

## Complaints and Academic Appeals for Undergraduate and Postgraduate students in the Department of Chemistry

This document describes the procedures for making a complaint or an appeal in the Chemistry department.

A **complaint** refers to the provision the department makes. A complaint may cover aspects of teaching and learning (*e.g.* teaching facilities, health and safety in the laboratory where you are working, or supervision arrangements), or non-academic issues (*e.g.* support services, library services, university accommodation or university clubs and societies). Normally complaints will be considered within the department in the first instance.

An **appeal** refers to the result of any form of assessment, such as an exam or practical mark, or an outcome such as transfer of status. Normally appeals must be made through your college to the Proctors. Please note that the Proctors cannot overturn matters of academic judgement (see 10 below).

The Chemistry department has no direct control over what happens in Colleges, even though many academics employed by the department are also employed by colleges. Colleges will have their own complaints procedures for matters within their remit, such as tutorial provision, vacation study bursaries etc.

### Complaints procedure

1. If you have a complaint the first thing to consider is to discuss it informally with the person involved and to try to resolve it. This may not be appropriate or possible, but informal resolution is often the simplest way to resolve the complaint. However, please note that if the complaint is about an exam it is not permitted to approach the examiners directly.
2. If you want to take advice, there are many possibilities available. Your college will have a range of people to advise you, as does the department. Undergraduates can obtain advice from their tutors, from the Senior Tutor of their College, or from the Director of Studies for Chemistry. Postgraduates can obtain advice from their Supervisor, their Advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, their College Advisor or the College Tutor for Graduates. In addition you can obtain advice from OUSU or the Counselling Service, who are both very experienced in advising students. You may wish to take advice from one of these sources before pursuing your complaint.
3. General areas of concern about provision affecting students as a whole may be raised through your representative on the Chemistry Joint Consultative Committee (CJCC).
4. If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made **by the Department**, then the appropriate course of action will depend on whether you are an undergraduate or a postgraduate. Undergraduates may raise complaints

with the Faculty Office (Nina Jupp) or the Director of Studies (Nick Green). Postgraduates should normally make their complaint to the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies. Complaints may also be made or referred to the coordinators of the teaching labs, the heads of Inorganic, Organic, or Physical and Theoretical Chemistry, the Area Safety Officer for Chemistry (Chris Blackwell) or ultimately the Chairman of Chemistry, as appropriate. Within the department, the officer concerned will attempt to resolve your complaint informally, or refer to another member of staff who is better placed to deal with it. The person dealing with your complaint will normally acknowledge it promptly, and will inform you on what reasonable time frame he/she hopes to be able to deal with it.

5. If you are dissatisfied after your complaint has been dealt with locally, or are not satisfied that it has been dealt with on a reasonable timescale, then you may take your concern further by making a written complaint to the University Proctors (<https://academic.web.ox.ac.uk/complaints>). You may take confidential advice from the Clerk to the Proctors and OSU before submitting your written complaint.

A complaint to the Proctors should be made only if attempts at informal resolution have been unsuccessful. The procedures for the consideration of complaints and appeals are described in the relevant Council regulations (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/247-062.shtml>).

6. If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision **made by your college**, then you should raise it either with your tutor or with the Senior Tutor or Tutor for Graduates as appropriate. Your college will also be able to explain how to take your complaint further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of its consideration. Proctors cannot intervene in internal college matters.

### **Academic appeals**

7. An appeal is a formal questioning of a decision made on an academic matter by the responsible academic body, or a questioning of the process by which that decision was reached.
8. For undergraduate or taught graduate courses, a query or concern which might lead to an appeal should be raised with your college authorities and the individual responsible for overseeing your work. **It must not be raised directly with examiners or assessors.**

If it is not possible to clear up your concern in this way, you may put your concern in writing and submit it to the Proctors via the Senior Tutor of your college. As noted above, the procedures in relation to complaints and appeals are on the web (<https://academic.web.ox.ac.uk/complaints>). Appeals must be submitted to the Proctors as soon as possible and not later than three months after the notification of the results of the examination concerned.

9. For the examination of research degrees, or in relation to transfer or confirmation of status, your concern should be raised initially with the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies. Where a concern is not satisfactorily

- settled, then you, your supervisor, or your college authority may put your appeal directly to the Proctors at the Proctors' Office, University Offices, Wellington Square, OX1 2JD.
10. Please note that:
    - (a) The Proctors are not empowered to challenge the academic judgment of examiners or academic bodies.
    - (b) The Proctors can consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed; *i.e.* whether there was a significant procedural administrative error; whether there is evidence of bias or inadequate assessment; whether the examiners failed to take into account special factors affecting a candidate's performance.
    - (c) On **no account** should you contact the examiners or assessors directly.
  11. The Proctors will indicate what further action you can take if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or appeal considered by them.
  12. For undergraduate or taught graduate courses if you are dissatisfied with the Proctors' decision about a request for a special examination arrangement has a right of appeal to the Council's Educational Policy and Standards Committee (details are available from Senior Tutors).

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