**Student Complaints Regulations and Procedures**

**Accelerated Procedure for Student Complaints in the Event of Major Disruption**

**Context**

In the event of major disruption such as a natural disaster, pandemic or industrial action, the University will make all reasonable efforts to minimise the impact on our students. However, we recognise that the number of student complaints may increase following a period of major disruption and that our usual procedures may not be able to address the extra complaints quickly enough.

Since we are committed to resolving complaints as quickly as possible at all times, we have developed an accelerated procedure to manage complaints during a period of major disruption. This type of event may impact on your assessments or access to learning opportunities, therefore we need to be able to take measures quickly to ensure minimal impact on your overall academic experience.

The Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group will decide when an event or series of events constitute major disruption to the institution or a part of the institution and will inform Directors of Service, Deans and School Managers who will disseminate the information. Once a period of major disruption has been declared, initial complaints directly connected to it may be dealt with using this procedure. The Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group will decide when the effects of a period of major disruption have ended and will declare that this procedure should no longer be used.

**Principles**

* If your complaint is not related to the impact of the major disruption, you may continue to follow the standard complaints procedure in the [regulations](https://www.hud.ac.uk/registry/current-students/taughtstudents/student-complaints/).
* If your complaint relates to the impact of the major disruption, we will use this amended process to minimise any disadvantage to you. We anticipate that this reduces the need for assessment appeals at a later stage.
* We will act as quickly as possible to minimise any ongoing disadvantage to you. However, because we will not know in advance the potential scale of any issues resulting from major disruption, we cannot guarantee to work to a specified timescale. Normally we would hope to agree an outcome with you within 28 working days.
* Unfortunately, it may take longer than usual to respond to other complaints received during this time as we will prioritise those connected with the major disruption.

**Scope of accelerated procedure**

This procedure may be right for you if you are a taught student and your module(s) have been directly impacted by major disruption. Normally your Head of Department will be responsible for seeking resolution under this procedure. The Dean of your School will confirm who the appropriate nominee is, in cases where the Head of Department is not available.

Grounds

You might have experienced a lack of staff availability to teach or a lack of access to facilities, for example:

1. Replacement learning materials/opportunities have not been provided within the timescales communicated by the Head of Department (or nominee).
2. Assessment deadlines fall within the period of major disruption and rely on material which has not been taught as a result of the disruption.
3. You can demonstrate that supervision for dissertations, final year projects or similar has been adversely affected by a major disruption.
4. Something else has happened as a result of the major disruption which you feel has had a similar impact to the examples above.

This procedure may also be right for you if you are a postgraduate research student who can demonstrate an adverse impact by a major disruption.

This accelerated procedure is for academic matters only. If you have a complaint relating to the delivery of Professional Services, we will consider this using the standard student complaints procedure in the [regulations](https://www.hud.ac.uk/registry/current-students/taughtstudents/student-complaints/).

**Informal Resolution**

The University will make every effort to provide alternative support from the first day of the disruption and will then react to unfolding events on a daily basis. We hope that the necessary support can be put in place before a complaint can be lodged and processed, however, we recognise that this will not always be possible.

As with all complaints, you should first attempt to resolve your complaint informally with your Head of Department (or nominee) who may be able to reassure you that they are working on a resolution.

When teaching and learning opportunities are affected during a period of major disruption we will, wherever possible, replace learning materials or provide alternative learning support to you.

Due to the nature of major disruption, it may take time to speak to relevant staff and agree appropriate arrangements for replacing learning materials/opportunities. We will inform you of the alternative measures we intend to put in place to support your studies as soon as possible.

The Head of Department (or nominee) will in all cases communicate with those students affected within 5 working days to provide an update. This communication will usually offer alternative arrangements to replace your missed learning opportunity. We will accept accelerated complaints under this procedure from the sixth working day following a disruptive event.

**Potential Remedies**

During a period of major disruption, it is the responsibility of the Head of Department (or nominee) to ensure that accurate records are kept and to agree when and how replacement learning materials/ experiences will be made available. Where it is not possible to replace the learning opportunity on a like-for-like basis, the Head of Department (or nominee) will exercise discretion in offering a suitable alternative remedy.

Depending on the nature and timing of the disruption, the Head of Department (or nominee) may:

* Extend an assessment deadline by an appropriate length of time. This will normally apply to all students on the module, although solutions tailored to individual circumstances may also be appropriate.
* Arrange for the module issue to be referred to Registry as a claim for Extenuating Circumstances. This will normally apply to all students on the module, although solutions tailored to individual circumstances may also be appropriate.
* Extend a dissertation deadline by an appropriate length of time. This will normally apply to all students with the supervisor affected, although solutions tailored to individual circumstances may also be appropriate.
* Arrange for the supervisory issue to be referred to Registry as a claim for Extenuating Circumstances. This will normally apply to all students with the supervisor affected, although solutions tailored to individual circumstances may also be appropriate.

The Course Assessment Board will take measures to ensure that student attainment and progression is not unduly affected.

**Procedure**

As with all complaints, Stage One is dealt with by your School. If you wish to complain about a matter relating to major disruption, you should submit the complaint on the usual Complaint Form to your nominated School contact for complaints.

You should clearly state the following at the top of the form, “This complaint relates to the impact of major disruption on my studies”. You should also indicate which of the grounds 1-4 above apply to your complaint. We will prioritise these complaints but where possible we would like to ensure that we have offered a remedy and you have had the opportunity to judge the efficacy of that remedy, before we consider your complaint. Complaints must be submitted within 28 working days of the disruptive event.

If you are part of a group of students affected, we encourage you to submit one complaint on behalf of the group. If the Head of Department (or nominee) has already received a complaint in relation to a group or cohort of students, all subsequent complainants will be informed of this and communication of the outcome will be made to all affected students.

You can use the standard procedure to complain about a major disruption but you should be aware that this may take longer than this accelerated procedure. If your complaint is about something else, please follow the usual complaints procedure but be aware that it may take longer than usual for us to deal with your complaint.

Under the accelerated procedure, the Head of Department (or nominee) will investigate the complaint on behalf of the Dean. As appropriate, they will:

* confirm that the activity was affected by the major disruption
* check when replacement learning materials/opportunities should have been made available
* check when it was actually made available
* confirm how this related to relevant assessment deadlines
* ascertain the number of supervision sessions missed.

If it is clear that all students have been disadvantaged, the Head of Department (or nominee) will ensure that all students on the module are offered the same remedy. Where there has been a disproportionate disadvantage to one or more students within a cohort, a different and/or additional remedy may be offered in order to meet their needs.

The Head of Department (or nominee) will not necessarily offer to meet with students making a complaint under this amended procedure where this could slow down the process of finding a resolution.

If learning material was not made available within agreed timescales, the Head of Department (or nominee) will confirm with a relevant staff member when the learning material will be replaced and will inform all students on the module.

If it is not possible to replace the learning material, the matter will be referred to Registry as a claim for Extenuating Circumstances and ultimately this will be brought to the attention of the Course Assessment Board. Where a complaint made under this procedure is found to be justified, the Head of Department (or nominee) will ensure that an extenuating circumstances claim is submitted on behalf of all affected students and will notify all affected students of this, advising them not to submit individual extenuating circumstances claims.

If you believe that an extension to a deadline as a result of the impact of major disruption is not reasonable, e.g. it creates substantial bunching of deadlines, you can request a further amendment deadline using this process. The Head of Department (or nominee) will confirm the last possible deadline for submission of assessed work to enable students to progress.

The Head of Department’s response should explain the reasons for this clearly to all students affected.

If the above procedure is followed, students will not normally have grounds for an assessment appeal or for financial compensation. Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage One Complaint made under this procedure may submit a Stage Two complaint in line with the standard Student Complaints Procedure.