



Student Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. The London School of Business and Finance (LSBF) is committed to delivering high-quality teaching and learning. We believe that an important part of delivering our mission involves students having adequate means and feeling free to express their concerns and ideas for improvement. Students may offer feedback via a variety of channels. A student may provide feedback, negative or otherwise, without raising a complaint. Students are encouraged to provide feedback to the appropriate Student Support team member in a prompt and constructive manner. When a student has a persistent or significant dissatisfaction, they are encouraged to raise this as a complaint. Our Complaints Policy, including the process of escalating from an informal complaint to a formal complaint, is described in detail here. Complaints raised by delegates of LSBF Executive Education are also covered by this policy.
- 1.2. The LSBF Student Complaints Policy and Procedure has been informed by the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, specifically the Advice and Guidance on Concerns, Complaints, and Appeals. It is compliant with the Office for Student (OfS) requirement that institutions and students know how complaints will be made, processed, and concluded.
- 1.3. LSBF is committed to managing complaints sensitively and in a manner that:
 - Ensures full confidentiality;
 - Is timely and efficient, to facilitate a speedy resolution;
 - Is fair and transparent to all parties;
 - Promotes informal conciliation, such as mediation, where appropriate;
 - Promotes feedback and best practice to enhance the student experience.
- 1.4. This procedure covers all aspects of the student experience at LSBF except for the following, for which separate procedures exist:
 - All academic matters relating to examination and assessment performance and outcomes are managed via the Academic Appeals Policy.
 - Disciplinary issues are covered by the Disciplinary Policy.
 - Racial, sexual, and other forms of harassment are covered by the Harassment and Bullying Policy.
 - Approval and payment of refunds are handled by a separate procedure; however, complaints related to refunds may be submitted under this procedure, once the following steps have been taken:
 - Students are advised to submit their refund request via our Refunds Portal: <https://refunds.lsbf.org.uk/>. Once the request is successfully submitted an automated response with a unique refund case ticket number is sent to the requestor's email ID.

This ticket number and their student ID can then be used to log in to the Refunds Portal at <http://refunds.lsbf.org.uk/case>.

- 1.5. The formal complaints procedure may, however, be used to investigate any of the processes listed above as an internal quality measure to ensure they have been carried out correctly and fairly.
- 1.6. We aim to investigate and provide written feedback to all formal complaints within 10 working days whenever possible and without prejudice to the complainant. Where this is not possible, the complainant will receive an acknowledgement and will be kept up to date.
- 1.7. This policy may be used for both individual and collective complaints. However, collective complaints are normally more appropriately addressed via the student representative system. Individual students participating in a collective complaint cannot pursue an individual complaint about the same issue.
- 1.8. This policy should not be in any way confused with a student's right to complain to the accrediting or awarding body. However, complaints to the accrediting or awarding body should be submitted only in the case that all internal resources have been exhausted. This policy outlines the channels and procedures for internal complaints.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. For the purposes of these procedures, a complaint is defined as a written expression of concern or dissatisfaction with an aspect of the school's service. This can include (but is not limited to) the provision of a course or programme of study, or a related aspect of service or a facility which is provided to students enrolled on, or recently graduated from, programmes studied at LSBF.
- 2.2. This Complaints Procedure policy is designed for legitimate complaints only. Complaints that are vexatious and frivolous (defined for the purposes of this policy as "*a complaint that has no serious purpose or value, or is specifically being pursued to simply harass, annoy, or cause financial cost*") will not be considered legitimate.
- 2.3. Grounds for a complaint might include the following:
 - Dissatisfaction with standards of academic provision, for example, insufficient or ill-maintained resources and facilities, arrangements for assessment, academic feedback, or information provided, or not provided, about a course;
 - Dissatisfaction with the quality or frequency of supervision or tuition;
 - Deficiencies in standards of service, for example, support facilities such as administrative services;
 - Misinformation about an academic programme;
 - Dissatisfaction with the level and availability of pastoral support;
 - Other deficiencies in the quality of the learning experience;

- The inappropriate behaviour of a member of staff.
- 2.4. The procedure does not allow for a complaint to be raised about an academic assessment decision, for example an examination or assessment result. All academic appeals are subject to the appropriate appeals procedure, as specified in the Academic Appeals Policy.
 - 2.5. The procedure does not allow for complaints by one student against another. Such complaints are the subject of separate disciplinary regulations published in the Disciplinary Policy.
 - 2.6. Students who require assistance submitting a formal complaint may seek help from the appropriate Student Support team member.

3. General Principles

- 3.1. It is important that students, prior to engaging with the Complaints Policy, have a clear understanding of what the procedure entails and possible outcomes. All legitimate complaints are taken seriously, and students will not be penalised for making a genuine complaint. The aim is for this procedure to be simple, clear, and fair to all parties involved, with mediation and informal resolution as options at any point. Complaints will be handled sensitively, courteously, and confidentially. All complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible to avoid issues becoming protracted. However, patience and understanding on the part of all involved are encouraged. Complex issues or complaints involving multiple parties may require longer investigations and resolution processes.
- 3.2. It is assumed that all parties operate in good faith and provide information which is true and complete; this includes a duty to disclose all information relevant to the issue at stake.
- 3.3. All information provided regarding a complaint will remain confidential for use within the complaints process and is subject to the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Only staff directly involved with the complaint will be given access to confidential information as specified in the LSBF Data Retention Policy. Under Article 7(3) of the GDPR, you have the right to withdraw your consent for processing your data at any time and can do so by contacting LSBF Data Protection Officer via dpo@lsbf.org.uk.
- 3.4. Anonymous complaints will be forwarded to the appropriate staff member but will not be formally investigated as it is not possible to respond to an anonymous complaint. Third-party complaints made on behalf of a student will not be undertaken without the student's written signed agreement to the concerns raised and their signed consent for an investigation to be carried out. This includes complaints made by the parent or spouse of the student concerned. Complaints may also be lodged by a group of students.

- 3.5. No student bringing a complaint under this procedure, whether successfully or otherwise, will be treated less favourably by any member of staff.
- 3.6. LSBF endeavours to address and resolve all complaints within 10 working days. Certain complex cases may, however, take a longer time to resolve. In such instances, students will be kept informed of the progress of their case and LSBF will attempt to give an indication of when the matter will be resolved. If the process is taking longer than 10 days and you have not received an explanation for the delay, you may contact Student Support (Delegate Support for Executive Education) and request an initial escalation provided you detail the background to the complaint, its status if known, and the reason for the escalation.
- 3.7. LSBF reserves the right to discontinue communication with a complainant on the topic of a complaint where the complainant becomes abusive or aggressive towards members of staff.
- 3.8. Complaints will not be upheld where the complaint raised is about something that has been made clear in the terms and conditions or policies of LSBF.
- 3.9. Where complaints are against a member of staff (academic or operation), LSBF will at times be required to share a copy of the complaint with the subject of the complaint.

4. LSBF's Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

- 4.1. LSBF has a three-stage Complaints Procedure.
- 4.2. All complaints, regardless of their nature, should initially be raised as informal complaints.
- 4.3. Any complaints that are escalated before the earlier stages of the Complaints Procedure have been applied will be reverted to the appropriate stage unless there is a strong reason for the escalation.

4.4. Stage 1 – Informal Complaints Procedure

Students are requested to initially submit all complaints as informal complaints. Informal complaints should be submitted in person or via email to the appropriate staff member as outlined below. LSBF endeavours to provide written feedback to all informal complaints within three working days and informal resolution within ten working days, where possible.

4.5.

For LSBF Executive Education

Delegates are requested to raise their initial informal complaint with a Delegate Support Officer by emailing executiveadministration@lsbf.org.uk or by speaking in person to the delegate support officer (applicable to on-campus delegates).

For LSBF Study Online

Students are requested to raise their initial informal complaint with a Student Support Programme Administrator using the Intercom button on Canvas.

For LSBF Professional Qualifications

Students are requested to raise their initial informal complaint by emailing professional.admin@lsbf.org.uk.

- 4.6. All complaints should normally be made within three months of the alleged incident, matter, or concern.
- 4.7. Students should keep a record of their action taken to resolve the complaint and keep copies of any relevant correspondence.
- 4.8. A student should normally expect to receive a written or email acknowledgement of their complaint within three working days and a full response, via email or in writing, within ten working days. This timescale may need to be extended during vacations or when the complaint is complex or involves multiple parties.
- 4.9. If it is not possible to resolve a complaint at this first stage, it should then be submitted under Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, outlined below.
- 4.10. **Stage 2 – Formal Complaints Procedure**
Where the complaint has not been resolved or satisfactorily dealt with as an informal complaint, a student can submit a formal complaint. Students will be expected to provide details of their attempt to resolve the matter as an informal complaint, or a suitable reason as to why informal resolution was not possible.
- 4.11. **Submitting a Formal Complaint:**
Students should submit formal complaints by completing a Student Complaint Form (accessible through Canvas) and emailing it to complaints@lsbf.org.uk
- 4.12. Where necessary, students should provide appropriate evidence to support any allegations they make (evidence may include signed witness statements, letters, emails, and any other relevant information). Where a student fails to provide reasonable evidence to substantiate their allegations, LSBF reserves the right not to progress the complaint further, as a justified case cannot be established in such an instance.
- 4.13. If a formal complaint is submitted outside the stated deadlines, without mitigating circumstances or reason, then the complaint will be deemed out of time and LSBF reserves the right not to progress the complaint, unless it would be inequitable to do so.
- 4.14. **Resolution of Formal Complaints**

In addition to informing continuous quality enhancement, the aim of this policy is to provide resolutions. Accordingly, while general expressions of concern are welcome, students are encouraged to specify the remedy they seek and/or the desired outcome to their complaint. There are several ways in which a complaint may be progressed at this stage, depending upon the nature of the complaint. Students will be notified of this in writing.

Such action may include:

- A meeting with a designated senior staff member to clarify matters of procedure;
- Forwarding the complaint to a named person within LSBF who will investigate the matter locally and provide a written response to the complaint;
- Mediation facilitated by the support or senior staff.

4.15. Where the complaint is complex and/or contains serious allegations against staff, the designated senior staff member will either:

- Appoint an independent Investigating Officer to investigate the circumstances of the complaint; or
- Arrange a Formal Hearing of the complaint.

4.16. Notwithstanding the above, the student may formally request that the case be taken to mediation at any point in the proceedings up to the convening of a Complaints Committee (Stage 3, below). During the investigation, it is possible further information may be requested.

4.17. Wherever possible, LSBF will seek to facilitate an early resolution of the complaint. LSBF aims to provide a resolution within 10 working days of submission of the formal complaint. Should this not be possible (due to complexity or requests for information from other parties), students will be kept informed of any delay and the reasons for the delay, at the earliest opportunity.

4.18. On completion of the investigation, the student will receive details as to how the complaint was investigated, evidence received, conclusions arrived at and, where appropriate, steps suggested to resolve the matter. Outcomes of formal complaints include but are not limited to:

- no case to respond to
- formal apology;
- review of LSBF policies and/or procedures;
- provision of specific information;
- change of timetable;
- provision of additional tuition (normally by means of joining another class as a sit-in student);
- ex-gratia payment or refund (without liability); the decision as to whether an ex-gratia payment is offered and in what amount is entirely at the discretion of LSBF. Ex-gratia payment is normally only considered in circumstances where a student has missed a significant number of classes, has experienced significant stress or anxiety, or has unexpected expenditures or a loss of income (where supporting evidence is supplied).

4.19. A report of the nature and outcomes of the complaints received will be prepared to assist in monitoring the effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure. The report will identify relevant quality assurance issues and, where necessary, ensure that the procedures are revised, and impact assessed as appropriate.

4.20. Complaint reports will be submitted for consideration to the Student Experience Enhancement Group (SEEG) three times per year.

5. Stage 3 – Review

5.1. If the response to the complaint following completion of the Stage 2 procedure is not considered acceptable by the complainant, they may invoke Stage 3, which involves a review of the case. Requests for review must be submitted by the complainant within 21 days of the date of the outcome notification of the formal complaint. The review will be undertaken by the Complaints Committee.

5.2. The Complaints Committee convenes ad hoc (as required). The Complaints Committee will comprise of senior managers from another department (e.g., for LSBF Executive Education, senior managers from LSBF Study Online or Professional Qualifications) to maintain impartiality.

5.3. The grounds for requesting a review of a formal complaint outcome should be clearly stated in writing and sent with full supporting evidence to the appropriate contact, as outlined below.

5.4. The case will be reviewed and referred to the next Complaints Committee meeting if:

- There remains, at the time, a complaint which comes within the scope of this procedure;
- The request for review has been lodged within the set time limit;
- The complaint is not of a petty or harassing nature.

5.4.1. Student should include the following information in their review request email:

- A copy of the original complaint decision;
- The reasons as to why they believe the outcome is unsatisfactory;
- All appropriate supporting evidence.

5.5. Where to email review requests

For LSBF Executive Education:

Requests for review should be emailed to: executiveadministration@lsbf.org.uk

For LSBF Study Online:

Requests for review should be emailed to: online-complaints@lsbf.org.uk

For LSBF Professional Qualifications:

Requests for review should be emailed to: QAprofessional.complaints@lsbf.org.uk.

- 5.6. The review will not consider new evidence unless there are good reasons as to why such evidence was not produced at Stage 1 or 2 of the complaint's procedure.
- 5.7. In the event of a decision not to uphold a complaint, the complainant will be advised as to the range of support services that are available.
- 5.8. The complainant will be formally notified in writing of the decision of the review procedure within 5 working days of the Complaints Committee meeting (and ideally, within 15 days of the review request). If a complaint is not upheld, the complainant will be informed of the reasons for its rejection. The letter will be copied to the Head of School or other designated senior academic staff, as appropriate.
- 5.9. The decision ("notification of outcome") of the Complaints Committee is final and concludes the LSBF complaints procedure. Therefore, there will be no further correspondence with the student about the decision.
- 5.10. The notification of outcome will advise the student of the opportunity for external review of the case if they remain unsatisfied with the outcome. External review is available at request from the accrediting or awarding body. Contact details may be sought from the school's administration.

6. Completion of Procedures

- 6.1. The complaints procedure is considered exhausted only when all internal review stages *and* external review by the accrediting or awarding body award's validating partner (if applicable) have taken place, and any required actions have been implemented.
- 6.2. Once procedures have been exhausted, LSBF will inform the student that a Completion of Procedures (COP) letter can be requested. The COP letter will be provided within 7-10 working days of a request. Such requests should be directed by the student to the Student Support Officer (or Delegate Support Officer for Executive Education) within 1 month of the notification of outcome.
- 6.3. If complaint is not upheld or there are found to be insufficient grounds to investigate a complaint or conduct a review, a COP letter will be issued to the student.
- 6.4. If, having completed the entire complaints procedure, the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request a review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Full details of this service are provided to the student by the School.

7. Training and Awareness

7.1. The Administration Office in consultation with the relevant heads of schools and Academic Leads will organise activities to raise awareness of the Complaints Procedure, and how it is to be used, amongst the student body.

8. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

8.1. Records of all complaints and their outcomes will be maintained by LSBF for a period of at least two years. Records of complaints of a serious nature and/or related to sensitive topics, including sexual harassment, may be retained for a period of more than two years.

8.2. Complaints are monitored by the Student Experience Enhancement Group (SEEG) in line with School Reporting requirements.

8.3. Any lessons learned from the monitoring of complaints will be acted upon as part of continuous review.

8.4. The Complaints Policy and Procedure is subject to review once per year by the Student Experience Enhancement Group (SEEG) at LSBF to ensure practices are maintained to the highest standard and remain compliant with accrediting and awarding bodies' requirements.

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*Content owner is responsible for ensuring the regular review and update of the document to reflect changes in both internal governance and external regulations.

Authorship

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