

Complaints Policy Process

This process is applicable to students and prospective students who are studying, or who are considering studying, for a University of Portsmouth degree via Portsmouth Online and who have a complaint against some aspect of their experience.

Portsmouth Online is a recognised affiliate college of the University of Portsmouth, run in partnership with CEG Digital Ltd to deliver a selection of its online programmes

As a result of this partnership, students will follow a different complaints processes depending on the nature of their complaint.

1.1 Policy to Follow

If the complaint relates to the conduct of a Student Adviser, Course Adviser, Fees team member or the fee payment process then students should follow the Complaints Policy which can be found at the end of this document.

If the complaint refers to the service provided by a 3rd party Fees provider (i.e., WorldPay/Flywire etc), the complainant should contact the third-party provider directly.

If the complaint relates to anything else, the complainant should follow the University complaints policy here <https://www.port.ac.uk/about-us/contact-us/complaints/current-students-complaints-procedure>.

If on receipt of a complaint made under one of the policies above, it is decided that the matter is better dealt with under a different policy / procedure, the student will be contacted directly by the recipient of the complaint. The recipient of the complaint will discuss why it is believed that the matter should be dealt with under a different policy / procedure and to gain the student's complaint to pass the complaint to the person in charge of the other policy / procedure.

Complaints Policy for Fee Payments/Student Advisers/Course Advisers

This policy is applicable to students and prospective students who are studying, or who are considering study, for a University of Portsmouth degree via Portsmouth Online* and who have a complaint about the following:

Student Adviser staff

Course Adviser staff

Portsmouth Online Fees payments or Fees staff

1.1 Definition of a complaint

A complaint about the fee payment process is defined as “the expression of a specific concern about the mechanisms of making a fee payment via Portsmouth Online”. This does not include the services provided by third party providers such as WorldPay or FlyWire. For these complaints, the complainant should contact the third party provider directly.

A complaint about either the Student/Course Adviser or Fee Team staff is defined as “the expression of a specific concern about the conduct of Student/Course Adviser/Fees Staff”. This does not include complaints about teaching or services provided by the University of Portsmouth, in those cases the complainant should follow the University complaints policy here <https://www.port.ac.uk/about-us/contact-us/complaints/current-students-complaints-procedure>.

1.2 Important points to note:

- The point of complaint starts when the complainant has drawn their concern to the attention of a Portsmouth Online member of staff.

- Complainants will not be discriminated against or suffer recrimination for making a complaint;
- Complaints cannot be made anonymously;
- Complaints raised under this policy must be invoked within 8 weeks of the incident that is the cause for complaint. N.B. It is important to note that timelines for making and handling complaints under the University of Portsmouth procedure are different from those in this policy, so students should familiarise themselves with both documents.

2. Procedure

Step 1 - Early Resolution

- 2.2 In the first instance, Portsmouth Online encourage students to resolve any issues informally, by emailing the member of staff involved directly.
- 2.3 If the student believes that the matter is still unresolved, or there are compelling reasons as to why early resolution is not possible or appropriate, the student may lodge a formal complaint as outlined below in Step 2.
- 2.4 If the complaint is resolved informally, or the student decides not to raise it as a formal complaint, it will not be logged as an official complaint and the matter will be closed.
- 2.5 If the student wishes to make a formal complaint, the reasons behind the complaint not being raised informally should be explained.

Step 2 – The Formal Stage

- 2.6 If a resolution is not possible via informal means, then the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Centre Director, Laura Coutts, at laura.coutts@cambridgeonlinelearning.com
- 2.7 Timeframe: Step 2 must be invoked within 10 working days of the completion of Step 1.
- 2.8 The student should provide as much detail as possible in their complaint, including:
- full details of the cause for the complaint, including its impact;
 - the action the student has taken thus far and the date(s) of that action;
 - the response they have received;
 - the reason for their dissatisfaction or disagreement with that response;
 - the remedy that they are seeking; and
 - copies of supporting evidence if appropriate.

- 2.9 The complaint will be investigated by the Centre Director. During their investigation, it may be necessary for them to speak to the complainant or others involved as appropriate.
- 2.10 Students will receive an acknowledgement of their complaint within 5 working days. Portsmouth Online will endeavour to respond to the complaint, in writing, within 10 working days of the date of acknowledgement. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, the final response might take longer, in which case the student will be advised of this in the initial correspondence. The complaint response will include details of who to contact in case of a review.

Step 3 – the Review Stage

- 2.11 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome reached regarding their complaint, then they may request a review of their complaint.
- 2.12 The grounds for requesting such a review are:
- a material irregularity in the conduct of the investigation; and/or
 - where material new evidence has become available since the commencement of the investigation.

The student should submit their request, in writing, to the CEG Group Chief Operating Officer whose details will be provided in the official response in stage 2.

- 2.13 The request for review should include all details of the complaint to date and details of why the complainant feels a review is necessary
- 2.14 Timeframe: a request for review must be made within 10 working days upon receipt of the outcome of Step 2.
- 2.16 The reviewer may need to contact both the complainant or others involved in the complaint as appropriate.
- 2.17 The review will be completed within 1 month of it being submitted by the complainant. If it is not possible to complete the review within this time, the complainant will be notified and given a likely date for conclusion.
- 2.18 Following the review, the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter. This letter denotes the conclusion of Portsmouth Online's internal complaints procedures. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, the complainant may forward their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) at the address below. The complaint must reach the OIA within 12 months of the issue of the Completion of Procedures letter.

The OIA's contact details are: Office of the Independent Adjudicator, Second Floor, Abbey Gate, 57 – 75 Kings Road, Reading RG1 3AB.

Tel: 0118 959 9813

Email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

Further details can be found on the OIA website at: www.oiahe.org.uk

- 2.19 Only students enrolled and registered for a Portsmouth award are eligible to refer their complaint to the OIA. Prospective students and applicants do not have recourse to this service.

*Portsmouth Online Ltd is the trading name of a collaborative partnership between Portsmouth University and Cambridge Education Group (CEG).