standards Sub-Committee.
  - Other staff may be briefed to prevent recurrence of the problem;
  - If a complaint raises issues that needs to be addressed urgently, the Registrar shall take appropriate steps, which may include staff development, review of procedures and alerting the Senior Leadership Team.
- (iv) A response with appropriate explanations in relation to all matters to which the student has requested a response will be made within 10 working days of the complaint being assigned to an investigator. If it is not possible to make a full response at this time, an update will be sent detailing the revised timescales for response.

### **9.1 Step 2 Complaint**

If the complaint is still not resolved following Step 1, the student complaining may escalate their complaint via the College's Partner Institution, which is the University of Derby. To do this, students must submit another complaint form. An online form is available for logging complaints. This is available through UDo and the complaints website at [www.derby.ac.uk/complaints](http://www.derby.ac.uk/complaints) and is submitted to Student Policy and Regulations Team within The Registry. A word document version of the complaints form is also available on the website which can be sent as an attachment via email.

## **10. Remedies**

- 10.1 The College is committed to providing the highest standards of service and maintaining good relationships between staff and students;
- 10.2 Remedies available in response to complaints therefore reflect our desire for customer satisfaction and to maintain quality;
- 10.3 An offer of a remedy should not to be taken as admission of legal responsibility, nor should a particular remedy or offer of a remedy be regarded as a legal entitlement;
- 10.4 Often remedies in response to complaints, such as apologies, will be wholly, or partially, recognition of your complaint and may be given with or without conditions;
- 10.5 When deciding what outcome is best to resolve a complaint, the College aims to provide the response it feels is most appropriate to help a person benefit from a quality service from the College;
- 10.6 When the person complaining can no longer benefit from the College's services, or where a complaint alleges an impact beyond the scope of the College's services, a member of senior leadership may wish to consider alternative courses of action to resolve the complaint, which may include remedies not listed below;
- 10.7 Remedies will need the approval of the Principal and may include the granting of some or all of the following:
  - Reconsideration of a decision within College policies and procedures, as if that decision was being made for the first time;
  - Remission to an appropriate body with the power to authorise the application of an exception to the College's policies and procedures;
  - Review of a College policy or procedure, with or without suspension of its operation in particular or general cases;
  - Suspension or cancellation of a fine, penalty or limitation of service;
  - Proportionate reimbursement of moneys paid, or a waiver of moneys owed
  - In all cases, the student is entitled to an explanation; and
  - In any case an apology may be offered.

## **11. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)**

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. The College of Osteopaths is a member of this scheme. If you are unhappy with the outcome you may be able to ask the OIA to review your complaint. You can find more information about

making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right if something has gone wrong here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students>.

You normally need to have completed Step 1 and Step 2 before you complain to the OIA. The University of Derby will send you a letter called a "Completion of Procedures Letter" when you have reached the end of our processes and there are no further steps you can take internally.

If your complaint is not upheld, The University of Derby will issue you with a Completion of Procedures Letter automatically. If your complaint is upheld or partly upheld you can ask for a Completion of Procedures Letter if you want one. You can find more information about Completion of Procedures Letters and when you should expect to receive one here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers/completion-of-procedures-letters/>

Scheme Application Forms are available from the OIA at:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), Second Floor  
Abbey Gate  
57-75 Kings Road  
Reading  
RG1 3AB  
Tel: 0118 959 9813  
Email: [enquiries@oiahe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@oiahe.org.uk)  
Website: [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)



