



UCP-COM001 Higher Education Student Complaints Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 University Centre Peterborough (UCP) is committed to high standards of service and the quality of teaching and learning. UCP's focus at all times is to ensure students have a positive and rewarding experience. However, it is accepted that students may have complaints relating to their course or the services and facilities provided. UCP takes such complaints seriously and will deal with them without recrimination and in a confidential manner in accordance with the policy.
- 1.2 This policy, developed in consultation with the HE Academic Board, has been designed to:
- Reflect the principles of justice;
 - Be transparent and involve timely resolution of the complaints;
 - Include procedures for independent review and decision making;
 - Encourage the resolution of the complaint at a local level;
 - Act to improve the student experience.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of the policy is to ensure that students are aware of what to do if they are dissatisfied with an action, or lack of action, by UCP or about the standard of service provided by UCP. It also ensures UCP adheres to the requirements and expectations outlined by best practice guidance from Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA), Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), any Designated Quality Body for Higher Education as appointed by the Office for Students (OfS) and Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). It also recognises the demands of higher education and the importance of student experience and ongoing enhancement.
- 2.2 It is our policy to deal as quickly as possible with any complaint a student or applicant may have about their treatment by a fellow student; or one of our employees, services or departments. The purpose of this procedure is to give students/applicants an opportunity to resolve any such problem. We will resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage in the procedure and make every effort to do so informally. However, some complaints may be difficult to deal with informally and a student may wish to make a formal complaint. This should only be done once they have exhausted the informal route. Clear lines of communication are published to students on CANVAS and in the student handbook.
- 2.3 The Complaint Process can be summarised as
- **Stage 1 – Early Resolution – Informal procedures**, completion of an Informal Complaint Form (ICF) that is reviewed and actioned by the Faculty HE Manager
 - **Stage 2 – Making a formal complaint with a CS2 form**
 - **Stage 3 – The review stage** is where the student can appeal to a higher level within UCP or the awarding body (e.g. OU, Pearson, Lincoln Bishop) for a review of the process of the formal stage to make sure that appropriate procedures were followed

and that the decision was reasonable. UCP/ awarding body will write to the student setting out its decision at the conclusion of this stage.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 UCP is the higher education arm of the Inspire Education Group (IEG). This policy covers all prescribed higher education provision operating through UCP which includes Peterborough and Stamford campuses, and franchised partners. It is to be followed by all students regardless of the awarding body.
- 3.2 A complaint is to be distinguished from an Academic Appeal which should be managed through the UCP-ASS005 Higher Education Academic Appeal Policy published on the UCP website www.ucp.ac.uk/supporting-you/ucp-policies
- 3.3 An Academic Appeal as defined by the OIA, is a "request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with making decisions on admission, student progress, assessment and awards." This relates to appeals against the decision of an Assessment Panel, Awards/Exam Board, or progression decisions. Matters, which may be dealt with by means of Academic Appeals or other regulations relating to courses of study or the assessment thereof, shall not be dealt with through this policy.
- 3.4 A complaint as defined by the OIA, is "an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about a provider's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the provider."
- 3.5 If an applicant or student raises concerns that do not fall neatly into the category of either a complaint, an academic appeal, unacceptable behaviour, or other disciplinary matter or if their concern contains issues which could be covered by one or more policies, UCP will advise them which issues will be looked at under which procedure. This will be irrespective of which procedure has been used to formally raise a concern.
- 3.6 If an applicant or student submits a complaint and an academic appeal, the investigation of one may be suspended pending the completion of the other. UCP may decide to consider all matters together particularly if, for example, the findings of a complaint are likely to influence a decision regarding an academic appeal.
- 3.7 Examples of complaints include (but are not restricted to);
- Complaints in respect of a student's educational experience
 - Complaints concerning discrimination on grounds of gender, race, disability, creed or ethnic origin etc.
 - Complaints on grounds of maladministration.
- 3.8 Students have the right to escalate a complaint for external review to the Awarding Body (if it relates to the academic standards and/or quality of the learning opportunity).
- 3.9 Students can also contact the OIA, after exhausting the UCP internal procedures, if they remain dissatisfied.

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 4.1 UCP policies are available at <https://ucp.ac.uk/supporting-you/ucp-policies/>
- Accrediting / Awarding Body Academic Regulations (e.g. Open University (OU).), Pearson, Lincoln Bishop University etc.)

- UCP policies for:
 - UCP Higher Education Student Charter
 - UCP Terms and Conditions of Admissions and Enrolment
 - UCP-REC001 Higher Education Recruitment and Admissions Policy
 - UCP-FIN01 Higher Education Tuition Fee and Refund Policy
 - UCP-ASS005 Higher Education Academic Appeal Policy
 - UCP-ICF Informal Complaints Form (google form)
 - UCP-COM001 Appendix 2 CS2 Form – Stage 2 Student Complaints Form
 - UCP-COM002 Higher Education Visitors, Customers and Stakeholders Complaints Policy
 - UCP-DIS002 HE Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour, Harassment or Sexual Misconduct Policy

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 Complaints are only formal if submitted using the CS2 form from the UCP website and emailed to academicoffice@ucp.ac.uk.
- 5.2 Complaints must be submitted by the individual. Third parties can only act with written authorisation from the complainant.
- 5.3 For group complaints, one student must be nominated as the representative. UCP will only communicate with that representative.
- 5.4 Anonymous complaints are generally not acted upon, though UCP may investigate in exceptional cases.
- 5.5 Responsibilities and time frames for response and action by the student and UCP.

- **Stage 1 – Early Resolution:**
At the early resolution stage, the Faculty HE Manager will listen to the student's concern, offer an explanation, and explore possible solutions, such as providing additional information, suggesting alternatives, or offering an apology if appropriate. If the concern falls within their remit, they will aim to resolve it directly or collaborate with relevant colleagues. If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the student will be referred to the formal complaint process. The HE Manager dealing with the ICF should document actions taken, decisions made, and inform the student of the next steps, ensuring clear communication throughout. UCP will respond within 14 calendar days to an ICF. Students are expected to complete and submit an ICF within 30 calendar days of the initial incident or event.
- **Stage 2 – Making a formal complaint:** An independent HE Manager (one from a Faculty other than the one in which the student is studying) will investigate the complaint. (The target for conclusion of investigation and response to student will be 28 calendar days from receipt of a CS2). (The complaint must be made within 28 calendar days after an ICF response has been sent to the student).

UCP will write to the student setting out the outcome of the formal stage, including any decision to reject the complaint, giving a clear explanation and outlining the

reasons for each decision in straightforward language. This will help the student decide whether or not to pursue the matter further.

The decision will also give information about:

- the student's right to take the complaint to the review stage
 - the grounds on which they can do so
 - the time limit for taking it to the review stage
 - the appropriate procedure
 - where and how to access support.
-
- **Stage 3 – Requesting a review:** Once stage 2 procedures are completed, a student has the right to refer the complaint to the Awarding Body or higher authority within the institution, if a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal stage. The grounds for asking for a review may be limited, including but not confined to:
 - 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.

With regards to the Open University (OU), a student has 28 calendar days to submit a request for a review by the OU. UCP in this instance will issue a Completion of Institutional Procedures (COIP) letter.

Once the student has exhausted the 3 stages above, after conclusion of stage 3 then they can submit their complaint to the Office of the independent adjudicator (OIA).

Details of how to refer your complaint to the OIA are available here:

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/>

- 5.6 If for any reason, for example due to delays in the evidence being provided, a response is not possible within the target timeframe the complainant will be informed of the reason and of the expected timeframe for resolution. It should be noted that it is good practice to complete the processing of a formal complaint, and any associated review, within 90 calendar days wherever possible.
- 5.7 UCP will always think about the obligations under the equalities legislation when considering whether there are exceptional reasons to accept a complaint or the normal time limit, or whether it would be reasonable to adjust UCP's normal procedures.

6. RISK ANALYSIS

- This policy is required to ensure that correct procedures are in place and documented by all involved in the handling of complaints, both formal and informal, for higher education students.

Analyse risks of non-adherence to this policy

- Poor student satisfaction and impact on annual return to the OIA.
- Poor external stakeholder perception and potential financial cost and compensation.
- Failure to demonstrate effective enhancement.
- Failure to achieve a positive outcome from a Higher Education Review and the likelihood of additional scrutiny.

Staff training needed

- Initial and refresher training to be made available to staff.

7. DATA PROTECTION

- 7.1 UCP complies with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act, 2018. As such, applicant and student data are treated as confidential by all staff involved in this process and not divulged unnecessarily or inappropriately. However, the aforementioned Act requires UCP to release certain information to UK authorities upon request in order to assist those authorities with the prevention and detection of fraud or other crimes. UCP will release the requested information on receipt of an appropriate request from UK authorities such as (but not limited to) the police, Home Office (for immigration and related matters), local authorities, and the Department for Work and Pensions. UCP may use anonymised data collected as part of an individual's application and enrolment for fulfilling statistical and reporting requirements.

8. PROCEDURE

Stage 1 - Early Resolution Stage

- 8.1 Students are encouraged to follow the lines of communication (see the final page of this policy) published in student handbooks. This is also found on CANVAS, which is UCP's Virtual Learning Environment, and explained to students during induction. Initial concerns must be discussed with the Module/Unit Tutor, Course Leader or HE Manager. These staff understand the student's circumstances, programme of study, and are often best placed to resolve issues quickly. If issues raised by the student are not resolved, then they should complete an ICF.
- 8.2 Applicants who have a complaint in relation to admissions are encouraged to contact UCP [Academic Office](#) to resolve the issue informally if they have concerns that the standard of service received has fallen below the standard that might reasonably be expected.
- 8.3 An ICF is filled in by the student and sent to the Faculty HE Manager. The HE Manager for the Faculty will ensure a response is sent to the complainant within 14 calendar days of receipt. In some circumstances, the enquiry may extend to giving all parties an opportunity to be heard and if it is substantiated in whole or part, act to correct the situation. From time to time, a complaint may require extensive investigation, which cannot be completed within 14 calendar days. In such cases, a letter/email is to be sent by the HE Manager to the complainant keeping them informed of progress.
- 8.4 The Faculty HE Manager dealing with a dispute from a student should recommend the student proceed to Stage 2 if a satisfactory resolution cannot be agreed or if they in any way feel it would be unprofessional to continue informally.

Stage 2 - Making a formal complaint (CS2 form submitted by the student/applicant)

- 8.5 Students/Applicants should complete a CS2 form. This must be done within 28 calendar days of receiving the ICF response. Complainants may be offered support in order to make their complaint. Support will be provided to students by the Student Officer or member of the Student Support Team. For applicants the Academic Office can provide this support (academicoffice@ucp.ac.uk).
- 8.6 The complainant will receive an acknowledgement of the complaint within 7 calendar days and an investigation will be conducted. The acknowledgement will explain the steps to be taken, how long the process is expected to take and any further information required.
- 8.7 This complaint will be investigated by an independent HE Manager (an independent HE Manager is any HE Manager who is not the Manager for the student's Faculty) and findings presented to the complainant within 28 calendar days. The individual concerned may be contacted for further information. A student can request to attend meetings or interviews accompanied by a representative from the student body, parent or guardian. Due to data protection, we do however communicate only with the Student / Complainant. The Academic Office securely holds all case paperwork.
- 8.8 The complaint will be judged upheld, partially upheld or not upheld based on the findings. The independent HE Manager will send a written response to the complainant, and a copy to the Academic Office (for recording and monitoring purposes).
- 8.9 If a resolution cannot be found, the student or a representative (who must have permission from the student to act on their behalf) may proceed to Stage 3 for an external review.

Stage 3 – Requesting a review

- 8.10.0 If an internal resolution cannot be found, the student has the right to refer the complaint to the Awarding Body.
- 8.11 OU students can approach the OU about any concerns through the OU's Student Casework Office (SCO) at studentcaseworkoffice@open.ac.uk
Postal address: The Vice-Chancellor's Delegate, The Open University, Academic Services, Student Casework Office, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. A student has 28 calendar days to submit a request for a review at the OU (stage three), after a Partner has issued the Completion of Procedures (COP) letter to a student.
- 8.12 Lincoln Bishop students can address their request for review of UCP's internal complaints investigation by going through the link below. Students must attach any evidence to be considered and use the template Appendix 1 found [on the Lincoln Bishop Policies and Procedures page](https://www.lincolnbishop.ac.uk/about/policies-and-procedures). <https://www.lincolnbishop.ac.uk/about/policies-and-procedures>
- 8.13 Pearson (HNC/HND) students can present a complaint to Pearson. UCP can refer a student complaint to Pearson or the student can do so themselves by emailing a clear explanation of the grounds to edexcelappeals@pearson.com.
- 8.14 If, after a review by the Awarding Body, the student remains dissatisfied, they may refer the complaint to the OIA. A COP letter must first be issued by the Awarding Body at the conclusion of its process.

8.15

8.16 Role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator

The OIA runs an independent scheme to review student complaints. In order to refer a complaint to the OIA a COP letter is required. This will be issued either by UCP or the Awarding Body in cases where there is a right to refer a complaint to an Awarding Body. The complainant must contact the OIA. This must be done within 12 months of the date of the COP letter. Details of the rules of the scheme and information about how to make an application for review by the OIA are available at its website - www.oiahe.org.uk .

Completion of Procedures (COP)

- 8.17 On completion of UCP's internal processes, or on completion of the awarding body's review, the student will be issued with a COP letter. This will include a clear explanation of the determinations made on the key elements within the complaint under review. Where relevant, UCP will provide an explanation of how any outcomes are to be implemented. The COP letter will advise the student of the right to submit a complaint to the OIA and the time limit for submission.

Recording, Monitoring and Analysis of Complaints

- 8.18 The Academic Office will oversee the tracking and monitoring of complaints processed through the procedure. All forms and outcome of investigations must be submitted to the Academic Office.
- 8.19 In order to continually review and enhance the student experience, complaints received are reviewed and monitored by the Academic Office. The details of all informal and formal complaints are also summarised and presented at the Higher Education Academic Board, which meets on a semester basis to ensure any common themes can be addressed or changes to policy can be implemented. Complaint trends and the annual report are reviewed by the governing body.
- 8.20 The Academic Office will hold a record of all complaints for 3 years for audit purposes.
- 8.21 Please note - In the event of an investigation / complaint being deemed vexatious/ malicious / not in good faith the Disciplinary Policy will be enacted.

HE Student Complaints Procedure Flow Chart



♦ Stage 1: Early Resolution (Informal Stage)

- Raise concern with Module Tutor, Course Leader, or Faculty HE Manager
- Submit **IC Form** (within 30 calendar days of incident)
- HE Manager responds within **14 calendar days**
- Attempt resolution informally

♦ Outcome:

- **Resolved** → END
- **Unresolved** → Proceed to Stage 2



♦ Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- Submit **CS2 Form** (within 28 calendar days of ICF response)
- Acknowledgement within **5 working days**
- Independent HE Manager (from another Faculty) investigates
- Decision within **28 calendar days**

♦ Outcome:

- **Resolved** → END
- **Unresolved/Dissatisfied** → Student can proceed to Stage 3



♦ Stage 3: Review



Awarding Body Review or review at higher level within the organisation

- OU: Submit request within **28 calendar days** of COIP letter from UCP

Lincoln Bishop / Pearson: Submit as per each body's guidance

♦ Outcome:

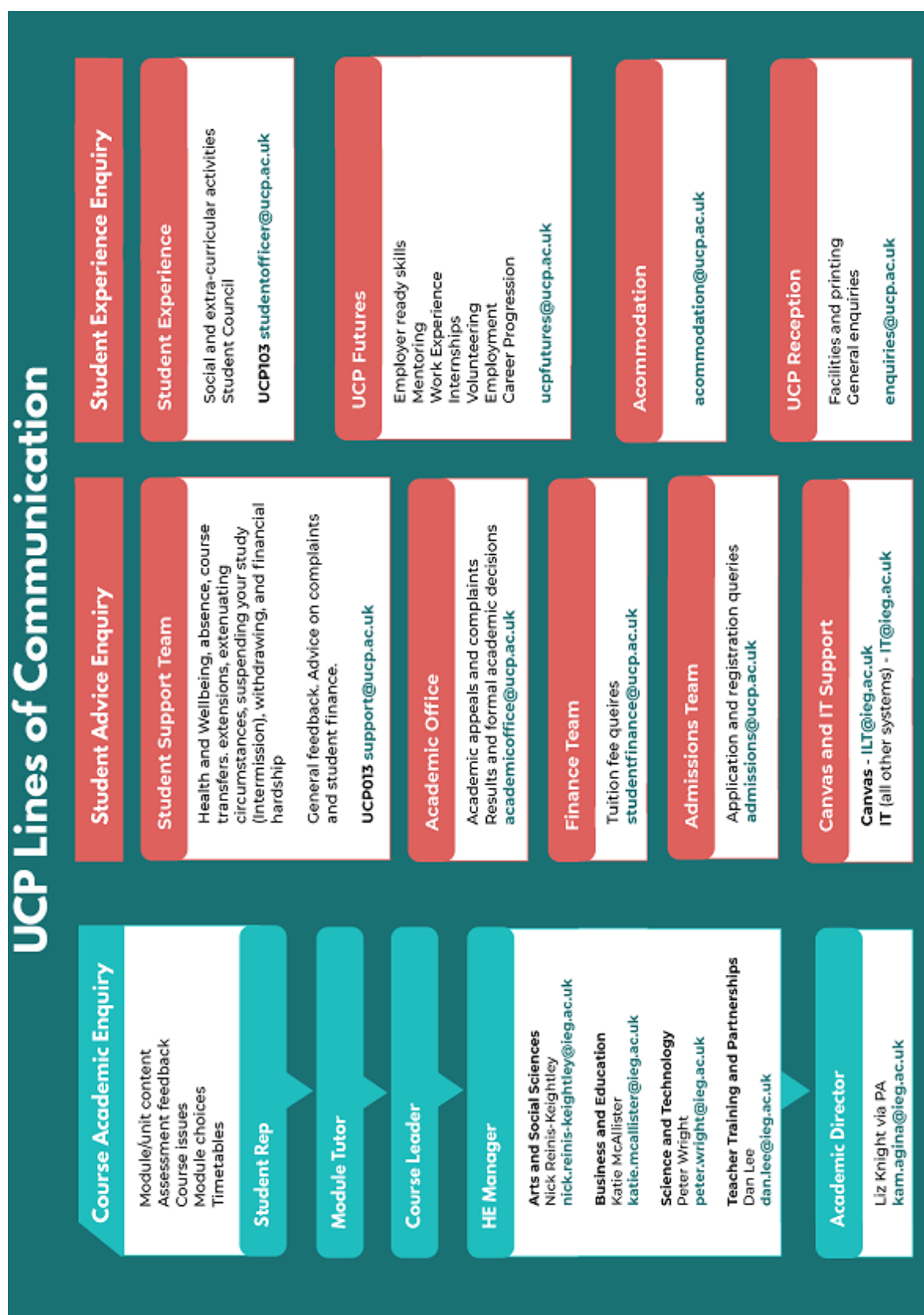
- **Resolved** → END
- **Unresolved/Dissatisfied** → Student to go to the OIA



OIA Review

- Must have received COP letter from Awarding Body (or UCP's COIP letter)
- Submit to OIA within 12 months
- **Completion of Procedures (COP Letter Issued)**

Lines of communication and department responsibilities





CS2 Stage 2: UCP STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Before completing this form, you should read our student complaints policy and ensure you have gone through the Stage 1 informal complaints process and completed an ICF.

The scope of this procedure is restricted to:

- Complaints in respect of a student's educational experience at University Centre Peterborough and UCP@Stamford including relationships with any non-teaching department.
- Complaints concerning discrimination by UCP / UCP@Stamford on grounds of gender, race, disability, creed or ethnic origin etc.
- Complaints on grounds of maladministration.

Matters which may be dealt with by means of Academic Appeals or other regulations relating to courses of study or the assessment shall not be dealt with by means of this procedure.

This procedure, in consultation with the Student Officer, has been designed to:

- Reflect the principles of natural justice
- Be transparent and involve timely resolution of complaints
- Include procedures for independent review and decision making
- Encourage the resolution of the complaint at a local level.

Prior to making a formal complaint you must have tried to resolve the issue informally and you will be required to enter the details of this attempt on this form.

1. YOUR DETAILS

Title Forenames..... Surname.....

Correspondence Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Daytime Tel..... Mobile Tel.....

Email address.....

Student Identification Number (if you are a student)

Course/Year of Study.....

Course.....

Campus of study.....

Date of submission of this form.....

2. ADDITIONAL DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT

Please provide clear and concise details of the complaint below.

What would you like as an outcome?

3. DETAILS OF ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE COMPLAINT INFORMALLY

Please provide details of your attempt(s) to resolve your complaint informally. (If you have not done this please return to the Early Resolution stage as we are confident that many issues can normally be resolved this way)

Who did you discuss the complaint with?.....

.....

Post title *(if appropriate)*

Department *(if appropriate)*.....Date discussed.....

What was the outcome and why are you still dissatisfied?

4. DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

I confirm that the information provided on this form is true and correct and in submitting this form I consent for the information provided in this form to be used as detailed below and I understand that University Centre Peterborough and UCP@Stamford;

- will not accept complaints from third parties or anonymous sources;
- will deal with any complaint that it believes to be malicious and unfounded under the provisions of its Student Disciplinary Policy;
- will hold some elements of the information I have provided on an electronic database;
- may need to share the information I have provided with other persons or organisations as part of any investigation to resolve my complaint.

Signed.....

Date.....

We would welcome your feedback in relation to the Complaints procedure. If you would like to make any suggestions/comments once the procedure has been completed, please submit these to the Academic Office

Once completed, please return this form by email to AcademicOffice@ucp.ac.uk or please send this form to the Academic Office, University Centre Peterborough, Park Crescent Peterborough, PE1 4DZ

You should keep a copy of your submission.

If you have any additional documents which you are unable to send by email, please send these, together with a copy of this form to the Academic Office, as above.

For internal use only:

Date complaint received.....

Office reference.....

APPENDIX 2

UCP-COM001

CS3 FORM



University Centre
Peterborough

CS3 Stage 3: UCP STUDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Before completing this form, you should have completed stage 2 and read our UCP-COM001 HE Student Complaints Policy.

Having been unable to resolve the complaint at stage 2, I request that this matter be referred to stage 3 of the student complaints procedure.

If the matter requires a review at a higher level within UCP, I request that this is undertaken.

If the matter requires referral to the awarding body, I understand that stage 3 will be dealt with by them. UCP will complete a completion of institutional procedures (COIP).

Contact details for all awarding bodies are provided within the complaints policy, and if unsure, clarification can be sought from the Academic Office.

The grounds for asking for a review may be limited, including but not confined to:

- 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.

1. YOUR DETAILS

Title Forenames..... Surname.....

Correspondence Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Daytime Tel..... Mobile Tel.....

Email address.....

Student Identification Number..... Course/Year of Study.....

Pathway.....

Faculty/Service.....

Date of submission of this form..... Date of CS2 submission.....

2. DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT (including in particular why you feel the complaint had not been resolved to your satisfaction at Stage 2 of the Complaints process).

3. DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

I confirm that the information provided on this form is true and correct and in submitting this form I consent for the information provided in this form to be used as detailed below and I understand that University Centre Peterborough and UCP@Stamford;

- will not accept complaints from third parties or anonymous sources;
- will deal with any complaint that it believes to be malicious and unfounded under the provisions of its Student Disciplinary Policy;
- will hold some elements of the information I have provided on an electronic database;
- may need to share the information I have provided with other persons or organisations as part of any investigation to resolve my complaint.

Signed.....

Date.....

We would welcome your feedback in relation to the Complaints procedure. If you would like to make any suggestions/comments once the procedure has been completed, please submit these to the Academic Office

Once completed, please return this form by email to academicoffice@ucp.ac.uk or please send this form to the Academic Office, University Centre Peterborough, Park Crescent Peterborough, PE1 4DZ

You should keep a copy of your submission.

If you have any additional documents, which you are unable to send via email, please send these, together with a copy of this form to the Academic Office, as above.