

Complaints Policy for Research and Research-Related Projects

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The University has adopted the principles of **Designing For Diverse Learners**, and all policy documents should be written with reference to these principles. Further information is available at [Designing for diverse learners.info](https://www.hull.ac.uk/designing-for-diverse-learners/info).

An Equality Impact Assessment must be considered for all new and amended policies. Further information is available from the [EIA section of SharePoint](#).

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Hull recognises the importance of fostering a culture of collaboration, transparency, and integrity in all its research and knowledge exchange endeavours. We understand that collaborative projects are essential for delivering real-world impact from our research base and that the two-way exchange of knowledge is a central component of a vibrant research environment.
- 1.2 We also acknowledge that challenges or grievances may arise during the course of collaborative research and research-related work. To uphold the principles of fairness, accountability, and professionalism, the University has established a systematic complaints procedure.
- 1.3 This procedure serves as a structured framework through which concerns or disputes can be addressed promptly, fairly, and effectively, thereby safeguarding the rights and interests of all parties involved while preserving the integrity and credibility of our collaborative endeavours.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The policy applies to all external organisations and individuals involved in research and research-related projects with the University of Hull, whether undertaking funded or unfunded work.
- 2.2 Projects that fall within the scope of this Policy include the following activities:
 - **Collaborative research:** Activity that meets the internationally recognised definition of research, taken from the Frascati Manual. This involves original investigation, undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge.
 - **Contract research:** Where new research work is done for the direct benefit of the external partner, i.e. where the partner owns all the new Intellectual Property generated by such research.
 - **Consultancy:** The utilization of existing knowledge for the benefit of the external partner.
 - **Other research-related projects:** Activities undertaken university staff that do not meet the Frascati definition of research, but may involve the application of knowledge generated in the course of research, or other specialist expertise.

3. Principles

- 3.1 The University adopts the following principles when handling complaints associated with research and research-related projects:
 - **Accessibility:** The procedure should be easily accessible and clearly communicated to all stakeholders involved in collaborative research and research-related work, ensuring that individuals are aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding the lodging and resolution of complaints.
 - **Transparency:** Transparency is crucial in building trust and confidence in the complaints process. All stages of the procedure, from the submission of a complaint to its resolution,

should be conducted transparently, with clear communication provided to all parties involved regarding the progress and outcome of the complaint.

- **Fairness:** Every complaint should be treated with impartiality and fairness, irrespective of the status or affiliation of the parties involved. Procedures should be designed to ensure equitable treatment and procedural fairness, including the opportunity for all parties to present their perspectives and evidence.
- **Timeliness:** A timely resolution is essential to prevent prolonged disputes and minimise any adverse impact on collaborative research activities. The procedure should specify reasonable timeframes for each stage of the process.
- **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality should be maintained throughout the complaints handling process to protect the privacy and reputation of individuals involved. Information related to complaints should only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with relevant data protection regulations.
- **Accountability:** Clear lines of responsibility and accountability should be established within the procedure, ensuring that designated individuals or committees are responsible for overseeing the complaints process and making decisions based on the available evidence and applicable policies.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 The **Named Person** and the **Deputy Named Person** are the individuals nominated by the PVC-RE on behalf of the institution to have responsibility for receiving any complaints relating to research or research-related projects; initiating and supervising the investigation; maintaining the record of information during the investigation and subsequently reporting on the investigation to internal contacts and external organisations; and taking decisions at key stages of the procedure.
- 4.2 The **Complainant** is a person raising the complaint.

5. Process

- 5.1 Complaints are handled according to the following three-stage process:

A Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- **Direct Communication:** The Complainant should first attempt to resolve the issue informally by discussing it directly with the individual(s) involved or their immediate supervisor, if applicable.
- **Documentation:** If the issue remains unresolved, the Complainant should document the details of the complaint, including dates, individuals involved, and specific incidents or concerns, and proceed to Stage 2.

B Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- **Submission of Formal Complaint:** If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal resolution process, they may submit a formal complaint to the Named Person.
- **Documentation:** The formal complaint should include all relevant documentation and details related to the complaint, as well as any previous attempts at resolution.
- **Initial Response:** The Named Person will acknowledge receipt of the allegation by the Complainant. The Named Person will consider all the information provided and may decide it is necessary to contact the complainant to seek further information.

- **Investigation:** The Named Person will identify a suitable independent senior member of University staff with relevant expertise, who will conduct an Investigation into the complaint, including gathering evidence, interviewing relevant parties, seeking expert advice, where required, and assessing the validity of the concerns raised.
- **Resolution:** Based on the findings and recommendations of the Investigation, the Named Person will determine what action (if any) is appropriate to resolve the complaint and take steps to implement such action.
- **Notification:** Both the Complainant and the individual(s) subject to the complaint will be notified of the outcome of the Formal Complaint process.

C Stage 3: Appeal

- **Appeal Request:** If the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Formal Complaint process, they may request an Appeal within 14 days of receiving notification of the outcome, by notifying the Named Person.
- **Appeal Panel:** An Appeal Panel consisting of three independent individuals will be convened to review the investigation and the University's response. The Complainant, and any other contributors to the investigation will have the opportunity to present their case and provide additional evidence or arguments.
- **Decision:** Following the appeal hearing, the Appeal Panel will make a final decision on the complaint, which will be communicated to both parties in writing.
- **Conclusion:** The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final, and no further avenues for appeal within the University's Complaints Procedure will be available.

- 5.2 Care will be taken to ensure that no individuals involved in the Investigation or Appeal processes have a conflict of interest, and that they possess relevant experience and knowledge to undertake their duties.
- 5.3 Where the Complaint is about the Named Person, the Named Person is unavailable, or the Named Person has a conflict of interest, the Complaint should be handled by the Deputy Named Person, who will then take the place of the Named Person in discharging the responsibilities set out in this section.
- 5.4 Depending on the nature of the Complaint, referral to other institutional processes and policies may be required (for example, the University Code of Practice for Dealing with Research Misconduct).

Version Control

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