

Council Minutes

1st week Trinity Term 2013

1st Week Council held on Wednesday 24th April 2013 at 5.30pm in the Harris Lecture Theatre, Oriel College.

If you have any questions about OUSU Council, please contact David Railton, the Chair, at motions@ousu.org

- a. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- b. Matters Arising from the Minutes
- c. Ratifications in Council
- d. Elections in Council
 - Graduate Welfare Officer
 - Graduate Women's Officer
 - 2 Positions for Deputy Returning Officer
 - 1 Position for Scrutiny Committee
 - 4 positions for Complaints Committee
 - 3 positions for Internal Affairs
 - 3 positions on Steering Committee
- e. Reports from the Sabbatical Officers
- f. Reports from the Executive Officers who wish to make reports
- g. Questions to Members of the Executive
- h. Emergency Motions
 1. Welbeing Week Motion (Please note this is also a Motion Authorising Capital Expenditure)
- i. Passage of Motions Nem Con
- n. Other Motions
 2. NUS Conference Report 2013
 3. Students with Extended Terms
 4. College Policies and Procedures, or Plain English Please!
 5. Motion in Support of the Trans* Community
 6. Policy Guidelines
- m. Any Other Business

a. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes passed for both Termly and 7th Week Council HT13.

d. Elections in Council

The following positions were elected in OUSU Council of 1st week.

Graduate Welfare Officer works with the VP (Graduates) and VP (Welfare) to coordinate graduate welfare and aid campaigning initiatives.

Hust Required

Yasser Ahmad Bhatti (Green Templeton)
Akshara Motani (Linacre)

Returning Officer advises the candidates they have 2 Mins

Katie Colliver on behalf of Yasser Ahmad Bhatti
He is teaching at the moment so sends apologies as can't be here

Akshara Motani (Linacre)

Believe a lot of misinformation 44% grads at Uni 75% of which are Overseas in comparison to only 14% of UG difficult to settle in, this is especially difficult in short courses by the time people get a grasp of courses time to move on.

Want to initiate some sessions for students for when they arrive so they can settle in more easily. There are more applications for Grads rather than UG, lot of interest but not too many get accepted. One of the big things for Grads is funding, another is accommodation. Grad students are asked to leave after 1st year which is difficult. In addition a lot of students are vegetarian so would like to urge colleges to provide more vegetarian options, as otherwise students are forced to eat out or source own food which can become expensive.

Katie Colliver (Univ)

1 part of the welfare job is working to support students who have children, is there anything in your experience that would help you support these students?

Akshara Motani (Linacre)

Have a degree in counselling and have also represented friends to the counselling services, the counselling service don't provide basic support, needs to be more daycare. Would conduct focus groups to get information and then reach out to them.

Henry Chong (Harris Manchester)

A lot of grad students come back late in life what would you do to support them?

Akshara Motani (Linacre)

15,000 students in cont ed in Oxford, these students have a lot of different needs struggle to mingle, wish had something of their interest or a way they could speak up to university. Would try to represent them better.

Graduate Women's Officer

Hust required 2 min hust.

Sophie Williams (Wadham)

Zelga Simone Anderson (Dept of Ed)

Oduwole Olayinka (Kellogg)

Sophie Williams is the only candidate present.

Sophie Williams (Wadham)

Running for this role because of experience as MCR Women's officer, difficulties that women face in science and how we can build campaigns and training to support them. Building a community because of unequal nature of childcare in society, centralised welfare, online resources, ways in which people can find out rights. I want to deal with challenges facing women in academia, only 2 female academics in chemistry department out of 60. Encourage women up the ladder in a cohesive fashion.

No questions

1 Deputy Returning Officer - Deputy Returning Officers are responsible for assisting the Returning Officer in running elections, including this term's annual cross-campus elections. Successful candidates will serve for one term, and will be required to chair hustings, undertake administrative tasks in the OUSU offices, and to support the Returning Officer generally. motions@ousu.org

Nick Cooper (St John's) stood, no hust required.

1 position for Scrutiny Committee - Scrutinises the work of the OUSU Executive and the Divisional Board Representatives. Has the power to call officers to be interviewed and request documents. Issues a report each term to OUSU Council.

James Blythe (Brasenose)

Election Results

Akshara Motani (Linacre) was elected to the position of Graduate Welfare Officer
Sophie Williams (Wadham) was elected to the position of Graduate Women's Officer
Nick Cooper (St John's) was elected to the position of Deputy Returning Officer
James Blythe (Brasenose) was elected to the Scrutiny Committee

e. Reports from the Sabbatical Officers

David Townsend - President

Nothing to add, so please read.

Sarah Santhosham - VP Charities & Community

RAG last term £91,725.25 if you want to know where the money goes tune into Oxide Radio tomorrow.

Chris Gray - VP Graduates

David met the VC a few days ago to get him to sign a formal pledge supporting graduates, he wouldn't but he advised that he was considering the issue. I am going to Milton Keynes to represent Graduates at the NUS Postgraduate Conference.

Suzanne Holsomback - VP Women

Have just had a huge win as the University has finally taken on the role of training University staff on sexual harassment, something that the student union has been providing for the past few years. Don't forget to take a red and yellow fliers for the Film Screening of Girl Rising the basic thing is how education can transform lives, and how it effects girls especially. This is the first showing in England.

Katie Colliver - VP Welfare & Equal Opportunities

Apologies report late, was organising Folk festival would like to highlight next week is wellbeing week, quite a few events on including talks about dealing with exam anxiety.

David Messling - VP Access & Academic Affairs

University has developed a large scale survey for Freshers' about their financial system so please complete. Start discussing the questions about fee waivers and UG finance in your JCR's I have sent briefing material. Good time to think about at a time when we can have a direct impact.

Questions to the Sabbatical Officers

Davis McCarthy requests that Suzanne sends him the blurb about Girl Rising

James Blythe requested blurb from David Messling for the Freshers' Survey.

h. Emergency Motions

1. WELLBEING WEEK MOTION

Council Notes:

1. Oxford students experience considerable academic pressure and are at a higher risk for developing some mental health problems.
2. Many students are under additional pressure during Trinity Term because of exams.
3. Wellbeing Week was set up by OUSU's Vice President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) in 2010 to encourage students to take the time to look after their mental health and overall wellbeing.
4. Wellbeing Week has no specific budget.
5. OUSU has a discretionary campaigns budget that can be used to support worthwhile projects.

Council Believes:

1. Oxford student should be encouraged to look after their mental health during stressful times.
2. Wellbeing Week is a worthwhile way of engaging students across the University on issues of mental health and wellbeing.

Council Resolves:

1. To grant Vice President (Welfare & Equal Opportunities) up to £200 from OUSU's discretionary campaigns budget to support Wellbeing Week.

Proposed: *Katie Colliver (Univ College)*

Seconded: *Suzanne Holsomback (Green Templeton)*

Chair - David Railton

Ruled motion in question that events concerned substantially arouse after the deadline.

Katie Colliver (Univ)

Also working on organising Yoga instructors only given final figures on Friday. No set budget for well being week but we need money to ensure it goes ahead so please can you agree to this amount.

David Messling (St John's)
What will £200 be spent on?

Katie Colliver (Univ)
Yoga instructors, sending out posters, and other administrative stuff.

Alex Cibulskis
How much in discretionary budget?

Katie Colliver (Univ)
Not sure exact amount but definitely £200

Chris Gray (Merton)
Advises over £1000

Motion passes

i. Passage of Motions Nem Con

2. NUS CONFERENCE REPORT 2013

Opposition

3. STUDENTS WITH EXTENDED TERMS

Council notes:

1. That several undergraduate masters degrees have fourth years that significantly longer than years one to three. (For example, Chemistry's fourth year is 38 weeks.)
2. Longer terms have a tangible effect on student finances, with 87% of fourth year Chemistry and Material Science students surveyed last term agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement "I have experienced greater financial difficulty in my fourth year than in previous years."
3. Additional support for fourth year extended terms varies significantly by college.

Council believes:

1. Access to education should be determined by merit, and not by wealth.
Student financial support should be set in line with the living costs imposed on a student by course requirements.

Council therefore resolves:

1. To campaign for additional financial support for students with extended terms.
2. To mandate the Vice-President (Access & Academic Affairs) to seek such additional financial support.

Proposed by: David Messling (St John's)
Seconded by: Ellie Milnes-Smith (St John's)

Nem Con

4. COLLEGE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, OR PLAIN ENGLISH PLEASE!

Council Notes:

1. That colleges adopt a diversity of policies and procedures, reflecting their status as autonomous legal entities.

2. That the location of these policies and procedures varies between colleges and some can be difficult to find, as noted in Nick Cooper's recent review of complaint and appeals regulations (Appendix 2).
3. That students are sometimes unaware of the content of their colleges policies and procedures, or do not fully understand how the documents relate to them.
4. That some colleges' policies and procedures are written in complex or legalistic language that is difficult to understand, (Appendix 2).

Council Believes:

1. That students at Oxford should experience a supportive learning environment regardless of which college they attend.
2. That it is in the interests of students to be able to find and understand their college's policies and procedures easily.
3. That colleges should follow models of good practice in creating their policies and procedures.

Council Resolves:

1. To mandate the Vice President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) and Vice President (Access and Academic Affairs) to promote awareness of good practice in policies and procedures amongst common room officers.
2. Mandate the Vice President (Welfare and Equal Opportunities) and Vice President (Access and Academic Affairs) to support common room officers in reviewing their college's practice and campaigning for change.

Proposed: *Katie Colliver (University College)*

Seconded: *Nick Cooper (St John's College)*

Nem Con

5. MOTION IN SUPPORT OF THE TRANS* COMMUNITY

Council Notes:

1. That on the 20 December 2012 the Daily Mail newspaper printed an article written by Richard Littlejohn titled 'He's not just in the wrong body, he's in the wrong job'. This article attacked a teacher on the basis of her gender identity after her transition to reflect her gender identity. It involved offensive, incorrect claims and consistently misgendered a trans woman.
2. That The Sun Newspaper Published an equally poisonous article on the 19th December 2012 - 'Sir becomes Miss'. This article had no byline.
3. That trans* people suffer harassment as a result of these type of articles.
4. That trans* people suffer far worse mental health than the general population due to transphobia.
5. That Trans Media Watch has expressed significant concern about the representation of trans* people in The Daily Mail¹
6. That Trans Media Watch has reported that 8% of trans people asked reported being physically or sexually assaulted in a way that could be traced to media presentations of trans people and that 48% have attempted suicide at least once, and a third have attempted at least twice.
7. That gender identity is not covered by hate speech legislation²

Council Believes:

1. That deliberate or lazy misgendering is inherently offensive, especially to trans* people

¹ <http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Supplemental-Submission-by-Transmedia-Watch1.pdf>

² Race and religion are covered by the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 but these are the only protected categories.

2. That the gender identity of ordinary members of the public is a private matter and it is not in the public interest to investigate them as 'news'.
3. That no-one deserves to be misrepresented in the press, either individually or collectively, either deliberately or through negligence.
4. That trans* people have the right to live freely from shame, stigma and hate speech.
5. The actions of Richard Littlejohn and *The Sun* constitute transphobia. The target of this article was harassed as a result of it. These actions are indefensible and abhorrent.

Council Resolves:

1. To oppose transphobia in all its forms.
2. To issue a statement of support to trans* people in general, and teachers in particular.
3. To mandate the LGBTQ Campaign Officer to write to the Daily Mail editor Paul Dacre, calling for Richard Littlejohn to be fired on behalf of OUSU
4. To mandate the LGBTQ Campaign Officer to write to Sun Editor Dominic Mohan, expressing our distaste at the article on behalf of WomCam.
5. To encourage members to write to their MPs about this matter.
6. To affirm OUSU as a trans-inclusive space.

Proposed: *Reuben Walsh (St Edmund Hall)*

Seconded: *Sarah Pine (Wadham)*

Nem Con

6. POLICY GUIDELINES

Opposition

n. Other Motions

2. NUS CONFERENCE REPORT 2013

Council Notes:

1. That OUSU is affiliated to the National Union of Students (NUS)
2. That OUSU sent 7 delegates (the President, the President-elect and 5 elected NUS Delegates) to the NUS Conference on 8 to 10 April 2013
3. That, during Hilary Term 2013, OUSU Council discussed and voted on several matters which were the subject of motions at the NUS Conference
4. That Standing Orders Sch 1 M 3.7 requires the President, in consultation with the other delegates, to submit a report to the first meeting of OUSU Council following the NUS Conference describing “the fulfilment of mandates and any other matters which may be of interest”

Council Resolves:

1. To receive the ‘President’s Report on OUSU’s Attendance at the NUS Conference 2013’ (Appendix 1)

Proposed: *David J. Townsend (St John’s College)*

Seconded: *Tom Rutland (Jesus College)*

David Townsend (St John’s)

OUSU is affiliated to the NUS and therefore the number of delegates we can send to conference is 7 automatically one is the current President and one the incoming President. All bar one of these delegates attended conference. Have to deliver a report explaining how we voted in that council

mandated us to vote on. This reports shows how council voted, how delegates voted and what happened to motion in council.

Katie Colliver (Univ)

Please can you amend the report to remove the Latin throughout in accordance with our new policy on Plain English.

David Townsend (St John's)

Will change but would also like to see nem con removed from Council agenda in accordance with this policy too.

Suzanne Holsomback (GTC)

Elaborate 701. Delegates appear to have voted against what council poled on that day.

David Townsend (St John's)

Can't speak on why they voted on other peoples behalf. If you want to know then you can request all the delegates to attend next time. I believe Emily was out of the room. Some voted according to what OUSU suggested but OUSU didn't bind the delegates so that the delegates could listen to the debate at conference and vote accordingly. Think how delegates voted is actually proportional to the votes in council.

Nathan Akehurst (Lincoln)

If people stand on certain things on their manifesto which would take precedence if council mandated them to vote in a certain way at conference?

David Townsend (St John's)

Important point.

Chris Grary (Merton)

If you a make a promise on your manifesto then the manifesto takes precedent.

I understand that the vote in council was an indicative poll, but I do think how the delegates voted actually went against council. If go through again then we should clarify the procedure and make the results in council binding.

David Townsend (St John's)

If you would like to make these points to the delegates then you could request they attend next council.

Chris Gray (Merton)

Would like to ensure that we bring binding polls rather than indicative polls next year.

The Chair brings a procedural motion that this Item should be brought back to council in 3rd week and that the Delegates should be requested to attend to explain how they voted.

3. STUDENTS WITH EXTENDED TERMS

Passed Nem Con

4. COLLEGE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, OR PLAIN ENGLISH PLEASE!

Passed Nem Con

5. MOTION IN SUPPORT OF THE TRANS* COMMUNITY

Passed Nem Con

6. POLICY GUIDELINES

Council Notes:

1. That Policy Guidelines are policies passed by the student body which either mandate or restrict action by the Trustees and Officers of the Student Union.
2. That the current system of Policy Guideline creation, whereby all Council motions become policy, creates lots of unworkable and unnecessary Policy Guidelines.
3. That OUSU intends to redraft Council regulations in full next academic year.
4. That 'guidelines' are a 'statement or other indication of policy or procedure by which to determine a course of action'.

Council Believes:

1. That Policy Guidelines should codify the Student Union's long-term policies, rather than short-term actions.
2. That if we had fewer, more carefully chosen, Policy Guidelines they would be more effective and the organization would be more likely to follow them.
3. That in the short-term we should introduce a stream-lined mechanism for introducing Policy Guidelines.
4. That this will allow Council and OUSU to prepare for next year's full re-writing of the Council regulations.

Council Resolves:

1. To store all motions which are passed in a new 'Motions Book' instead of the existing 'Policy Guidelines Book'.
2. To only record explicit Policy Guidelines in the 'Policy Guidelines Book'.
3. To require future motions enacting Policy Guidelines to state this clearly in the 'Council resolves' section of the motion.
4. Only to enact Policy Guidelines which have some long term bearing on OUSU's work.
5. To mandate both the Chair of Council and President, on behalf of Steering Committee, to inform those bringing motions of this process so that all students have the opportunity to pass Policy Guidelines.

Proposed: *David Railton (St Catherine's College)*

Seconded: *Christopher Gray (Merton College)*

David Railton cedes the Chair to Beth Hanson-Jones the RO in order to speak on this motion.

David Railton (St Catherine's)

Slightly boring but important as brings clarification about what becomes policy. Council can pass clear long term policies or just mandate for a certain period. The current policy guidelines are made up of all motions passed in council, so it is essentially meaningless, but is supposed to be used by trustees to assist in making decisions.

This motion is proposing to ask people who propose motions in council going forward to confirm if policy or just a motion. Want to make distinction between short term and long term aims.

This motion won't bind the power of council in the future just want clarification for trustees so have to look at 10 rather than 300 motions.

Nathan Akehurst (Lincoln)

Please could clarification of this be sent out next week in order than anyone submitting motions is aware of it.

David Railton (St Catherine's)

Yes, but the motion also mandates the chair to ask the individual who is submitting the motion to confirm whether they want it to be policy.

Current policies have a sunset clause, they lapse after 3 years, if we stick to this procedure for 3 years then old policy will fall out of the guidelines. This is a stopgap until then.

Jessica Whalen

Sometimes have policies which combine long term policy with short term actions.

David Railton (St Catherine's)

Whole motion wouldn't become policy but particular clause would.

Motion passes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON OUSU'S ATTENDANCE AT THE NUS CONFERENCE 2013

OUSU is affiliated to the National Union of Students. Policy for the National Union of Students is set at its annual national Conference; in 2013 the Conference occurred between 8 and 10 April in Sheffield.

OUSU is entitled to send 7 delegates to the NUS Conference: 2 are *ex officio* (the President, who acts as Lead Delegate for organisational purposes, and the President-elect); the other 5 are elected specifically as NUS Delegates in the annual elections in Michaelmas Term.

The OUSU delegates to the NUS Conference 2013 were:

- *Ex officio* David J. Townsend (St John's College), President and Lead Delegate
- *Ex officio* Tom Rutland (Jesus College), President-elect
- Emily Cousens (Wadham College)
- Eleanor Davidson (New College)
- Helena Dollimore (St Hilda's College)
- Aled Jones (Corpus Christi College)
- Yulin Zhang (Wolfson College)

Unfortunately Eleanor Davidson was unable to attend the NUS Conference due to illness.

OUSU Standing Order Sch 1 M 3.7 requires the President to report back to the next meeting of OUSU Council after the NUS Conference, describing "the fulfilment of mandates and any other matters which may be of interest". This is that report.

During the course of Hilary Term 2013, OUSU Council discussed material relating to the following motions which were on the agenda for the NUS Conference.

- Motion 301: Targets in campaign for integrated access agreements
- Motion 312a: Reinstate the Post-Study Work visa route
- [Motion 404: Tax avoidance]
- [Motion 405: Child poverty]
- [Motion 414: Sex and relationship education]
- [Motion 423: Boycott, divestment and sanctions]
- Motion 603: Anti-early release campaign
- Motion 701: Proportion of female delegates

Some of these motions were placed on the agenda as a result of OUSU Council itself voting to submit them, others were on the agenda because they had been submitted by feeder committees which take place in advance of the NUS Conference itself. Due to the large number of motions on the agenda for the NUS Conference, not every motion was discussed: those which were not discussed due to the allotted time elapsing are in brackets above; no vote was held on these motions.

In respect of the motions which were discussed and put to a vote, OUSU Council's vote in advance of the NUS Conference, the OUSU delegates' vote at NUS Conference, and the final result of the motion at NUS Conference are as follows:

- Motion 301: Targets in campaign for integrated access agreements

OUSU Council: Voted in favour *nemine contradicente* 7th Week HT13 (27-02-13)

OUSU's NUS Delegates: 6 voted in favour

Result at NUS Conference: The motion was passed

- Motion 312a: Reinstate the Post-Study Work visa route

OUSU Council: Voted in favour *nemine contradicente* 7th Week HT13 (27-02-13)

OUSU's NUS Delegates: 6 voted in favour

Result at NUS Conference: The motion was passed

- Motion 603: Anti-early release campaign

OUSU Council: Voted in favour *nemine contradicente* 5th Week HT13 (13-02-13)

OUSU's NUS Delegates: 6 voted in favour

Result at NUS Conference: The motion was passed

- Motion 701: Proportion of female delegates

OUSU Council: Indicative poll (not formally binding) 44 against, 17 for, 11 abstentions 7th Week HT13 (27-03-13)

OUSU's NUS Delegates: 2 voted against (Townsend and Zhang), 3 voted in favour (Dollimore, Jones and Rutland), 1 abstained (Cousens)

Result at the NUS Conference: The motion was defeated

One OUSU delegate spoke at the NUS Conference. Yulin Zhang spoke in proposition of Motion 312 (Reinstate the Post-Study Work visa route); nobody spoke in opposition of the motion, due in no small part to the eloquence of Delegate Zhang!

I would like to thank my fellow OUSU delegates for their good humour and good fellowship both before and during the Conference. In particular, I want to thank Tom

Rutland for shouldering some of the organisational responsibilities in the 2 weeks immediately before the Conference while I was out of the country on other OUSU business.

I would like to extend my best wishes to individual members of OUSU who, of their own volition, travelled to the Conference to take part in some of the fringe activities even though they were not themselves official delegates; Nathan Akehurst (Lincoln College) and Arianna Tassinari (St Antony's College) were in this number. Deserving of special mention, however, is Jack Matthews (University College), a registered Observer at the NUS Conference and the founder of They Work for Students, whose longstanding interest in and scrutiny of the NUS is without equal.

Finally I would like to thank Mama's Moroccan Grill, Sheffield for their excellent chicken tibs.

David J. Townsend

President

21 April 2013

APPENDIX 2 - COLLEGE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, OR PLAIN ENGLISH PLEASE!

Review of Colleges' Complaints & Appeals Procedures

Introduction

A Working Group on Complaints, Appeals and Discipline was set up in 2009 by Conference of Colleges to consider the role of the Conference of Colleges Appeals Tribunal (CCAT) and best practice for colleges in their complaints and appeals procedures for students. The group produced a template for complaints and appeals, reproduced here in Appendix A, and recommended to colleges that their procedures and guidelines be reviewed in line with this template.

This review was therefore conducted to examine the current state of colleges' complaints and appeals (CAA) procedures, and how these are presented to students. These will be compared to the template recommended by the Working Group. There will be four sections: ease of locating this information on colleges' websites; ease of locating complaints and appeals procedures within the various policy documents (usually a student handbook or something similar); clarity of the procedures in place, including adherence to the template; and a comment on the procedures themselves. As a note, only undergraduate colleges were reviewed, although the procedures in these colleges will presumably apply to graduate students too.

Ease of locating CAA information

Of the 30 colleges surveyed, 28 documents were found - usually in handbooks for undergraduate students, with several in specific documents or in the college's regulations or by-laws. (The remaining two appeared to be behind "walls" that were accessible only to students at that college). Of the 28 documents found, 16 were found in a "Current Students" or similar area of the college website, and 6 could be found in a "Policies and Procedures" or similar area that was fairly clearly marked from the homepage. Five required a search for "Handbook", "Complaints" or "Appeals". The remaining one was Harris Manchester College, which was the easiest by virtue of being linked from the homepage!

Although students may have alternative ways of accessing this information (for instance, a paper copy of a handbook) it is apparent that the ease of accessing the relevant documents to obtain CAA information does vary from college to college. It would therefore perhaps be preferable if handbooks (or similar documents) were more easily locatable, and being clearly labelled within a "Current Students" (or similar) section appears to be both a popular and a useful choice.

Finding information in policy documents

For 23 of the 28 colleges, the relevant information on CAA could be found in an Undergraduate Handbook, or similar. Two of the remaining colleges had this information in a separate set of by-laws for discipline (academic or otherwise), two had this information in the college's overall Regulations (with a reference in the Handbook to this) and finally, University College had a specific Student Complaints Procedures³.

The merits of having the information in one handbook, or in a separate document, could be debated - in conjunction with a well laid-out website, a separate document such as Univ's makes it very easy to find where necessary, without need to fight through an entire handbook for the information required. Nevertheless there are several examples of college handbooks with clear sections or appendices dedicated to complaints and appeals, notably Keble⁴, Merton⁵ and St

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<http://www.univ.ox.ac.uk/sites/www.univ.ox.ac.uk/files/Student%20Complaints%20Procedure.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.keble.ox.ac.uk/students/college-handbook/part-g-policies>

Catherine's⁶ which demonstrate best practice with sections visibly named "Student Complaints and Appeals" or similar.

CAA information is also much clearer where it is presented in one location, as for the above named colleges, within the document (or documents) and not spread out in several places. Linking the stages of complaints and appeals available to students together is something that will be considered further below.

Clarity of proceedings & adherence to template

The template, as given in the Appendix, suggests several sections for a CAA document for best practice. These sections are:

- **Academic standards - what is expected of students**
- Feedback and support - how students will receive feedback, and can give feedback
- **Informal and formal academic disciplinary processes**
- **Students' right to appeal**
- Discipline regulations for minor and major offences
- **Informal complaints**
- **Formal complaints and appeals**
- **Recording of complaints**

Only those sections given in bold above were assessed for the purposes of this review into CAA procedures.

One of the suggestions made in the template is for "a high level summary of [a college's] processes, which may include a flowchart". Examples of such a flowchart are infrequent, but where they do appear, it is worth noting that these make proceedings very clear. For instance, both LMH's College Regulations⁷ and Merton's Student Handbook⁸ include a flowchart of academic disciplinary proceedings, a very transparent way of displaying the informal and formal channels followed in the event of failing to meet academic standards. Merton's Handbook also offers a similar flowchart for complaints procedures, laying out how complaints may be made up to the final appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

Most colleges appear to be setting out their definition and expectations of academic standards in their student handbooks, which is good to see given the Working Group's recommendations. This is most commonly in the form of a passing reference to an adequate pass at the First Public Examination, although some colleges enter far more detail of the student's academic obligations, for instance New⁹ and Harris Manchester¹⁰, who dedicate entire sections of their Handbooks to academic obligations (for example, that undergraduates' work should normally be to a 2.i standard). An explicit statement such as this offers no doubt for future complaints and appeals, and should therefore be in the college's interests as well as the student's.

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http://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/currentstudents/section_specific/College%20Handbook%202012-13.pdf

⁶ https://www.stcatz.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Shared_Files/Regulations.pdf

⁷ <http://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/getdoc/3fb5fee5-604a-4318-bc67-12034bc67237/College-Regulations.aspx>, p20.

⁸ *Ibid.* 3, at p106 for academic discipline, p133 for complaints.

⁹ <http://www.new.ox.ac.uk/system/files/Handbook%202012-13.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.hmc.ox.ac.uk/userFiles/File/PDF/College%20Handbook%202012-13%20FINAL.pdf>

While formal complaints procedures are often detailed in handbooks, what is often not discussed in detail is an encouragement to engage in informal complaints procedures first, either by contacting the person in question, a relevant college officer or a JCR representative. There are several examples of colleges that do highlight this; Merton for instance suggest that students firstly contact the person to whom the complaint pertains, before then offering a relevant College officer for an informal complaint, and all before any formal complaints procedures begin. This may produce a solution to a problem that, while serious for the student, is not one for which they are willing to seek formal resolution. One interesting example is at Teddy Hall¹¹, where such informal complaints are referred to as “concerns”, as separate from more formal “complaints” or academic “appeals”. Both concerns and complaints are dealt with in a specific Appendix of the relevant handbook.

Turning to formal complaints procedures, these are laid out in different ways across colleges. Some handbooks offer little information on how formal complaints are dealt with, instead suggesting that students seeking formal redress contact the relevant college Officer. This may be acceptable if in conjunction with adequate detail of informal complaints procedures, but may be difficult without this. In contrast, several colleges such as LMH¹² detail their formal complaints procedures with excellent details of the stages available.

Although the specifics of complaints procedures are set out later, it should be noted that about half of colleges make clear that students are entitled to a representative, be it a friend, JCR representative, Fellow of the college or (seemingly only mentioned in Teddy Hall’s handbook¹³!) somebody from OUSU. This is not explicitly stated in all handbooks - whether this means that representation is permitted or not is not apparent, and should perhaps be clarified as it may influence a student’s decision to make a complaint.

Appeals procedures are similar to those for formal complaints, and do not require much further comments. Most colleges outline the right to appeal to CCAT (if the college is a member), and eventually, the OIA, which is promising.

The last comment will be about recording of complaints and appeals. Although it may have been missed, the review did not identify many examples of college handbooks (or CAA regulations) stating how CAA were recorded (one clear counterexample would be LMH’s Regulations¹⁴. While this does not at all mean that colleges do not record complaints, it may be useful for students to be reassured that complaints are recorded and collated by their college. Nevertheless, many colleges do make a point of stressing that complaints will be taken seriously; a comment that may help reassure students that their complaint would be appreciated and not merely seen as vexatious.

One final comment is about the wording of length of some complaints and appeals procedure descriptions. The clearest examples appear to be those which outline a student’s right to complain (or make appeals) broken into small sections. Although transparency is encouraged, this should not be at the loss of clarity. While it may be useful to know some detail of the composition of a body that will decide upon a complaint or appeal (e.g. 3 Fellows of the college), the specifics of the selection process may be better placed elsewhere in the college’s Regulations, and not necessarily in the Handbook or CAA guidelines. Several sets of CAA guidelines were fairly impenetrable, and may discourage a student from wishing to escalate a complaint. Flagrant uses of Latin, of which there were only a couple of examples, may also have a similar discouraging effect.

¹¹http://www.seh.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/GreyBook_2012b_ForWeb_0.pdf

¹² Ibid. 5, at p12.

¹³ Ibid. 8, at p49.

¹⁴ Ibid. 5, at p14.

Details of CAA proceedings

The final consideration relates to the actual CAA proceedings themselves. Although this will not be considered in detail here, it is worth highlighting that proceedings do still vary between colleges. In general, it is pleasing to see that several processes are in place that may alleviate concerns held by students seeking to make a complaint or appeal. Examples include: highlighting that a complaint or appeal will not be dealt with (or at least, not voted on) by the person against whom the complaint is being made, or whose decision is being appealed; the right to representation and/or support as previously noted; the right to confidentiality at informal levels¹⁵; and simply having the right to appeal against initial decisions made by college, either internally or, eventually, by CCAT or the OIA. All of these are moves to be encouraged in colleges not providing them currently (or not making these clear in student handbooks).

One interesting final point is the (albeit infrequent) use of the term “Penal Collections”. The Working Group decided against the use of the term in the CAA template, opting instead for “specially assessed collections”¹⁶. As for the Working Group, a discussion of the use of this term is outside the remit of this review, but is noteworthy for going against the template.

Conclusion

It does appear that a moderate degree of homogeneity now exists in college CAA procedures - the scope for making complaints, either informally or formally, appears to be clearly marked, usually in college handbooks but occasionally in other documents. Using the examples of best practice suggested above, the following considerations appear to be worth considering if colleges review their CAA guidelines:

1. Providing CAA guidelines, whether in a student handbook or elsewhere, in an easily-accessible location on the college’s website.
2. Offering either a dedicated CAA document, or a clearly marked appendix or section of the college’s student handbook. The information should be together, rather than distributed throughout the document or worse still, across several documents or buried in Regulations.
3. Outlining informal and formal complaints procedures in a transparent and accessible way, for instance using a flowchart, and using only clear, relevant language when explaining proceedings.
4. Highlighting a student’s ability to make an informal complaint, and to whom such a complaint should be made.
5. Ensuring that CAA proceedings are fair, including offering the opportunity for a representative, and making this clear to students in CAA guidelines.
6. Recording all complaints made, and making students aware that this happens.

As noted in OUSU’s paper¹⁷ to the Working Group in 2010, this will ensure that the University are correct to assert that choice of college does not affect a student’s academic experience.

Appendix: Template for college disciplinary and complaints processes (as approved by the Working Group on CCAT, 21st April 2010)

¹⁵ Several colleges note the fact that anonymous complaints cannot be maintained at a formal level, and this is not being argued against.

¹⁶ Minutes of the Working Group on CCAT, 21 April 2010.

¹⁷ College Complaints and Appeals Procedures: A Paper from the OUSU Student Advice Service, presented to the Working Group on Complaints, Appeals and Discipline.

The template below is aimed to act as an ‘overlay’ for colleges’ own statutes, bye-laws and regulations and to act as a standard way of presenting and communicating these effectively to students.

How the guidelines relate to the template

The template lists the content that should be included in college processes, in a standard format. It does not aim to be prescriptive about the detail of actual college processes under each broad heading. The associated guidelines should inform both the content of these processes and, most importantly, the way in which they are operated in practice.

How the template might be used

Colleges might use the template in any of the following ways:

- As a checklist, to ensure that their processes contain all the listed elements;
- As a template which cross refers to other documents (for example, through weblinks). This would be similar to colleges’ Freedom of Information policies which consist of a standard template which links and cross refers to other documents available on the college website;
- As a model structure to use when revising college handbooks, or collegiate disciplinary and complaints processes.

Introduction

Colleges should:

- Set out the scope of their disciplinary and complaints processes
- Refer to any underpinning statutes, bye-laws etc and any relevant university documentation (some examples of relevant university documents are set out in the weblinks below)

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam/section10.shtml>

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam/section11.shtml>

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam/section13.shtml>

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/har/>

- Highlight advice and support available to students and
- Produce a high level summary of their processes, which may include a flowchart.

1: ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

Note: this section applies to undergraduates; postgraduates' academic performance is the responsibility of their department/faculty

1A: Academic standards

This should clearly set out the standards of performance expected by the college. It should include:

- A definition of 'good academic standing' in terms of the standards of performance, attendance and any other requirements;
- Any relevant university requirements (eg public examinations, residence etc)

1B: Feedback and support

This should set out the support and advice available to the student. It should include:

- Details of how performance feedback is provided to the student. This should include collections (both exams and feedback) and the regular feedback provided through tutorials and interactions with the student's tutors and senior tutor;
- Details of how the student can provide feedback on academic provision, through questionnaires and surveys and through discussions with tutors and the senior tutor (this should refer to the complaints process);
- Details of the support available to any student experiencing difficulties with their academic performance (for whatever reason). This should include common room/student union support; support from college welfare officers and reference to specialist support available outside the college.

1C: Informal Process

This should set out how the college will attempt to find an informal solution with the student to any academic difficulties. It should include:

- Criteria for reaching the informal process (eg poor performance in exams or tutorials, poor attendance, performance not meeting expectations or previous standards);
- Discussions - who raises the issue and how it should be addressed;
- Informal warning
- Criteria for leaving the informal process (either to the formal process, or to 'normal' academic life)

Note: both 1C and 1D should describe the processes clearly and comprehensively, in line with the guidelines.

1D: Formal Process

This should set out the complete formal academic disciplinary process. It should include:

- Criteria for reaching the formal process (eg through the informal process, or directly through failure at FPE or other major issue)
- Formal warning
- Probation

- Specially assessed collections
- Criteria for leaving the formal process (either back to ‘normal’ academic life , to probation or to rustication/suspension/expulsion)

In line with the guidance, it should always be clear how decisions are made and by whom and how students may be supported and represented.

1E: Appeals

This should set out the student’s rights of appeal. It should include:

- Any internal college appeal
- Conference of Colleges Appeals Tribunal [where the college subscribes]
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator

It should be clear which decisions may be appealed to each body.

2 DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOUR

2A: Standards and requirements of behaviour

This sets out the general and specific requirements of behaviour by college members. It should include:

- A general statement of expectations
- Details of specific rules (with referral to other university and college documentation where appropriate - some examples of university documentation are in the weblinks below)

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam/section10.shtml>

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/info/pam/section11.shtml>

- How any issues of dual jurisdiction are handled (university, police etc)
- Reference to welfare and support for students

2B: Minor offences

This defines minor offences and sets out how they are dealt with within colleges. It should include:

- A definition of a minor offence, the penalties that may be imposed and the disciplinary authority (eg college dean)
- The process by which minor offences are dealt with (hearings, correspondence etc) and decisions made
- Any appeal mechanism [note - penalties for minor offences may not be appealable]

2C: Major offences

This defines major offences and sets out how they are dealt with within colleges. It should include:

- A definition of a major offence, the penalties that may be imposed and the disciplinary authority (eg disciplinary panel, governing body)
- The process by which major offences are dealt with (hearings, correspondence etc) and decisions made
- Appeal mechanisms - internal, CCAT (when relevant) and OIA

3 COMPLAINTS

3A Introduction

This should briefly set out the college’s approach to dealing with complaints. It should include:

- Reference to specific college and university policies (eg harassment; diversity and equality);
- Scope of complaints that should be dealt with through college (rather than university channels);

3B Informal stage

Sets out how the college will try to resolve complaints informally. It should include:

- Who may make complaints and who complaints should be made to;
- How an informal resolution may be brokered, and by whom, and the remedies available;
- Sources of advice and support for students;
- Any informal mediation process offered by the college.

3C Formal stage

Sets out how complaints should be handled formally. It should include:

- How to reach this stage (through failure of the informal stage, or directly);
- The process for making a complaint;
- How complaints are investigated (and by whom) and decisions made;
- Remedies available to the complainant;

3D Appeals

Sets out how appeals against decisions in 3C may be appealed. It should include:

- Internal college appeals (eg to governing body)
- Appeals to the OIA

3E Recording

Sets out how complaints are recorded and monitored and action taken to address any general or specific issues raised; describes how feedback on this is disseminated throughout the college.