

# Green Templeton College Policy and Procedure on Student Concerns and Complaints

## 1. Introduction

This procedure is designed to provide for students to raise concerns or complaints in relation to the provision (e.g. facilities and services) that the College makes for its students.

A *student concern or complaint*, in the context of this procedure, is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the College's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the College. The term *concern* will be used for matters raised informally, and *complaint* for matters raised formally.

Matters which affect the student community in general should be brought via Graduate Common Room (GCR) representation, either to College Officers or to Committees of the College.

The College intends that suitable provision is made for students and complaints will therefore be infrequent. It is, however, important that students know how to raise a concern or complaint, both informally and formally. The existence of a procedure is not intended to generate a culture of complaints, but to ensure that concerns and complaints are handled consistently and fairly.

Any manager or officer approached by a student with a concern or complaint may at the student's request or at their own instigation with good reason propose and act according to a variation to the procedures. Any such variation should be documented and reported to the Bursar. The person assigned to investigate a complaint will be responsible for requesting from the Bursar any additional resources or support that they might require

Where a concern or complaint includes elements better dealt with under a different policy, the Officer/Manager dealing with it should identify which parts should be dealt with under which policy and indicate to the student the proposed policies and process for dealing with all parts of the complaint.

Any concern or complaint which involves ongoing risk to the safety/health of members of College, staff or the general public should be acted upon as a matter of urgency. Issues involving significant damage or risk of damage to property will also be treated as a matter of urgency.

A concern or complaint should be brought by the person or persons affected. Anonymous concerns or complaints will not be considered.

In taking complaints seriously, the College acts in good faith that those complaining will do so honestly and fairly. In cases where investigation reveals that a complaint has been made dishonestly or maliciously, the complainant may be subject to a counter action.

This procedure does not relate to:

- concerns or complaints raised by members of staff: these should follow the College's grievance procedures (for academic staff, these are outlined in the Statutes; for support staff, these are outlined in the Staff Handbook. See [www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/about-gtc/policy-documents.html](http://www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/about-gtc/policy-documents.html))
- concerns or complaints against a University department or service: students should

**College Complaints procedure**

refer to the Complaints Procedures outlined in the Proctors' and Assessor's Memorandum (available online at [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam/)). The Senior Tutor or a student's College Adviser may be able to assist with the informal resolution of such concerns or complaints.

- harassment complaints, for which the College has its own Green Templeton College Policy and Procedure on Harassment
- Concerns or complaints against other students. These will be dealt with most appropriately through other procedures such as the Green Templeton College Policy and Procedure on Harassment (see [www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/college-life/student-welfare.html](http://www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/college-life/student-welfare.html)), the College Disciplinary Code (see the College Regulations [http://www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/images/stories/policydocs/gtc\\_regulations\\_24\\_10\\_2013.pdf](http://www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/images/stories/policydocs/gtc_regulations_24_10_2013.pdf)), or in relation to commitments in the Student-College Contract.

Advice may be sought from any of the Fellows of the College, the student's College Adviser, or members of the GCR Committee.

The Policy on Student Concerns and Complaints may be called upon by any student currently registered as a member of the College or who has left the College normally no more than four months prior to the concern or complaint being first raised. Having "left the College" is defined as the student's programme completion date, the date of their withdrawal or lapsing status, or in the case of research degree students the date at which they were granted leave to supplicate.

College Officers and managers are not required to respond to concerns or complaints raised after more than 12 months. Concerns should be raised as soon as possible after the matter complained about has occurred. In order that the formal procedure may be initiated if required, concerns should always be raised well ahead of the 12 month limit on complaints.

## **College Complaints procedure**

### **2. Informal procedure**

The simplest and often the most satisfactory way to achieve resolution of a concern is by an informal discussion with the person directly involved in the matter. Premature escalation to that person's supervisor or to someone without direct involvement can lead to positions becoming entrenched and more difficult to resolve.

However, if an initial, informal discussion does not produce the desired result, the following paragraphs detail how to take a concern further. A concern may be raised orally or in writing.

#### ***Academic matters***

If the concern relates to teaching or other provision made by a University faculty/department or other service, it should be raised with the faculty/department using their procedure. Your College Adviser or the Senior Tutor may be able to assist you with contacting the correct person.

If the concern relates to clinical medical teaching provided by the College, this should normally be discussed with the Senior Doll Fellow in the first instance. If it is not possible to speak to the Senior Doll Fellow or if the concern relates to him/her, approach should be made to the Senior Tutor.

If the concern relates to any other teaching or academic provision then approach should be made to the Senior Tutor. If the concern relates to the Senior Tutor, then the matter can be raised with the Vice-Principal.

#### ***Domestic matters***

If the concern relates to an aspect of the College's provision for accommodation (including allocation of rooms), catering, facilities or services, it should be discussed with the Domestic Bursar.

#### ***College staff conduct or behaviour***

Except in cases of harassment, concerns about the conduct or behaviour of College support staff should be discussed in the first instance with the relevant line manager. Line management details can be found in the College Handbook. Concerns about the conduct or behaviour of academic staff or other Senior Members should be raised initially with the Senior Tutor, or with the Vice-Principal if the behaviour of concern is that of the Senior Tutor.

Cases of alleged harassment should follow the harassment procedure, outlined in the College Handbook and at [www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/college-life/student-welfare.html](http://www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/college-life/student-welfare.html).

#### ***After you have raised your concern***

The person with whom you raise your concern may wish to discuss it with you and/or make enquiries of others before reaching a decision on what (if anything) needs to be done. He or

## **College Complaints procedure**

she may refer your concern to someone else within the College who is more appropriately placed to respond. He or she may decline to deal with the concern informally, in which case you will need to pursue it as a formal complaint.

The person with whom you raise your concern will inform you of his or her decision, any proposed course of action, and the reasons for these without undue delay. Matters raised will be treated in confidence where appropriate.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may pursue the matter as a formal complaint.

### **3. Formal procedure**

You may make a formal complaint about any College matter so long as you have first raised the matter informally. Exceptionally, in cases of whistleblowing, the student may proceed immediately to the formal procedure.

#### ***Stage 1: Initiation***

Complaints must be made in writing and clearly identified as a formal complaint. The letter initiating the complaint should describe in detail the nature of the complaint, the facts giving rise to it, and your preferred outcome. A copy of that letter and all subsequent correspondence regarding your complaint (including any review) will be kept in a College Complaints Register held by the Bursar and accessible to such College Officers and staff who the Bursar considers need access to the information in order to carry out their duties. The Vice-Principal will keep a separate register of any complaints against the Bursar.

Complaints must be addressed to the Bursar, the Academic Registrar or the Vice-Principal, with the Junior Dean/s carbon copied (cc'd) on the initial correspondence. They will where possible nominate an appropriate member of College who has had no previous involvement to deal with the complaint or will deal with it themselves

Normally, complaints about academic matters and the College Office should be addressed to the Academic Registrar. Complaints about financial matters, College accommodation, facilities or services, or domestic staff should be addressed to the Bursar. Complaints about Fellows or members of the Common Room should be made to the Vice-Principal. Complaints against any of the Officers/Managers identified in this paragraph should be made to one of the other two officers.

If you do not wish your complaint to be dealt with by the Officer identified above, you may direct it to the Principal with a written explanation of why you would like someone other than that Officer/Manager to handle it. It will be for the Principal to decide whether someone other than the Officer/Manager identified above should deal with your complaint, and if so who. You will be informed of the Principal's decision in writing.

You are strongly encouraged to notify the Junior Dean/s of your complaint.

Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days.

## **College Complaints procedure**

### ***Stage 2: Investigation and Resolution***

The Officer/Manager dealing with the complaint, assisted by an administrative officer or other member of staff, will invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and ask any questions he or she has about its content. This meeting will normally take place within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint. You may invite another person to accompany you and you may ask such an accompanying person to represent you. This might include a Junior Dean, another member of the College, or an OUSU Official.

After meeting with you, the Officer/Manager will investigate the matters raised in the complaint. In order to do so he or she may need to speak with others, and/or to seek clarification or further information from you.

If, in the opinion of the Officer/Manager, the matter raised by you as a complaint affects a substantial section of the College community, he or she may choose to refer it to a Committee of the College with GCR representation.

Where a complaint is upheld, appropriate remedies may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following:

- A written and/or oral explanation or apology
- A change in practice or policy
- Financial compensation
- Disciplinary or other appropriate action against staff or Fellows.

The Officer/Manager will ordinarily make a decision about your complaint within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. You will be informed of the decision and the reasons for it in writing.

### ***Stage 3 (optional): Review***

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you may make a request in writing to the Principal for a review of the decision. The letter requesting a review should describe in sufficient detail the reason for your request, and include a copy of the decision against which you are seeking review. You should also outline what action you would like to be taken instead of that decided upon by the Officer/Manager.

Requests for review must be lodged within 20 working days of receipt of the decision of the Officer/Manager dealing with the complaint. The Principal will acknowledge your request in writing within 5 working days, and report back on his/her deliberations within 10 working days.

If the Principal is unable to deal with the request because he or she is either the subject of the complaint or is on some other way conflicted, then the General Purposes Committee will designate one of its members or another member of the Governing Body who has not been involved in the complaint or the procedure for dealing with the concern or complaint to undertake the review.

The review decision is final, and the written response to you will constitute a Completion of Procedures letter. If you remain dissatisfied after the College's internal procedures have been exhausted, you have the right of appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. Further information can be found at [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk).

#### **4. Monitoring and reporting**

The Officer/Manager assigned to deal with a formal complaint shall provide the Bursar with a summary of the complaint and its resolution within five days of that resolution being decided.

The Bursar will keep a register of the complaints made using the formal procedure, and a summary of numbers and outcomes will be reported annually to the General Purposes Committee in September, along with recommendations for any action required in response to issues identified in complaints. The General Purposes Committee, through the Bursar, will be responsible for checking that decisions are being made consistently and at the appropriate level, and that information is gathered to improve services and the student experience and that appropriate action is taken.

#### **5. Confidentiality**

When a formal complaint is made, the complainant should understand that any person complained against will be given information about the complaint and the complainant. Others will be informed solely on a need-to-know basis. Once a concern has been raised against a person or a complaint has been made against a person, it is expected that the complainant will use discretion when discussing the matter outside the procedure for the duration of that procedure.

#### **6. Victimisation**

Victimisation occurs where anyone involved in dealing with a complaint takes action to the detriment or disadvantage of the complainant as a result of their having made the complaint. Victimisation is unacceptable to the College. Any occurrence of victimisation will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

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