



Teaching Quality Handbook

Part 8

Student Support Services (June 2017)

Part 8 outlines the student support systems in place at the University, including both academic and pastoral support services.

Version Control

Version	Created by	Date approved by Academic Board	Summary of changes
June 2017	Asst Registrar QAE	17/07/2017	Changes to reflect organisational restructuring

Part 8: Student Support Services

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Part of the Teaching Quality Handbook is informed by [Chapter B4 Student Support, Learning Resources and Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance \(December 2011\) of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#). It provides details of the range of free academic and pastoral support services available to students throughout their time at the University. The services are designed to facilitate the integration of new students into University life, provide support during their academic studies and enable the identification and development of key skills required for a range of employment positions.

2. Induction arrangements

- 2.1 Upon enrolment, all students will be informed about the location of the Student Handbook that includes the University assessment regulations. The Handbook is accessible from the VLE; Gateway.
- 2.2 All new undergraduate and postgraduate students are expected to participate in an induction programme.
- 2.3 The induction programme will combine institutional, Centre and programme specific information and activities. The development and delivery of the programme will reflect this combination. The final programme will be approved by the Academic Board. The objectives for the induction programme are to:
- Ensure all students feel welcome and comfortable at the University.
 - Enable students to become familiar with the University environment.
 - Ensure students are aware of the University's rules and regulations and the disciplinary process.
 - Introduce key members of the academic and support staff.
 - Ensure students have an overview of the programme on which they are enrolled, of relevant external reference points and any professional body requirements.
 - Provide information about, and access to, learning and welfare support and resources, including library and IT facilities, support for disabled students and careers advice.
 - Promote understanding of the expectations and obligations placed on students, in terms of their commitment to their studies, their responsibilities in the learning and teaching scheme and in their general conduct.
 - Provide opportunities for students to meet with their personal tutors.
 - Encourage students to meet and socialise with each other.
 - Promote and develop the collegiate nature of the institution.

- 2.4 The success of the programme against these objectives will be evaluated each year, using feedback from students and staff. The outcome of such evaluations will inform successive programmes.
- 2.5 Returning students will be expected to participate in a reorientation programme to:
- Remind them of their obligations and the expectations placed on them as students of the University.
 - Ensure they have an overview of the programme on which they are enrolled.
 - Introduce key members of staff and allow meetings with personal tutors.
- 2.6 The induction programme will also provide for completion of the registration process.

3. Personal tutoring arrangements

- 3.1 All students will be allocated a personal tutor and there will be time during the induction programme to hold a first meeting with each tutee. Personal tutors can use their tutee's Personal Development Plans (PDPs) as a tool to identify support needs. Personal tutors should then arrange regular meetings with their tutees and review their progress.
- 3.2 Personal tutors will review students' progress and refer students who have particular support needs to the relevant members of staff or Department including:
- Disability Officer and Dyslexia Specialist.
 - Student Support Services Manager.
 - University Student Counsellor, Health & Wellbeing Officer
 - University Nurse.
 - International Student Support Officer.
 - Careers Adviser.
- 3.3 Appropriate records of meetings should be made on the student database, to which students may be given access.

Role of personal tutors

- 3.4 The purpose of the policy of appointing a personal tutor for each student registered at the University is:
- (i) To help students to become fully engaged in the life of the University, both academically and socially.
 - (ii) To provide an informal means of communication between the student and all the academic and student support staff.

- (iii) To ensure that relevant non-academic matters are brought to the attention of the Subject Examination Boards and the University Examinations Committee.
- (iv) To remind students of and, if appropriate, to refer students to the disability / dyslexia and professional counselling services available during any discussions concerning studying or welfare.

3.5 The procedure by which the above objectives will be achieved is as follows:

- (i) Personal tutors are allocated to students at enrolment by the Registrar.
- (ii) Tutors should be available to meet their tutees individually and privately at least once per term and should keep a written record of the invitation and of the meeting on Quercus.
- (iii) Tutors should support the PDP process; they should familiarise themselves with their tutees' progress and encourage their tutees to discuss any issues with them.
- (iv) Tutors will normally attend all Subject Examination Boards at which the progression of their tutees is under consideration and will bring relevant matters to the Board's attention.

3.6 In order to carry out their role, personal tutors should be informed by Module Leaders and Programme Managers of possible problems indicated by poor performance, late submission of coursework, etc.

4. Support for disabled students

- 4.1 Students are encouraged to inform the University of any disability or particular support needs they may have before they enrol; they will be given information on support available, including additional financial support.
- 4.2 Students who have or who believe they have a disability or who need support are encouraged to make individual appointments with the University's Disability Officer at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.3 Students will be provided with an advice and guidance session during the induction process, including a self-test screening questionnaire, following which students suspected of specific learning difficulties will be invited for an informal chat and the opportunity for a free computer screening. The Disability Officer will provide confidential help and advice to students regarding disclosure, and, with a student's agreement, may take up particular issues on the student's behalf.

- 4.4 The Disability Officer will provide advice and guidance on obtaining Educational Psychologist assessments and on applying for the Disabled Student Allowance.
- 4.5 Students registered as disabled are entitled to a variety of alternative arrangements and additional support dependent upon their individual needs. Evidence will be required, a consultant's report for medical disabilities or an Educational Psychologist's (or PATOSS registered specialist's) assessment for dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties carried out after a student's 16th birthday. This should be presented directly to the Disability Officer who will then hold an informal discussion and make any arrangements necessary.
- 4.6 University policy requires all staff to provide electronic copies of all documents and teaching materials, including lecture presentations, by publishing them on the intranet in advance of the lecture.
- 4.7 The Disability Officer will ensure that all students with appropriate recommendations will be given extra time in examinations, and other adjustments such as reader, scribe or use of word processor will be provided where recommended. The University also employs the services of a professional dyslexia tutor to provide support and guidance for students with specific learning difficulties. Further details of support for disabled students are available on the University intranet.
- 4.8 The Library will provide additional support services tailored to the needs of disabled students, including extended borrowing rights for disabled students, and will provide such additional support as necessary to provide equal access to required learning materials. Further details of library support services are available from the [Library web-pages](#).

5. Student information and support

- 5.1 The University provides a secure setting in which students are given support to enable them to address and work through issues or concerns that are impeding their ability to achieve their full potential during their studies.
- 5.2 Information and support is available to all students on a drop-in basis or by booking a private appointment with the Student Support Services Manager or Student Counsellor, Health & Wellbeing Officer or by referral via Personal Tutors.
- 5.3 Referral to external agencies is arranged where appropriate, e.g. Cotswold Counselling Service.
- 5.4 With the student's consent, the Student Support Services Manager can raise matters with Personal Tutors or other members of staff and issues can also be discussed with parents or other parties. An annual report is prepared which details (on an anonymous basis) the number of students

and their profile who have used the student support service and the issues they have presented. From this, the need to review any particular aspects of the University's provision and services can be identified and addressed.

6. Student Support

- 6.1 The Student Support Services Manager will work with Personal Tutors, academic and other staff to identify students who are at risk of failure or non-completion. Such students will be encouraged to take up opportunities to identify and address factors affecting their progress and to take up opportunities for support.

7. Careers information and guidance

- 7.1 The RAU Careers Office serves the needs of individual students by assisting them in making informed decisions about their future career and realising their aspirations. The Office is staffed by a professional Careers Adviser and Careers and Employability Coordinator.

- 7.2 The aims of the Careers Office are to:

- Provide guidance to enable students/graduates to identify their values, interests and skills and reflect on these in order to make career choices.
- Provide accurate and relevant information on a range of occupations including graduate vacancies, vacation work, gap year activities, voluntary work and postgraduate study.
- Promote students' employability by helping them understand and develop the key skills.
- Assist potential employers by providing efficient recruitment facilities and promoting the University.
- Provide the University with information about graduate destinations.
- Support academic staff in providing career planning and skills development for students.
- Assist with the recruitment of students to the University by providing advice to potential students.

- 7.3 The Careers Office staff endeavour to provide services of a high professional standard which are responsive to the needs of students and receptive to feedback from both students and staff. Furthermore, the staff will provide an impartial and confidential service that will operate fully within the University's equality and diversity policies.

- 7.4 The Careers Service is guided by [Chapter B4 Enabling Student Development and Achievement](#), the AGCAS Code of Practice on Guidance, the AGCAS Code of Best Practice in Graduate Recruitment and the AGCAS Equal Opportunities Policy.

8. Student complaints

- 8.1 A complaint is defined as a specific concern about an aspect of the provision of a module or programme, a related academic service or a non-academic service provided by the University. This differs from an appeal which is a request for a review of an academic decision concerning student progression, assessment and awards.
- 8.2 A complaint can only be made by students who are registered or enrolled on a module or programme of study, or within one month of a student graduating or otherwise leaving the University. A complaint brought on behalf of a student, rather than made by the student directly, will only be investigated in exceptional circumstances; students are expected to raise any complaints themselves.

Underlying principles:

- 8.3 The complaints procedure is based upon the following principles:
- Complaints must be raised, investigated and resolved in a timely way.
 - Students raising matters of proper concern must not fear disadvantage or penalty and, subject to necessary disclosure to allow proper investigation, students' and staff members' privacy and confidentiality must be respected.
 - Those about whom complaints are made are entitled to know the nature of the complaint and by whom it has been raised.
 - Complaints must be dealt with fairly, objectively and sensitively.
 - Legal procedures and legalistic approaches should be avoided. The parties should not normally require legal representation. Legal costs incurred by complainants will not be reimbursed by the University.

Complaints procedure

Informal stage

- 8.4 In the first instance a complaint should be raised informally with the person or Centre responsible for the service or provision that is the source of the complaint (e.g. the Disability Officer if the complaint concerns a disability/specific learning support need), no more than one month after the cause of the complaint arose.
- 8.5 The person with whom the complaint is raised informally must, within 10 working days of receipt, inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigations into the complaint and of any actions taken as a result. The response will normally be made in writing.

- 8.6 The person who received the complaint must keep a record of the complaint and log the complaint on the Student Records System (Quercus).
- Formal stage**
- 8.7 If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the complaint must be put in writing by the student to the Complaints Officer.
- 8.8 A complaint will not normally be investigated using this procedure if:
- a) no attempt has been made to resolve the complaint informally. However, if serious concerns or misconduct are being alleged the informal stage may be bypassed.
 - b) the complaint has been received anonymously.
 - c) the complaint is deemed by the Complaints Officer to be vexatious, frivolous or malicious.
 - d) there is a police investigation and/or legal action underway. If the complaint is not to be investigated formally under this procedure a written explanation must be provided to the student.
- 8.9 The Student Support Services Manager may provide students with support in the preparation of their submissions. The following must be set out in a complaint submission:
- a) Details of the matter upon which the complaint is based.
 - b) The date(s) on which the concern(s) arose.
 - c) Any attempts made to resolve the matter informally and the outcome of such attempts.
 - d) The outcome/remedy being sought.
 - e) Whether the complainant would wish, or be willing, to be interviewed about their complaint by the Investigating Officer.
 - f) Whether the matter has been reported to the police or is the subject of any legal proceedings.
- 8.10 The Complaints Officer (or their nominee) must, within no more than five working days, acknowledge in writing receipt of the complaint and let the student know who has been appointed by the Complaints Officer as Investigating Officer to investigate the complaint.
- 8.11 The Investigating Officer will normally be a senior person in the Centre in which the matter being complained about arose. However, the complaint must not be investigated by any person who is the subject of, or who has a direct or personal interest in the outcome of, the complaint. Where necessary, and in order to avoid any such conflict, the matter will be investigated by an appropriate person in another Centre.
- 8.12 The Investigating Officer will make enquiries and gather the evidence necessary to evaluate the merit of the complaint, interviewing the complainant [subject to their agreement as in 8.9 e) above] and those complained about as required. The Investigating Officer will recommend whether the complaint should be upheld (and, if so, the appropriate remedy) or rejected.

- 8.13 The range of appropriate remedies will be varied, for example an apology, a change to the way a specific service is provided, the publication or revision of information or referral of a student or staff member to the appropriate disciplinary procedure. If a specific financial loss has been incurred as a direct result of the complaint matter (excluding legal costs), financial compensation may be appropriate.
- 8.14 The Investigating Officer will, within 20 working days of their receipt of the complaint, provide to the Complaints Officer a written report of their findings and recommendations for any action to be taken in response to the complaint. If the Investigating Officer cannot meet the 20 day target they must provide an interim report to the complainant and Complaints Officer setting out the reasons for the delay and the expected date by which the final report will be available to the Complaints Officer.
- 8.15 The Complaints Officer will review the final report to ensure that the procedure has been followed, that there has been an objective consideration of the evidence and that the reasons for the conclusion and recommendations for action are clear. The Complaints Officer will provide a written response to the complainant within five working days of receipt of the report. If this deadline cannot be achieved the reasons for the delay must be communicated to the complainant together with an expected date for the delivery of the written response.
- 8.16 If the Complaints Officer is not satisfied that the matter has been investigated fully and fairly and in accordance with the procedure a further investigation will be undertaken.
- 8.17 The Complaints Officer will keep a record of all complaints made under the formal or informal procedure, their outcome, and a profile of complainants, to monitor matters that are the cause of concern, allow for trends to be identified and take steps to address such concerns to enhance the student learning experience. Such monitoring will also help the University to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and consistently.

Review procedure

- 8.18 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation the complainant may, within one month of the date of receipt of the response to the complaint, request that a review be undertaken by a Complaints Panel. The review request must demonstrate at least one of the following:
- The original complaint was not fully and fairly investigated.
 - Reasons were not given for the outcome of the complaint.
 - The complaints procedure was not followed.
 - Fresh evidence, that was not available during the original investigation, has become available.

- 8.19 Review requests must be made in writing to the Director of the Student Experience. If the Director of the Student Experience is satisfied that grounds for a review have been demonstrated, a Complaints Panel will be convened to consider the original complaint and its investigation.
- 8.20 The Complaints Panel will comprise members nominated by the Director of the Student Experience and include:
- The Centre Head not involved with, and with no interest in, the original complaint, its investigation or outcome.
 - Another senior member of staff not involved with, and with no interest in, the original complaint, its investigation or outcome.
 - A student, identified by the Director of the Student Experience in consultation with the General Manager of the Student Union, who has no interest in the original complaint, its investigation or outcome.
- 8.21 The Director of the Student Experience will appoint one of the members to chair the Panel and nominate an additional member of staff to act as secretary to the Panel.
- 8.22 The Chair of the Complaints Panel will agree a date for the Panel to meet, in consultation with the complainant, the other Panel members and the person(s) who are the subject of the complaint or are responsible for the complaint matter.
- 8.23 The papers that it is intended should be considered by the Complaints Panel, outlining the original complaint, the investigation of the complaint, the original outcome and the request and reasons for a review of the complaint must be copied to the complainant no less than seven working days before the Panel is due to meet. The complainant must be invited to provide, with a reasonable deadline for receipt, written comments on the papers, identifying any omissions or inaccuracies. The complainant must also be asked to confirm whether they wish to attend for an interview with the Panel and, if so, whether they will be accompanied. The set of papers, together with the complainant's comments, will be circulated to the Complaints Panel at least two working days before the Panel is due to convene.
- 8.24 The Panel will convene on the agreed date. It will meet initially in the presence of only the secretary to ensure all documentation has been received and considered and to identify any particular aspects of the complaint or its investigation that the Panel wishes to explore.
- 8.25 If the complainant has asked to present their complaint and the grounds for their request for a review, the following procedure must be followed:
- The Panel must invite the complainant to outline their initial complaint, any efforts they have made to resolve the matter and reasons why they have requested a review of the complaint investigation and outcome.

- The Panel may then ask the complainant to leave the meeting while it invites others to attend before the Panel to respond to the issues raised.
 - The Panel may then ask the complainant to return to meet with the Panel to address or clarify any further matters raised.
 - The complainant and all others who attended the meeting, with the exception of the secretary, will be required to leave the Panel which will convene in private to consider the initial complaint and its investigation.
 - The complainant and the subject of the complaint, or the person(s) responsible for the complaint matter, must be informed in writing by a 'Completion of Procedures Letter' within 10 working days of the Panel's decision. The Letter will confirm that the University's complaints procedure has been completed and that if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response they should refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education. The Completion of Procedures Letter must contain:
 - a) A summary of the complaint and review request the student has made to the University.
 - b) The title of the regulations/procedures which were applied.
 - c) A summary of the issues considered at the final stage of the internal complaints procedures.
 - d) The final decision taken by the University, i.e. whether the complaint should be upheld, any remedy or redress and its views on the conduct of the original investigation.
 - e) The reasons for that decision.
 - f) Information about the role of the OIA as an independent review scheme.
 - g) The date by which the OIA should receive the student's OIA Complaint Form. The Letter must make it clear that if the student wishes to complain to the OIA, the OIA Complaint Form must be received by the OIA no later than three months after the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter.
- 8.26 If the complainant decides not to attend the Complaints Panel the procedure will be adjusted accordingly. Those who are the subject of the complaint or are responsible for the complaint matter, and those who were involved with its investigation, will remain entitled to attend the Panel.
- 8.27 The complainant may choose to be accompanied at the Complaints Panel. However, the person accompanying the complainant must not be acting in a professional capacity and will not be entitled to speak to the Panel on the complainant's behalf; they will be able to take a note of the hearing.