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### Regent's Park College – Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. This document lays out procedures for students who wish the College to consider and, if necessary, respond to serious dissatisfaction with their tuition, or make a complaint against a member of staff or other aspects of College procedures. (Note: complaints against students are dealt with in other ways).
  - a. Students may begin informally and then choose to transfer to the formal process or proceed directly to a formal complaint.
  - b. Complainants may at any stage be accompanied by a friend or an adviser (e.g. an officer of the JCR or MCR).
  - c. If the complainant does not wish to be identified, the initial approach may be made through another student (e.g. an officer of the JCR or MCR) or through a member of staff such as a Personal Tutor. However, it must be understood that certain kinds of complaint will not be easy to make or sustain anonymously, and formal complaints will never be permitted anonymously.
  - d. Any initial approach to an Officer will be in confidence, and the complainant will be advised of how far further action will involve others knowing his or her identity.
2. Complaints, formal or informal, may be withdrawn; but in some circumstances investigation will have to carry on to allow someone complained about to clear their name, or so that the College can itself be satisfied that nothing improper has occurred.
  - a. It is the duty of the Principal or other College Officer to ensure that if they consider that a complaint is withdrawn under pressure (and this is especially the case where the matter is serious) the matter is independently investigated under some other appropriate College procedure.
  - b. Similarly, a student making a complaint should be assured that in the event a member of staff responds to the complaint in a way that may constitute bullying or harassment, such a response will also be investigated.
3. The need to avoid unnecessary delay in the resolution of complaints is stressed. Normally the College will seek to resolve formal complaints within four weeks, though this may not always be possible.
4. Informal Procedure:
  - a. Complaints may be discussed with any senior member of staff, including Personal Tutors, the student's Director of Studies, the Women's Officer, the Chaplain, the Dean, the Senior Tutor, and a Harassment Officer.
  - b. It is very important that this stage is not protracted and the person approached sees their role as essentially advisory and conciliatory, and makes clear that they are not an arbitrator. But within these constraints, they may, with the permission of the complainant, speak to both sides to the complaint.
5. Formal Procedure: stage one
  - a. When it is decided that a formal complaint is to be made, a formal complaint should be made in writing to the appropriate College Officer.

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- b. The relevant College Officers are as follows:
- i. for academic matters: Senior Tutor (for Undergraduates), or Tutor for Graduates (for Graduates), or the Director of the Visiting Student Programme (for Visiting Students), or the Course Director of the Pastoral Studies Programme (for Ministerial Students);
  - ii. for issues involving academic-related staff: the Senior Tutor or Principal
  - iii. for issues involving administrative and domestic College staff, food or accommodation: the Head of Operations;
  - iv. for financial matters: the Head of Finance;
  - v. for complaints about one of the College Officers listed in [5.b.i – 5.iv] above: the Principal or Acting Principal;
  - vi. Complaints about other students should be made to the Dean and will be dealt with under other processes.
- c. The Officer will (a) seek to offer sympathetic and confidential advice; and/or (b) try to find a remedy, or a reconciliation (in cases where relations have broken down between individuals, and the complainant does not object to this course).
- d. If the College Officer (or other Fellow) approached is unable to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant may write to the Principal or Acting Principal (or for a complaint that involves the Principal, the Chair of Governing Body and Council).
6. Formal Procedure: stage two.
- a. On such a reference the Principal or Acting Principal (or for a complaint that involves the Principal, the Chair of Governing Body and Council) will consider whether a *prima facie* case has been made to take the matter further.
  - b. If the Principal decides that a *prima facie* case has been made s/he will appoint a member of staff to investigate the complaint. The investigator will be, so far as is possible, someone who has not previously been involved in the case.
  - c. The investigator will meet with the student making the complaint in order to clarify it.
  - d. The investigator will then inform the member of staff against whom the complaint has been made – giving them a copy of the complaint before or at a meeting with them.
  - e. The investigator will interview others as relevant and appropriate.
  - f. The investigator will then report to the Principal recommending a course of action, which may include one or more of the following:
    - i. Further disciplinary action against the member of staff;
    - ii. A formal or informal warning to the member of staff;
    - iii. Measures to be adopted by the member of staff or the College to avoid a recurrence of the circumstances of the complaint, e.g. a course of training;
    - iv. Dismissal of the complaint.

- g. The Principal will then act upon the investigator's report as s/he deems appropriate; in certain cases the Principal may refer the investigator's report to the Governing Body.
    - h. When this stage is completed the Principal will write to the complainant stating the action taken and indicating that all internal procedures are now exhausted.
7. If at the termination of stage two of the Formal procedure above, the investigator concludes that the complaint was malicious or vexatious, s/he shall so report to the Principal who shall take such steps as are appropriate.
8. Record Keeping.
  - a. Each College Officer listed at [5.b.i – 5.v] will keep a register of formal complaints made in an academic year, and a summary of numbers and outcomes will be collected by the Principal and submitted to Governing Body and the Equality Committee.
  - b. The registers will indicate how many formal complaints have been registered, and what stage they reached (stage one, stage two, still unresolved, withdrawn).
9. Appeal
  - a. If the student remains dissatisfied by the conclusion of the complaint process at [6.h.] s/he has the right to appeal to the Chair of Governing Body (or, if the complaint has been handled by the Chair of Governing Body, to the Deputy Chair) who will ask two independent members of Governing Body to form a panel with the Chair (or Deputy Chair) to consider the matter and determine an outcome.
  - b. If the student remains dissatisfied after an appeal to the Chair (or Deputy Chair of Governing Body), and their complaint falls within the rules for complaints published by the OIA,<sup>1</sup> s/he may appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
    - i. Details of the OIA's procedures and rules may be found here:  
<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/rules-and-the-complaints-process.aspx>.
    - ii. If the complaint falls within the scope and jurisdiction of the OIA, a Reviewer is appointed. The OIA states that: 'In deciding whether a complaint is justified the Reviewer may consider whether or not the [College] properly applied its regulations and followed its procedures and whether or not a decision made by the [College] was reasonable in all the circumstances.'

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<sup>1</sup> The Conference of College Appeal Tribunal 'can only deal with appeals against "disciplinary decisions imposing a substantial penalty" upon students, and therefore its scope and jurisdiction does not extend to complaints by students against members of staff or the College and its processes.