

EMMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

**Procedure for comments, suggestions and  
complaints from students**

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## 1. Overview

The College welcomes comments and suggestions from students about the services it provides. Students wishing to make a suggestion or comment about the College's services, either academic or non-academic, can do so informally at the point of service delivery, or by contacting the person in charge of the relevant area (see Appendix 2), or where it seems appropriate by raising the matter with their Tutor or the Senior Tutor. Occasionally however, students may wish to make a complaint about the services they receive. This document sets out the procedure for making a complaint to the College. The College anticipates that complaints will normally be dealt with informally in the first instance. Students with a complaint should seek to bring it to the attention of the College using the procedure outlined here as soon as possible following the occurrence of a problem and ideally within one calendar month. Many complaints can be dealt with quickly and effectively in this manner, without recourse to the formal procedure. The College's procedures have been developed with this in mind.

The College recognises that it has a duty to provide fair and objective procedures for examining and resolving complaints, and to ensure that its procedures are free from partiality arising from personal or institutional conflict of interest or other sources of bias. Having raised a complaint will disadvantage no student, but the College expects that students will not make frivolous, vexatious or malicious complaints.

Students who are considering making a complaint may wish to seek help or advice from the persons listed in Appendix 1.

A student may of course wish to complain about a matter that is not within the control of the College but within that of another institution, e.g. the University or another College. In this case the first thing to do will be to identify the appropriate point of contact within the Faculty, Department or other college, and you may either contact that person directly or ask your Director of Studies, your Tutor or the Senior Tutor of Emmanuel College to take up the matter on your behalf. If it is unclear to you where responsibility for the matter lays you may seek advice from any of the persons listed in Appendix 1.

### 1.1 Examination Appeals

Students should be aware that a separate procedure exists for appealing to the University in a case where a student feels that he or she has been disadvantaged or unfairly classified in a University examination. Further information on examination appeals is available from the University web site at <http://www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/>.

Examination appeals to the University must be made within one month of the relevant class list having been published. In the event of an examination appeal to the University, students should seek the advice and assistance of their Tutor. Examination appeals should not be made directly to the University without the assistance of the College.

## 1.2 Inappropriate behavior

Students with a complaint relating to inappropriate behavior by another student at the College should refer to the College's guidance on, and procedures for handling cases of, harassment or sexual misconduct [link].

A procedure for considering a complaint of inappropriate behavior by a Fellow or member of the College staff is set out in section 2 below.

## 1.3 College Policy

Complaints on matters of College policy should be directed to the appropriate College Committee (see Appendix 3) through student representatives. These may be contacted through the Emmanuel College Students' Union and/or the MCR.

## 1.4 Confidentiality

Every attempt will be made to maintain the confidentiality of a complainant. However, where a complaint is of a personal nature against an individual, it is likely that the complainant's identity would have to be revealed at some stage in all but the most exceptional cases in order for there to be a fair investigation. The College will endeavour to inform an individual complainant of the extent to which her/his identity is likely to be revealed at each stage of the procedure.

To assist in the process of auditing the quality of its services and the responsiveness to student comments, suggestions and complaints, the College will monitor and evaluate any formal complaints that it receives. The College undertakes to respect the confidentiality of complainants in this exercise.

## **2. Complaints on non-academic matters**

### **2.1 Informal procedure**

#### **Stage one:**

Students who experience a problem with:

any service provided by the College  
the behaviour of a Fellow or any member of the College staff;  
or anything else within the control of the College,

should, if appropriate, raise the matter with the individual concerned. If direct discussion is inappropriate or does not resolve the situation satisfactorily, the student should, in the case of a complaint relating to a service provided by the College, approach the person responsible for the area to which the complaint relates (for example, the relevant Head of Department or College Officer), or, in the case of a complaint about the behaviour of a Fellow or a member of the College staff, approach a Tutor or another person listed in Appendix A. A prompt response can be expected.

#### **Stage two:**

In cases where a student feels that the nature of the complaint is too serious to be dealt with through discussion with the person concerned, whether directly or through a Tutor or other person, or where such discussion has not provided a satisfactory conclusion, the matter should be raised with the Senior Tutor, who will ensure that the matter is looked into as soon as possible. An initial response to any complaint can be expected within 7 days, and a considered response to the complaint, should be provided within three weeks, with any subsequent remedy implemented with the minimum of delay.

### **2.2 Formal procedure**

Should a complaint remain unresolved after the informal stage, the complainant can write to the Senior Tutor requesting that the matter be referred to the Master who will, through the Governing Body, undertake an independent assessment of the case and come to a conclusion on the matter. A full and considered response to the complaint should be completed within 40 days and any subsequent remedy implemented with the minimum of delay.

If a student is required to attend in person as part of the investigation into a complaint, he/she is entitled to be accompanied by a person of his or her choosing. This person may support the student but must not represent the student or speak on his or her behalf.

In some cases the first stage of the informal procedure set out above may already have involved the Senior Tutor as Executive Officer. Should the complaint remain unresolved

at the end of that stage, or in the event that a complaint is against the Senior Tutor, the complaint should be put in writing directly to the Master.

### **3. Complaints and Appeals on academic matters**

#### **3.1 Introduction:**

3.1.1. The College has put into place a procedure for dealing with complaints and appeals on academic matters. This procedure applies to all student members of the College.

In this context, a “Complaint” is defined as any specific concern about the provision of a programme of study or related academic service.

An “Appeal” is defined as a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on student progression, assessment and awards.

3.1.2. The College’s procedures for dealing with Complaints on academic matters are entirely distinct from its procedures for dealing with other issues (e.g. harassment). Students are assured that they will not be prejudiced in any way by lodging a Complaint. The College will ensure that Complaints are dealt with in full confidentiality save where the Complaint must be disclosed to another person or body in order to progress the Complaint. In that case, the student will be notified in advance that disclosure is to be made.

3.1.3. Any student who makes a Complaint under this procedure will be entitled to have the Complaint investigated swiftly and thoroughly. At the conclusion of the investigation, where it is decided that remedial action is required, the College will ensure that it is implemented without undue delay.

3.1.4. Students have responsibility to use this procedure responsibly. Frivolous or vexatious Complaints are wasteful of resources.

#### **3.2 Procedure Common To Complaints And Appeals : First Stage**

3.2.1 Any student wishing to make a Complaint or Appeal about an academic matter should initially make the Complaint/Appeal in writing to the Senior Tutor.

3.2.2 In the event that the student requires assistance or advice in making a Complaint or an Appeal, he/she may seek such assistance from his/her own Tutor, the Emmanuel College Students Union, the MCR or the Cambridge Students’ Unions’ Advice Service (SUAS).

- 3.2.3 If at all possible, the Senior Tutor will arrange to see the student to discuss the Complaint/Appeal within seven days of receiving the Complaint/Appeal in order to identify the issues raised and to decide the best means of investigating them. In the event that the student is unable or unwilling to attend a meeting, the Senior Tutor will proceed on the basis of written material provided by the student or, if the student so wishes, representations from a proxy instructed by the student
- 3.2.4 In the initial meeting with the Senior Tutor and in in any subsequent meeting where the Complaint/Appeal is discussed the student will have the right to be accompanied by a companion of his/her choice, normally a Junior or Senior member of the College, for example, the ECSU or MCR Welfare Officer. If the student so wishes, his/her companion may make representations on the student's behalf.
- 3.2.5 Should the student have any queries about the operation of the formal procedures for dealing with Complaints/Appeals the student should seek clarification from the Senior Tutor.
- 3.2.6 The Senior Tutor will, in all cases, endeavour to resolve the Complaint/Appeal informally. However, should this prove not to be possible, the Senior Tutor will act as a point of contact for the formal resolution of the Complaint/Appeal.

### 3.3 Procedures For Dealing With Academic Complaints

- 3.3.1 At the initial meeting with the student, the Senior Tutor shall:
- i. Notify the student whether he/she will be investigating the Complaint or appointing another Fellow to investigate it;
  - ii. Inform the student of the steps he/she intends to take to investigate the Complaint;
  - iii. Inform the student of any other person or body whom he/she intends to notify about the Complaint in the course of his/her investigations;
  - iv. Notify the student of any issues that affect the timescale for investigating the Complaint.
  - v. Discuss with the student the nature of the remedy the student is seeking.
- 3.3.2 Once the Senior Tutor has received a formal written Complaint and held the initial meeting with the student who has complained, he/she will, if the student wishes to proceed with the Complaint, conduct an investigation into the details of the Complaint.

- 3.3.3 In the event that the Complaint concerns a matter in which the Senior Tutor has a personal interest, he/she will nominate a different Fellow of the College to carry out the investigation and implement the procedure in his/her place.
- 3.3.4 Wherever possible, the Senior Tutor, or any Fellow nominated by him/her, will aim to complete his/her investigation into a Complaint and notify the student of the result of the investigation within 14 days of the initial meeting with the student. In the event that it is not possible to comply with this timescale, the Senior Tutor will, at the earliest opportunity, notify the student of the reasons for the delay and the modified timescale.
- 3.3.5 At the completion of the investigation, the Senior Tutor may write to the student to notify the student of his/her decision upon the Complaint and/or arrange a further meeting, at which the student may be accompanied, to notify the student about his/her decision on the Complaint and any action the College proposes to take in light of the Complaint.
- 3.3.6 Either at the initial or subsequent meeting, the Senior Tutor may, if he/she forms the view that the Complaint is frivolous or vexatious, notify the student of his/her decision to strike it out. The student will have the right to Appeal against the decision to the Appeals Committee.
- 3.3.7 The Senior Tutor shall have full authority from the College to decide on its behalf the appropriate remedy required to deal with a Complaint. Appropriate remedies may include:
- i. Adjustment of decisions affecting academic progress or award;
  - ii. Financial compensation;
  - iii. Disciplinary action against students, members of staff or a Fellow;
  - iv. A combination of these.
- 3.3.8 In appropriate cases, the Senior Tutor may decide that a student may recover reimbursement of reasonable and proportionate expenses incurred in pursuing a Complaint.
- 3.3.9 In the event that a student is dissatisfied with the decision reached by the Senior Tutor, he/she may within 14 days of receipt of the decision Appeal to the Appeals Committee. An Appeal must be made in writing and must set out the grounds of the application. The Committee will follow the rules for dealing with the Appeals Committee (see 3.5 below). Within 10 working days after the meeting of the conclusion of the Appeal, the Committee shall notify the student of the decision made upon review.

### 3.4 Procedures For Dealing With Academic Appeals: Second Stage

3.4.1 This part of the procedure relates to an Appeal relating to an academic decision made by the College. Academic decisions made by others, for example the University, are not part of this procedure.

3.4.2 A student may Appeal against a decision made by the College on an academic issue.

3.4.3 An Appeal on an academic issue should, in all cases, be addressed initially to the Master in writing, setting out in detail:

- i. The decision appealed against; and
- ii. The grounds for the Appeal.

3.4.4 If the Master takes the view that the Appeal is frivolous or vexatious, he/she may strike out the Appeal. The student may not Appeal against the decision to the Appeals Committee.

3.4.5 Unless the Appeal is considered frivolous or vexatious, the Master shall, within seven days, notify the body that made the decision appealed against of the student's written Appeal and the grounds for the Appeal.

### 3.5 Procedure Before The Appeals Committee

#### 3.5.1 Composition of the Appeals Committee

The Appeals Committee shall consist of three members of the Governing Body appointed by the Master who shall not have been in any way involved with the subject matter of the Appeal in question.

#### 3.5.2 When receiving a formal Notice of Appeal the Master will:

Call a meeting of the Appeals Committee to take place within not less than 10 nor more than 20 working days;

Make available to the Committee all documents relating to the case; and

Give notice to the student of the meeting and inform the student of his/her right to submit any new evidence to the Committee and that he/she is entitled to be accompanied to the meeting.

#### 3.5.3 The Appeals Committee shall have the power, in whole or in part, to:



- Confirm. or
- Rescind. or
- Amend

The decision appealed against.

### 3.6 Record Keeping

The Senior Tutor and the Master shall keep a record of all formal Complaints and Appeals. The record retained will include details of:

- i. The nature of all formal Complaints and Appeals;
- ii. How each formal Complaint/Appeal was dealt with and the time taken for each stage;
- iii. The outcome of each formal Complaint or Appeal.

### 3.7 Review And Evaluation Of The Complaints/Appeal Process

3.7.1 The Master and Tutors' Committee shall periodically review and evaluate the records of any formal Complaints or Appeals so as to assess:

- i. The adequacy of the advice, guidance and support for students in making Complaints and Appeals;
- ii. The adequacy of staff development and support to those involved in operating the Complaints and Appeal procedures;
- iii. The level of understanding amongst Fellows and students of these procedures for the effectiveness of these procedures overall in meeting the stated aims.

3.7.2 The Master and Tutors' Committee shall invite student representatives to participate in any review and evaluation of these procedures.

3.7.3 The Master and Tutors' Committee shall, in the course of a review and evaluation of these procedures:

- i. Seek to identify common causes of Complaints and Appeals;

- ii. Consider the performance of the College with regard to patterns of Complaints and Appeals;
- iii. Keep under review the implications of changes in legislation relating to Complaints and Appeals procedures;
- iv. Identify any structural changes required to the Complaints and Appeals procedures.

#### 4 External Review

If the Appeal Committee confirms the original decision the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter when he / she is provided with the adjudication. If the Appeal Committee amends the original decision the student will be offered a Completion of Procedures Letter when he or she is provided with the adjudication. Where the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Appeal procedure the Completion of Procedures Letter will enable the student to submit a complaint to the external ombudsman, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

## **APPENDIX 1:**

### **Persons from whom help may be sought**

Help and advice may be sought from anyone. Listed below are those contacts with a specific role to assist students.

**Director of Studies** (in matters relating to supervision or other academic provision)

**Your Tutor** (for any matters)

**The Senior Tutor**

**The Dean**

**The College Counsellor**

**The College Nurse**

**ECSU Academic Affairs Officer or the Welfare Officer**

**CUSU Academic Affairs Officer or the Welfare Officer**

**The Cambridge University Students' Unions' Advice service (SUAS)**

**The Graduate Tutor**

**Your Supervisor**

**The Secretary of the Degree Committee or other Departmental Graduate Adviser**

**The Board of Graduate Studies**

**The Graduate Union**

## APPENDIX 2

### Heads of Departments/Services

Academic	Master Senior Tutor	Dame Fiona Reynolds Dr Robert Henderson
Accommodation	The Committee Manager	Anna Battison
Bursary	The College Accountant The Bursar	Clive Gatford Dr Mike Gross
Development Office	The Development Director	Dr Sarah Bendall
Catering	The Executive Head Chef and Head of Catering	
Household	The Housekeeper	Ann Patten
Computing	The Computer Manager	Tom Corder
Gardens	The Head Gardener	Christoph Keate
Health and Safety	The Head Porter (Health and Safety Officer)	Dave Glover
Library	The Fellow Librarian The Librarian	Dr Sarah Bendall Dr Helen Carron
Maintenance	The Buildings Manager The Head of Maintenance	David Hobbs Graeme Little
MCR	The MCR President	
ECSU	The ECSU President	
Porters/Security	The Head Porter	Dave Glover
Room Bookings	The Conference Manager	Mrs Sarah Banbery
Supervisions	Directors of Studies The Senior Tutor	Dr Robert Henderson
Tutorial Office	The Registrar	Dr Anna Osipova
Tutors	The Senior Tutor	Dr Robert Henderson

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **List of College Committees with Student Representatives**

The Governing Body – the executive body of the College.

The College Council

The Master and Tutors' Committee

The Buildings and Services Committee

The Catering Committee

The Information Systems Committee

The Library Committee