

Complaints

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Pembroke College welcomes comments and suggestions about the services it provides, and junior members are encouraged to communicate any causes for concern, either academic or non-academic. Students should where possible first raise these concerns informally with the senior member or member of staff directly concerned, or by contacting the person in charge of the relevant area; if in doubt, or where it seems appropriate, students should contact an Assistant Tutor or the Tutor. But the following guide may be helpful. Students are usually expected to raise concerns about individual supervisors with their Director of Studies, and/or with an Assistant Tutor. Routine non-academic concerns would include comments about individual bed sitting rooms, or a question about a College bill; these may be expressed to the Bursar either in person or through an Assistant Tutor, and are generally resolved quickly. Issues of common concern, and which affect the student body as a whole, may be raised through the Junior Parlour Committee and Graduate Parlour Committees. All such representations will be taken seriously; many complaints can be dealt with quickly and effectively in this manner, without recourse to formal procedure.
- 1.2 The present Complaints Procedure is for those more serious complaints which fall beyond the scope of those outlined above in 1.1 or below in 1.3. These are likely to concern the educational provision of the College as reflected in the conduct of senior members or the academic staff of the College, in failing properly to discharge their responsibilities to a student or students. 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. In formulating this procedure, the College expects students to exhaust all normal and informal channels for expressing their grievance - an Assistant Tutor or a Fellow of the College or the Tutor for academic matters, the Bursar or the Tutor for complaints against College staff - before turning to the provisions outlined in the following paragraphs. In raising possible issues of complaint, junior members will be aware of and observe their obligations as members of the College and the University. They have a responsibility not to waste resources on frivolous or vexatious complaints.
- 1.3 In raising a complaint about an aspect of the College's educational provision, students should be aware that some of those aspects are already served by existing procedures. These include:
 1. College Discipline - details of informal and formal hearings, punishments, and appeals procedures are contained in the College's Rules and Regulations;
 2. Harassment and Bullying, and Discrimination, where the College is obliged to follow separate University Codes of Practice. Copies of these Codes of Practice are available in the Tutor's Office for consultation. Loraine Gelsthorpe is the College's trained Adviser in this area. Students should feel free to consult her.
 3. University Examinations Appeals. Students should be aware that a separate procedure exists for appealing to the University in a case where the student feels that he or she has been disadvantaged or unfairly classified in a University examination. The University Registry will be circulating further information on examination appeals in the course of this academic year; at

present, an Assistant Tutor makes an appeal on a student's behalf to the Deputy Registrar.

- 1.4 The complaints procedure shall be confidential, save where the complaint must necessarily be disclosed to another person or body in order to investigate the complaint, in which case the student will be notified in advance that the disclosure is to be made. Students will not be prejudiced in any way by lodging a bona fide complaint.
- 1.5 The College will aim to ensure that any complaint is investigated thoroughly and swiftly, and where it is concluded that remedial action is required, that it is implemented without undue delay.
- 1.6 Any student who is considering bringing forward a complaint under the procedure detailed in section 2 below may first seek advice from an Assistant Tutor or Fellow of the College, from a member of the Junior Parlour or Graduate Parlour Committees, or from the Cambridge University Students' Union.

2. Procedure

- 2.1 A complaint should initially be raised informally, in the manner outlined in 1.1 above. If this has not produced a satisfactory resolution, the student should write to the Complaints Officer, with a full statement of the complaint. (Care should be taken not to enter into written correspondence with the subject of the complaint.) The Tutor will act as Complaints Officer, except where the complaint is specifically against the Tutor; the Master should be informed in writing where this is the case, and will appoint a senior Fellow of the College to act as Complaints Officer.
- 2.2 The Complaints Officer will acknowledge receipt and aim to see the complainant, where possible, within 10 days of receiving the complaint, in order to discuss the issues and decide the best way to proceed. If the student so wishes, the Complaints Officer will proceed on the basis of written evidence or, in exceptional circumstances, on the basis of representations from a proxy.
- 2.3 The student may choose to be accompanied by a nominated companion from among the College's membership, either junior or senior, at the initial meeting with the Complaints Officer and at any subsequent meeting. The same companion should attend all relevant meetings, where he or she will have the right to speak.
- 2.4 At all stages the Complaints Officer will endeavour to resolve the complaint informally. Should informal resolution prove impossible or inappropriate he or she will formally resolve the complaint.
- 2.5 At the initial meeting the Complaints Officer will discuss with the student whether he or she wishes to proceed with a formal complaint. If so, the Complaints Officer will:
 1. Notify the student that he or she will investigate the complaint.
 2. Inform the student of the steps he or she intends to take to investigate the complaint.
 3. Inform the student of any other person whom he or she intends to notify about the complaint. (See 1.4 above.)
 4. Discuss the time-scale for investigating the complaint.
 5. Discuss the nature of the remedy the student is seeking.
- 2.6 The Complaints Officer will aim to investigate the complaint and notify the student of the results within 14 days of the first meeting with the student. In the event that this is

not possible, the Complaints Officer will communicate the reason for the delay to the student.

2.7 After concluding the investigation, the Complaints Officer will notify the student in writing of the decision, and may arrange a meeting at which the student will be notified of the decision, and of any action the College proposes to take.

2.8 Where a complaint is upheld, appropriate remedies may include one or more of the following:

1. Disciplinary or other appropriate action against students, staff or Fellows;
2. Financial compensation;
3. A written and/or verbal apology;
4. A change in practice or policy.

It should be noted that the College's action may be limited in cases where the person subject to the complaint is not a member or employee of the College. The Complaints Officer may also decide that a student shall recover reasonable expenses incurred in pursuing the complaint.

2.9 A complaint must normally be made within 3 months of the matters about which the complaint is made.

2.10 In the event that the complainant or, where he or she is a member of the College, the person subject to the complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, he or she may appeal within 14 days of receipt of the decision to the Appeals Committee.

3. Appeals

3.1 The Appeals Committee shall consist of three members of a panel appointed for the academic year by the Society ('The Society' is the statutory term for Pembroke's Fellowship, which meets fortnightly in academic term and which governs the College). No member of the Appeals Committee shall have any interest in or previous involvement with the issue or complaint, and the panel members shall jointly decide which of its members serve on each occasion.

3.2 When receiving notice of an appeal the Complaints Officer will:

1. Call a meeting of the Appeals Committee, to be held, whenever possible, within 14 days.
2. Make all documents relating to the case available to the Committee.
3. Inform both the student and the person subject to the complaint of the date and time of the meeting and of their rights to submit new evidence and to be accompanied to the meeting.

3.3 The Appeals Committee shall determine its own procedure, provided that both the complainant and the person subject to the complaint shall each be allowed a full and fair opportunity to make representations and to comment on any relevant evidence. The Committee shall form its own judgement of the merits of the complaint after full and careful review of all available evidence and in the light of the representations made by the parties.

3.4 The Appeals Committee shall have the power to confirm, amend or rescind the original decision.

3.5 If the complainant or, where he or she is a member of the College, the person subject to the complaint is not satisfied with the decision of the Appeals Committee, the

complaint should be put in writing to the Master, who will review the case at his discretion.

- 3.6 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedure, it may be open to him or her to refer the matter to the Visitor (The Visitor of the College shall be the Crown, acting through the Lord Chancellor.) Advice on the appropriate procedures may be obtained from the Master.

4. Monitoring and review

- 4.1 The Complaints Officer shall keep a record of all complaints, including the nature of the complaint; the ethnic origin/identity and gender given by the complainant; the procedure followed in dealing with the complaint; the time taken to resolve the complaint; and the outcome of the complaint.
- 4.2 The Complaints Officer shall report to a meeting of the Society once a year the profile of every complaint received, in all cases observing the principle of confidentiality outlined in 1.4.
- 4.3 The Society, in conjunction with student representatives shall, once a year, review:
1. The adequacy of information, advice, guidance and support for students on making complaints;
 2. The adequacy of understanding amongst Fellows, staff and students of the grounds on which a complaint might arise;
 3. Action which may usefully be taken to prevent the recurrence of a situation which led to a successful complaint.