

# BPF Student Complaints Policy

## Purpose

The bpf is committed to providing excellence in teaching and a positive learning experience to our students, however there may be occasions when a student wishes to raise a concern about our teaching or the services that we provide.

Many complaints can be resolved quickly at a local level, for example, directly with the Director of Training or Chair of a training committee for the student's programme of study. However, there may be occasion when a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the resolution or if the complaint is complex and may require a detailed investigation, which means that a student may submit a formal complaint.

This Student Complaints Policy sets out our complaints procedure and the routes for a student to make a complaint.

## Scope

This Student Complaints Policy (known as 'Policy') applies to all students (who may otherwise be known as a 'trainee') who have registered and enrolled in a programme of study with the bpf. This includes students who are undertaking a formal qualification, an infant observation as well as members who are completing programmes of continuous professional development. The Policy also applies to those who have recently left their course. This procedure applies to students who are undertaking a formal qualification which we are delivering in partnership with another educational provider.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about something a provider has done or not done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider.

Students wishing to make an academic appeal, should refer to the [bpf's Academic Appeal Policy](#). An academic appeal is different to a complaint and is a *challenge to or request for reconsideration of a decision by an academic body that makes decisions on student progress, assessment and awards. This may include a request to change marks or progress decisions, or final award classifications.*

## Who can make a complaint.

Students who are registered on a programme of study with the bpf, or those who have recently left their programme within the past 30 days, may bring a complaint to the bpf. Complaints should be made within 30 days of the issue, or of the last issue if there is more than one. It can be challenging to investigate or respond to complaints that are made a long time after an issue has arisen.

Students should not feel that they will be disadvantaged by bringing forward a complaint and all complaints are taken seriously, dealt with without any recrimination and treated confidentially as far as is reasonably practicable. We would encourage students to not make a complaint anonymously: it may change how we can investigate an incident, and limit how we can respond to and support students and/or others who may be involved in the complaint and any subsequent investigation outcomes.

We would encourage students to bring forward complaints themselves. We understand that this may not always be possible and a student may wish to appoint a representative, for example the student representative for their training, or a fellow student or friend. The bpf will not accept complaints from a third party to act on behalf of a student unless we have received written permission from the student to confirm their agreement that the third party will act as their representative. It is not normally appropriate or necessary for the student to appoint a legal representative.

### **Group Complaint**

If students wish to raise an issue that affects more than one student, they may do so as a 'group'. The group should nominate a representative from the group who will liaise with the bpf on behalf of all group members. The group should follow the steps set out in our complaints procedure, noting that where we require you to submit a complaint and/or review form, only one form should be submitted on behalf of the group. The bpf will take steps to confirm that each group member has opted-in to the group.

## **Complaints Procedure**

The bpf's complaints procedure is set out in our [Complaints Procedure: Timeline and Process workflow \(Appendix A\)](#). Students are required to complete each step before progressing onto the next part of the procedure. We will make available guidance about our complaints procedure to students, including what steps we may take, the type of information or evidence we may consider and possible outcomes.

We will communicate our decisions and outcomes, providing clear reasons and rationale, at the completion of each step in the complaints procedure.

### **Timelines**

When a student raises a complaint, we will aim to complete our investigation and resolve the complaint promptly and methodically, however more complex complaints (for example, complaints that have multiple issues) may take longer. We aim to complete our complaints procedure within 90 calendar days of receiving a formal complaint. We require students to provide all information or evidence promptly and within any set deadlines.

Table 1: Overview of timeline

In this Policy, we refer to calendar days (not working days).

Stage	Timeline
<b>Step 1: Early resolution</b>	Within 30 days of the issue, or most recent issue
<b>Step 2: Formal complaint</b> Submission of Formal complaint form by student	Within 14 days of the outcome of the early resolution
<b>Step 2: Formal complaint</b> Complaint investigation by the bpf	Within 28 days of receiving the formal complaint form
<b>Step 3: Review of formal complaint</b> Submission of Review of formal complaint form by student	Within 14 days of the outcome of the formal complaint
<b>Step 3: Review of formal complaint</b> Review of formal complaint by the bpf	Within 28 days of receiving the Review of formal complaint form
<b>Completion of Steps 2 and 3</b>	Within 90 calendar days

## Process

### Step 1: Early resolution.

Students should attempt to resolve their complaint informally at a local level, for example with their Director of Training or Chair of the relevant training committee. Complaints should be raised as soon as possible and no longer than 30 days after the issue, or most recent issue if there is more than one. If a student is unsure who to contact with their complaint, they can contact the Corporate Governance Team for advice by sending an email to [complaints@bpf-psychotherapy.org.uk](mailto:complaints@bpf-psychotherapy.org.uk). Where an early resolution is not possible or appropriate, for example if the complaint is complex or when the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the early resolution, the student can take their complaint formally to the Corporate Governance Team (Step 2).

### Step 2: Formal complaint

The formal process is activated when:

- the student has good reason for not wanting to engage with early resolution
- early resolution was attempted, but the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome
- the issues raised by the student are complex and require a detailed investigation
- the Corporate Governance Team decide that the student's complaint should be considered at the formal stage without first trying early resolution.

Students should submit a [Formal complaint form](#) as soon as possible and within 14 days of the outcome of the early resolution. If early resolution was not attempted, the formal complaint should be submitted as soon as possible and no longer than 30 days after the issue, or most recent issue if there is more than one.

The student should set out clearly and concisely: the nature of their concerns, the steps that they have already taken, the reason why they are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint and where possible, provide evidence to support the issues raised. The Corporate Governance Team will review the information and depending on the nature of the complaint, they may:

- refer the student to a different bpf policy or process, such as the bpf's [Academic Appeal Policy](#)
- reject the complaint, for example because the student has not met the bpf's deadline for submitting the Formal complaint form or evidence ([see Table 1: Overview of Timeline](#)). If the complaint is rejected, the Corporate Governance Team will provide the student with a Completion of Procedure Letter.
- proceed the complaint for formal consideration. The Corporate Governance Team will identify a member of staff who has not been previously involved to investigate the complaint to act as the Complaint Investigator. At any point in the formal process, the student may be invited to talk or meet with the Complaints Investigator to clarify any aspect of their submission.
- Refer the student to conciliation or mediation, which is a voluntary process where we will invite an impartial member of staff or independent third party to help resolve disputes confidentially.

As part of the formal process, we may convene a complaints panel. We will ensure that panel members are free of a reasonable perception of bias. Prior to the meeting, we will provide the student with information about what to expect and let the student know who will attend the panel, which may include anyone who has been invited to provide information or evidence at the panel. The student may wish to bring a representative to the panel meeting.

At the completion of the formal process, we will write to the student setting out the outcome of the investigation.

### **Step 3: Review of formal complaint**

If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage, they can ask for a review of a formal complaint by submitting the [Review of formal complaint form](#). The complaint must have been considered at the formal stage before it can be taken to the review stage.

The review stage will consider:

- a review of the procedures followed at the formal stage
- a consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable
- new evidence that could make a difference to the outcome and which the student could not reasonably have provided earlier in the process.

The review stage will not normally consider new issues afresh or involve a further investigation.

A member of the bpf's Senior Management Team, who has not previously been involved at any previous stage of the complaint, will consider the request for a review of the formal complaint.

## **When your course is delivered in partnership with another educational institution**

If a student is undertaking a course or programme of study which is delivered by the bpf in partnership with another educational institute, such as Birkbeck (University of London), University College London or the Anna Freud Centre, the student may bring their complaint to either the bpf and/or our educational partner. The student may wish to appoint a representative at their educational partner, such as a member of the partner's Students' Union.

We may share information that is proportionate to the complaint with the relevant educational partner for the purposes of investigating or responding to the complaint.

## **Complaints about a professional placement provider**

As part of a programme of study, a student may undertake a professional placement. If the student has a complaint about their professional placement which impacts their learning experience, they should bring their complaint to the bpf. However, if their complaint is about other issues, such as the services and activities of the placement provider, in the first instance they should approach their placement provider to raise their concerns.

## **Complaints that are intended to disrupt or with no serious purpose.**

We will not accept complaints that:

- we have previously considered and decided
- that are about something which a fair-minded person would consider to be trivial
- that the student is pursuing in a way that is having a seriously negative effect on our staff or work
- where a student is looking for a remedy that lacks any serious purpose or value.

## **Office for the Independent Adjudicator**

The Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) is the independent body set up to review students' complaints. If a student has raised a complaint to the bpf and they are unhappy with the outcome of their complaint and they are, or were, on one of our higher education courses, they can ask the OIA to review their complaint. It's important that the bpf have completed all of their internal processes, and that the student has been issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter, before the student can take their complaint to the OIA. The request to the OIA must be submitted within 12 months of outcome of the complaint.

The OIA Scheme applies to the following higher education courses which are delivered by the bpf:

- Doctor of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy
- MSc in Psychodynamics of Human Development

More information about making a complaint to the OIA Scheme can be found on the OIA's website  
<https://www.oliahe.org.uk/students>.

## **Governance**

The Corporate Governance Team will provide an annual assurance report about the application of our Student Complaints Policy to bpf's Audit and Risk Committee and Board of Trustees. Information on any complaints will be anonymised and no personal information about a student or others associated with a complaint will be disclosed in the report.

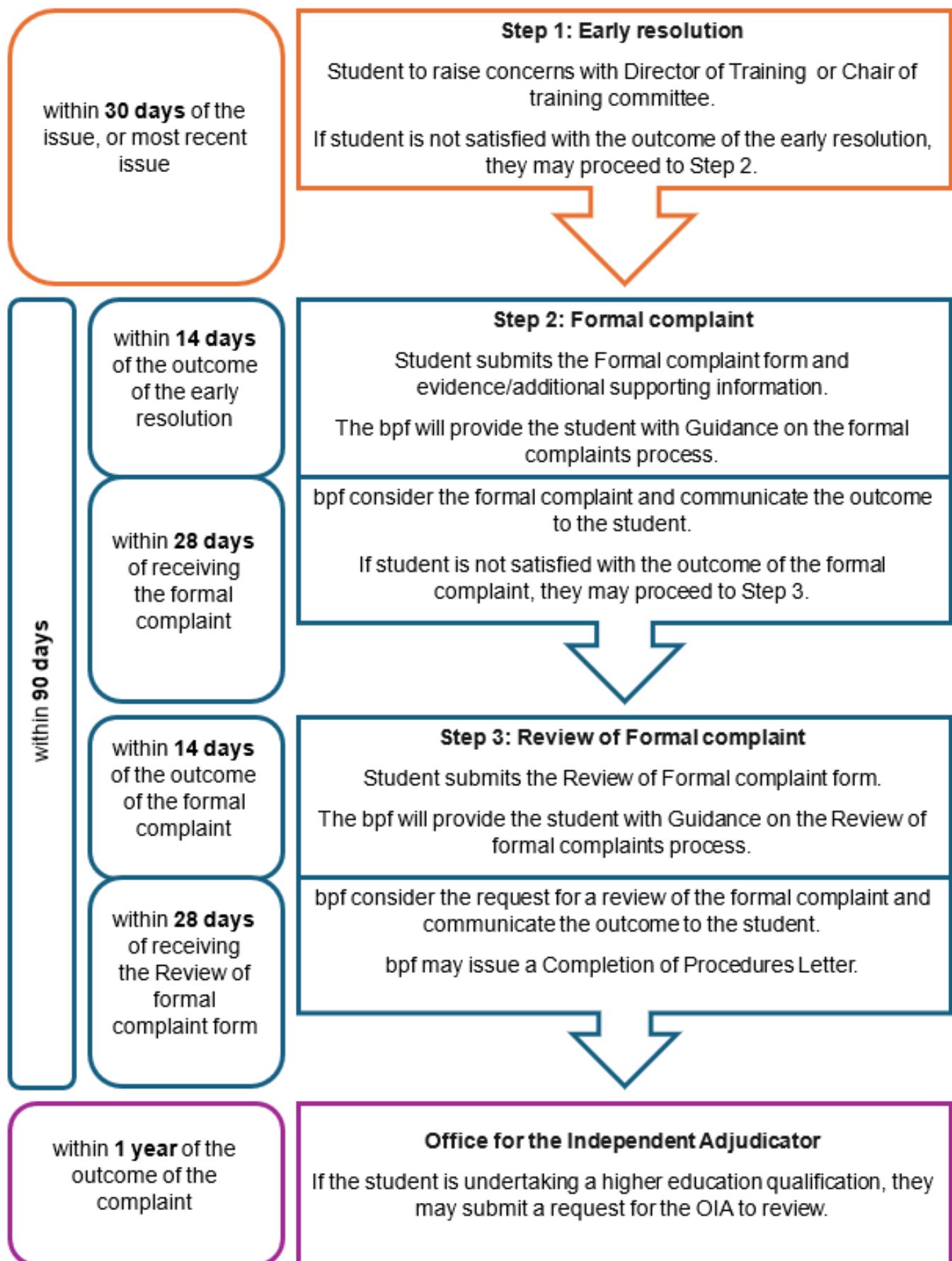
## **Internal Resources**

Students may wish to refer to our [student policies and regulations](#).

## **External resources**

- OIA Good Practice Framework: Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals  
<https://www.oliahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/handling-complaints-and-academic-appeals/>
- University College London  
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/>
- Birkbeck, University of London  
<https://www.bbk.ac.uk/>

## Appendix A. Complaints Procedure: Timeline and Process workflow



# Accessible version of Academic Appeals Procedure: Timeline and Process workflow

## 1. Process step 1: Early resolution

- Student must raise the concern within **30 days** of the issue, or most recent issue.
- Student to raise concerns with the Training Director or Chair of Training Committee.
- If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the early resolution, they may proceed to Step 2.

## 2. Process step 2: Formal complaint

- Student must submit Formal complaint form within **14 days** of the outcome of the early resolution.  
*If early resolution was not attempted, the formal complaint should be submitted as soon as possible and no longer than 30 days after the issue, or most recent issue if there is more than one.*
- Student submits the Formal complaint form and evidence and/or supporting information.
- bpf will provide the student with guidance on the formal complaints process.
- bpf consider the formal complaint and communicate the outcome to the student.
- If student is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint, they may proceed to Step 3.
- The bpf will provide an outcome of the Formal complaint within **28 days** of receiving the formal appeal.

## 3. Process step 3: Review of Formal complaint

- Student must submit Review of Formal complaint form within **14 days** of the outcome of the Formal complaint.
- Student submits the Review of Formal complaint form.
- The bpf will provide the student with Guidance on the Review of formal complaint process.
- bpf consider the request for a review of the formal complaint and communicate the outcome to the student.
- bpf may issue a Completion of Procedures Letter.
- The bpf will provide an outcome of the Review of Formal complaint within **28 days** of receiving the Review of Formal complaint form.

## 4. Step 2 and Step 3 should be completed within 90 days of the outcome of the early resolution.

## 5. Office of the Independent Adjudicator

- If the student is undertaking a higher education qualification, they may submit a request for the OIA to review.
- The student must submit their request within **1 year** of the outcome of the complaint.

Version	Date	Description of Amendments	Author
V1	01 August 2025	Publication of policy	Head of Safeguarding and Professional Standards Development
V1	18 September 2025	Administrative change: updated hyperlinks	Head of Safeguarding and Professional Standards Development
V1	08 January 2026	Administrative changes: internal resources	Head of Safeguarding and Professional Standards Development