



Student Complaints Policy and Procedure

Applicability: Finance Business Training (FBT) – all taught programmes

Effective: October, 2013

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Finance Business Training (FBT) is committed to delivering high quality teaching and learning and, therefore, we encourage our students to give us feedback. We believe that it is important for our students to be able to express their concerns and ideas for improvement, complaints and compliments and voice their opinions as this enables us to improve the quality of our services and academics. Students may do this via a variety of means, including via our Complaints Procedure.

FBT is committed to managing complaints in a way that:

- 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 inform Academic/Administrative teams and enhance the student experience.
- 1.2 This procedure covers all aspects of a student's experience at FBT.
- 1.3 The only exceptions are the following, for which separate procedures exist:
- All **academic** matters relating to examination and assessment performance and outcomes are managed via the Appeals Process (for degree programmes; a separate external appeals processes exists for professional body examinations which is managed directly by the relevant professional bodies).
 - Disciplinary issues are covered by the Disciplinary Procedures for Students.
 - Racial, sexual and other forms of harassment are covered by the Harassment and Bullying Policy.
- 1.4 We aim to resolve all complaints within 10 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.
- 1.5 Any complaints that are escalated before the earlier stages of the complaints procedure have been used will be reverted back to the appropriate stage.



2. Definition

- 2.1 For the purposes of these procedures, a **complaint** is defined as a written expression of concern about 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 FBT UK campuses.
- 2.2 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 compared with previously advertised levels;
 - 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 your learning experience;
 - The inappropriate behaviour of a member of staff.
- 2.3 The procedure does **not** allow for a complaint to be raised about an academic outcome or judgement, for example an examination or assessment result. All appeals against academic decisions are subject to Appeals Procedure.
- 2.4 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 Procedure.
- 2.5 Students who require assistance preparing a written expression of dissatisfaction may seek help from Student Liaison Officer/Administration, who are located within local Administration Office and from the Disability Officer located within the Student Counselling and Disability Office, dependent upon the particular area of assistance required. Alternatively, advice and assistance may be sought from the FBT Student Association.



3. General Principles

- 3.1** It is important that students, prior to engaging with the Complaints Procedure, have a clear understanding of what the procedure is, what it entails and possible (as well as impossible) outcomes.
- 3.2** All complaints are taken seriously and students may not be penalised for making a genuine complaint. FBT expects that students will not engage in frivolous or vexatious complaints. However, where clear evidence exists that students do submit complaints which are clearly baseless, frivolous or vexatious, action may be taken under the Student Disciplinary Procedure.
- 3.3** It is aimed for the procedure to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved, with mediation and informal resolution an option 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 is urged from all parties when complex issues or complaints involving multiple parties may require longer investigating and resolving.
- 3.4** The complaints procedure operates on the principles of natural justice:
- There are (at least) two sides to every dispute;
 - All parties are given the opportunity to provide evidence to substantiate their version of the issue / incident;
 - Full disclosure of any allegations or evidence will be made to those parties involved in the complaint;
 - All parties involved in a complaint have the right to be accompanied by a friend or non-legal representative at each stage of the procedure;
 - It is assumed that all parties operate in good faith and provide information which is true, complete and not misleading; this includes a duty to disclose all information which is relevant to the issue at stake, including information which may not support their position.
- 3.5** Students are expected to have met their obligations and responsibilities as a member of the FBT academic community with regard to:
- Meeting their academic commitments;
 - Acting in accordance with our Partner Universities regulations (if applicable);
 - Behaving with reasonable consideration for other students and staff.
- 3.6** All information provided regarding a complaint will remain confidential for use within the complaints process and is subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Only staff directly involved with the complaint will be given access to confidential information.



- 3.7** Anonymous or third party complaints will not be accepted. No investigation of a complaint made on behalf of a student will be undertaken without the student's written agreement to the concerns raised and their written consent for an investigation to be carried out. This includes complaints made by the parent or spouse of the student concerned.
- 3.8** No student bringing a complaint under this procedure, whether successfully or otherwise will be treated less favourably by any member of staff than if the complaint had not been brought.
- 3.9** FBT will endeavour to address and resolve all complaints as quickly as possible. Certain complex cases may however take a longer time to resolve than other cases. In such instances students will be kept informed of the progression of their case and FBT will attempt to give an indication of when the matter will be resolved.



4. FBT's Three Stage Complaints Procedure

FBT has a 'Three-stage Complaints Procedure' which should always be followed when making a complaint. This procedure should be followed by all students and staff in all cases.

5. Stage 1 - Informal Local Resolution

- 5.1** When first making a complaint, students should raise the issue informally with a member of FBT staff; this may initially be with an academic member such as the Tutor, Module or Programme Leader. In most cases this will be a member of the School's Administration or Student Liaison Officer. Students can raise issues by calling into the office and/or, if necessary, by arranging a meeting to discuss the matter. In most cases a face to face discussion is the quickest and most effective way of resolving issues. However, students may also submit complaints via email if they find this more convenient. We would request at this stage that students do not copy in long lists of staff.
- 5.2** All complaints should normally be made within 21 days of the alleged incident, matter or concern.
- 5.3** When a student raises a complaint with an Administrator/Student Liaison Officer, the Administrator/Student Liaison Officer may need to refer the complaint to a more senior member of the team or to an Academic. The student will be informed that the staff member is raising the issue with Management and made aware that the staff member will get back to them within a given time frame. Senior Management may contact the complainant directly to resolve the issue.
- 5.4** Students should keep a record of their action taken to resolve the complaint and keep copies of any relevant correspondence.
- 5.5** A student should normally expect to receive a written or email acknowledgement from the School/Department within 48 hours and a full response, via email or in writing, within 10 days. This timescale may need to be extended during vacations or when the complaint is complex or involves multiple parties.
- 5.6** If it is not possible to resolve your complaint locally then you can submit your complaint under Stage 2 of the Student Complaints procedure.



6. Stage 2 - Formal Procedure: Academic Registrar/Programme Director

- 6.1 Where the complaint has not been resolved or satisfactorily dealt with locally, then a student can submit a formal complaint. Students will be expected to provide details of their attempt to resolve the matter locally.
- 6.2 All formal complaints should be addressed to the designated senior officer within each School. Complaints relating to:
- The Business School (all undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes) should be made to the Academic Registrar at Registrar.Complaints@LSBF.org.uk
 - The Professional School (professional qualification programmes, including ACCA, CIMA, CIM, CFA) gaprofessional.complaints@lsbf.org.uk
 - The Vocational School (Edexcel - Higher National Diploma in all subjects) should be addressed to the Director of Vocational Schools at: vsbirminghamcomplaints@fbt-global.com
- 6.3 Complaints should be escalated within 21 days of the last verifiable attempt at local resolution. Where it is not appropriate for a complaint to be submitted for local resolution a formal complaint should normally be made within 21 days of the alleged incident, matter or concern.
- 6.4 If a complaint is submitted outside the advertised deadlines, without good cause or reason, then the complaint will be deemed out of time and FBT reserves the right not to progress the complaint, unless it would be inequitable to do so.
- 6.5 Students should complete a Complaint Form (a pro-forma is annexed to this policy) and 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, FBT reserves the right not to progress the complaint further if it is reasonably believed that a *prima facie* case was not established.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 Students will receive a formal acknowledgement within 10 days of submitting a complaint form to designated senior officer.



- 6.8** There are a number of ways in which the 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 an designated senior officer to clarify matters of procedure
 - Forwarding the complaint to a named person in the relevant School of Department who will investigate the matter locally and provide a written response to the complaint
 - Mediation facilitated by the designated senior officer
 - Where the complaint is complex and / or contains serious allegations against staff, the designated senior officer will either:
 - appoint an independent Investigating Officer to investigate the circumstances of the complaint; or
 - arrange a Formal Hearing of the complaint.
- 6.9** 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 Student Complaints Committee (Stage 3, below).
- 6.10** Wherever possible FBT will seek to facilitate an early resolution of the complaint. FBT aims to provide a resolution within 30 days of submission of the complaint. Should this not be possible (due to complexity or requests for information from other parties), then students will be kept informed of any likely delay and the reasons for the delay, at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.11** Students will receive written notification of the outcome of their complaint from the designated senior officer. This will include whether the complaint is upheld or not and any further action to be taken.
- 6.12** A report of the nature and outcomes of the complaints received by the FBT will be prepared by the Academic Registrar (with input from the other designated senior officers) to assist in monitoring the effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure. The report will identify relevant quality assurance issues and, were necessary, ensure that the procedures are revised and impact assessed as appropriate. The Reports will be submitted for consideration to the Academic Board on an annual basis.



7. Stage 3 – Appeals

- 7.1** If the response to the complaint following completion of the Stage 2 procedure is not considered by the student to be acceptable, they may invoke Stage 3, the appeal stage of the Formal Procedure. This involves a review of their case by the Student Complaints Committee. Appeals must be submitted within 21 days of the date of the Stage 2 outcome notification letter.
- 7.2** The grounds for the appeal should be clearly stated in writing and sent with full supporting evidence to the Executive Dean, who will convene a Student Complaints Committee within 21 days of receipt a notice of appeal if:
- There remains, at the time, a complaint which comes within the scope of this procedure;
 - The appeal has been lodged within the set time limit;
 - The complaint is not of a petty or harassing nature.
- 7.3** The appeal 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 Complaints Procedure.
- 7.4** In the event of a decision not to uphold a complaint, the Student Complaints Committee will advise the student of the range of support services that are available such as the Student Counselling Service, if appropriate.
- 7.5** The student will be formally notified in writing of the decision normally within fourteen (14) days of the Student Complaints Committee meeting. If a complaint is not upheld, the complainant will be informed of the reasons for its rejection. The letter will be copied to the Academic Registrar or other designated senior academic, and/or the Head of Department as appropriate. The decision of the Committee is final and concludes the FBT's complaints procedure.
- 7.6** The letter will advise the student of opportunity for external review of the case, if available. In the case of validated degree programmes, students, who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal and believe that the FBT has failed to follow this procedure correctly, may take their case to the Awarding Body.



8. Training and Awareness

Academic Registry will organise activities to raise awareness of the Complaints Procedure, and how it is to be used, amongst the student body. The Academic Registry will also provide support and guidance for FBT in handling complaints and resolving them as closely as possible to their point of origin.

9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Quality & Standards Officer at Academic Registry will oversee the tracking of complaints submitted at stages 1, 2 & 3 of the process and progressed through the Procedure, and will ensure that records show the nature of the complaint, the process employed to deal with the complaint, the time taken for each part of the process to be completed and the outcome. All data held will be monitored in accordance with the FBT's Equality and Diversity and Data Protection Policies and will be impact assessed on an annual basis in line with FBT procedures.



Student Complaints Procedure & Form

A full copy of the Student Complaints Procedure is available in your Student Handbook, and you should read this before completing the complaints form.

This Student Complaints Procedure applies to all students of Finance Business Training (FBT).

All complaints are taken seriously and students are not penalised for making a genuine complaint. The procedure is also an important source of information to help FBT improve the services it provides.

In the first instance students are expected to raise any complaints locally with their tutor, Module or Programme Leader or the Administration Department.

In case the officer contacted in the first instance is unable to resolve the issue or you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint you should complete the attached **Complaint Form** and return it to the designated senior officer for your School of study. The issue should be raised as early as possible to ensure the matter can be dealt with promptly.

- The Business School (all undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes) should be made to the Academic Registrar at Registrar.Complaints@LSBF.org.uk
- The Professional School (professional qualification programmes, including ACCA, CIMA, CIM, CFA) qa.professional.complaints@lsbf.org.uk
- The Vocational School (Edexcel - Higher National Diploma in all subjects) should be addressed to the Director of Vocational Schools at: vsbirminghamcomplaints@fbt-global.com



All formal complaints should be made to the designated senior officer within 21 days of the last verifiable attempt at local resolution.

Where it is not appropriate for a complaint to be submitted for local resolution, a formal complaint should normally be made within 21 days of the alleged incident, matter or concern. If a complaint is submitted outside the advertised deadlines then the complaint will be deemed out of time and FBT reserves the right not to progress the complaint.

In all cases you will be asked to provide full details of the issues surrounding the complaint and supporting evidence to corroborate any allegations you make.

You have the right to be accompanied by a friend/colleague at all stages of the complaints procedure. However, you should make your own arrangements in this matter.

To discuss issues regarding a complaint in confidence or for advice on the Student Complaints Procedure, you may contact the Student Liaison Officer/ the Disability Officer or the Student Association dependent upon the particular area of assistance required.



FBT STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM

Contact Details

Full Name:	.....	Student Number:	.....
Address:	.....	Programme of Study:	.....
	.....	Telephone No:	.....
	.....	Mobile:	.....
Post Code:	.....	Email Address:	.....

Brief details of your complaint

(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

1. Local Resolution

Have you submitted your complaint(s) to the Administration Office?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
IF NO: <i>Please specify below the reasons why you have not submitted your complaint to the relevant department</i>	
<i>(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)</i>	
IF YES: Please provide copies of all correspondence relating to your complaint.	
Copies of original complaint and response included:	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<i>Please specify the reasons why you believe that your complaint has not been resolved or satisfactorily dealt with locally:</i>	
<i>(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)</i>	



2. Please specify the outcome you seek and/or the resolution of your complaint.

(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

I declare that the information provided on this form is a true and accurate account of circumstances surrounding my complaint. I agree to FBT making independent checks on the information provided and will co-operate with any investigations. I will provide all relevant evidence to substantiate my complaint. I have read the student complaints procedure and understand that I will not be penalised for making a genuine complaint, but I am aware that any false or inaccurate statements may result in disciplinary action against me.

**Student
Signature:**

Date: