

The Blackfriars Studium Institute of Theology (BSIT)

Student Complaints Procedures (SCP)

Preface

The Blackfriars Studium Institute of Theology (BSIT) is committed to maintaining and promoting a warmly supportive environment for all its members characterised by mutual respect, fairness, and a willingness to offer timely and appropriate assistance to its student members, especially if and when any concerns or problems arise. Students may discuss these in confidence with the BSIT's Senior Officers who comprise the Directorium: the Director, the Vice-Director, and the Secretary of Studies. Students are encouraged to raise any issue at an early stage. They may also speak with the BSIT Bursar, its Welfare Officer, and its Harassment Officers.

Religious may also wish to discuss concerns or problems with their own Religious Superior, who is welcome to contact the Director of BSIT. However, the procedures set out below are those which a student may choose to follow that are internal to BSIT.

The BSIT welcomes feedback, whether positive or negative, and considers this to be a valuable source of information that will contribute to the continuous improvement of its services.

Where an issue concerns academic activities and support, or disability support, the Vice-Director is usually the Officer best placed to assist and advise in the first instance. Whatever the issue, the Welfare Officer can offer continuing support.

Scope

Most issues may be settled without recourse to the informal or formal procedures set out below. However, where a student wishes to bring a serious matter or complaint to the attention of the BSIT concerning its operation and provision for its students, he or she is encouraged to do so, and the matter will be promptly addressed in line with these procedures.

The procedures may be used by a current or former student of the BSIT.

A complaint under this procedure may address any of the following areas of provision:

- academic activities and support, examinations, and formal assessments;
- disability support.

Criminal allegations should be reported to the police, but a member of the Directorium should also be notified at the earliest opportunity.

A complaint concerning another student of BSIT, should be referred to one of the three officers who form the Directorium under its Student Disciplinary Procedure;

A complaint concerning bullying victimisation, racial or sexual harassment should be addressed under the BSIT Harassment Policy and Procedure;

Safeguarding concerns should be raised immediately with one of the three members of the Directorium or with BSIT's Safeguarding Officer and addressed through the procedures set out in the BSIT Safeguarding Policy;

The Student Complaints procedures may not be used to complain about:

- a person who is neither a member of BSIT, nor an employee of BSIT, nor an individual providing teaching or a service on BSIT's behalf;
- a service which is not provided by BSIT;
- a private dispute with a member of BSIT (i.e. a matter not arising from the member's role at BSIT);
- a matter affecting a wider circle of students, where there is no special individual impact on the complainant.

Timing

Recourse to these procedures should be made as soon as possible if concerns are not otherwise addressed to the complainant's satisfaction. Complaints made more than three months after an incident which is the cause of grievance will only be considered where the Studium recognises a compelling reason for the delay.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Complaints will be dealt with confidentially by all parties involved, except where it is necessary to disclose information to carry out a fair investigation (e.g. your identity will usually be disclosed to a person who is the subject of the Complaint) or where the complaint manifests a safeguarding issue (in which case the Safeguarding representative will be informed).

Anonymous Complaints will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where there are compelling reasons to do so. Malicious or vexatious allegations may result in disciplinary action.

Withdrawal and absence

Complaints may be withdrawn at any stage by the student complainant but in some circumstances, investigations will need to continue regardless so that BSIT can satisfy itself that no further action is required for the good of the BSIT community.

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. severe illness), an informal or formal complaint may be made and/or pursued by another person on behalf of an eligible individual.

Support

We aim to provide for the welfare of all BSIT (Studium) members on BSIT premises, and the BSIT Welfare Lead (unless the subject of the complaint) will be available to any student complainant for confidential support throughout the process. The student complainant may be accompanied by a current member of BSIT or by her or his Religious Superior for meetings at any stage of the complaint process. Any subject of complaint will also be offered pastoral support from within BSIT, and may be accompanied by a current member of BSIT or a union rep to meetings during the process.

Conduct

All complaints will be given full and fair consideration, and no student will be disadvantaged by raising a genuine complaint in good faith. BSIT expects students, however, not to engage in malicious or vexatious complaints. All parties involved in a process of this nature are expected to act reasonably

and respectfully towards one another. Disciplinary action may be taken against anyone who victimises or retaliates against a student bringing a complaint in good faith.

Records

Records of both informal and formal complaints under the SCP, any resulting report and supporting documentation, and the outcome must be retained by BSIT in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 for five years. Student complainants are therefore asked not to include unnecessary personal information, particularly about third parties, in their complaints.

Studium review

The members of the Directorium will annually review the number of complaints and a summary of outcomes in the Unreserved section of business, to allow consultation with BSIT representatives.

Informal Procedure

The informal procedure is intended to encourage discussion and understanding of the problem. The process starts when a complaint is made in writing to one of the three members of the Directorium as set out below. Where an attempt has already been made to resolve an issue informally outside this process, then BSIT and the student may agree that it would be appropriate to move straight to the formal procedure.

1. The complainant should raise the issue as soon as possible in writing with the Officer who seems the most appropriate to deal with it:
 - academic matters: Vice-Director
 - pastoral / welfare matters: Vice-Director or Secretary of Studies
 - disability matters: Vice-Director or Secretary of Studies
2. Where the subject of the complaint is one or both of the above Officers, then the issue can be raised with the Director.
3. The member of the Directorium to whom the complaint is directed should normally arrange a meeting with the complainant within ten working days.
4. Where the Officer in receipt of the complaint feels that they are not the most appropriate Officer to deal with the issue, they may, in consultation with the student, refer the complaint to another member of the Directorium.
5. The Officer should:
 - seek to understand the issue and, if it falls for them to address it under this process, conduct any relevant inquiries. The Officer may involve the subject of the complaint where they consider that this is required, and after having notified the complainant;
 - offer advice, whether to the complainant or to the subject of a complaint, or to both; if the complaint is found to have merit, try to find a remedy satisfactory to both parties and/or effect mediation/conciliation where the relevant parties agree; and;
 - record the complaint, the actions taken and the outcome in a written response to the complainant. If the subject of the complaint has been involved, they should also be informed of the outcome in writing.

Formal Procedure

The formal procedure will normally be used only when the informal procedure has not achieved a resolution or the student complainant is not satisfied with the suggested resolution. This must be done within fifteen working days of the complainant being informed of the outcome of an informal complaint by the relevant BSIT Officer.

1. Where the student complainant has adopted the formal approach immediately, the Officer may refer the complaint back for informal resolution. This does not stop the student complainant from making a further formal complaint in the event that they are dissatisfied with the outcome of informal procedures.
2. A formal complaint must be made in writing stating explicitly that a formal complaint is being made. It should be directed to the most appropriate Officer:
 - academic matters: Vice-Director or Secretary of Studies
 - pastoral / welfare matters: Vice-Director or Secretary of Studies
 - disability matters: Vice-Director or Secretary of Studies

Where the subject of the complaint is one or both of the above Officers, then the issue can be raised with the Director.

3. The written complaint must include:
 - a description of what gave rise to the complaint including dates and times;
 - if applicable, the name of the person or body within the Hall about whom or which the complaint is being made;
 - details of steps already taken to try to resolve the complaint;
 - if applicable, an explanation of why the student complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal procedure.
4. The Officer to whom the complaint is directed must within ten working days of its delivery acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint and either confirm that a more detailed investigation will follow; or notify the student complainant (with an explanation) that the complaint falls outside the process.
5. Where the Officer in receipt of the complaint feels that they are not the most appropriate Officer to deal with the issue, they may, in consultation with the student, transfer the handling of the complaint to another Officer or senior member of BSIT.
6. The subject(s) of a formal complaint shall be entitled to be notified of, see, and respond in writing to the written complaint at the earliest opportunity.
7. The Officer must notify both the subject(s) of the complaint and the Director. The Officer will convene a panel of three who may be drawn from the members of BSIT's Academic Council or from the Fellows of Blackfriars Hall. The Officer will appoint one member of the panel to serve as Chair. The panel will not include the complainant's tutor(s).
8. The student complainant and any subject(s) of the complaint will be informed of the identities of the panel before appointments are confirmed and given an opportunity to

object to any member within five working days; alternative member(s) may be appointed if the Officer feels the grounds for objection are reasonable.

9. The panel may make enquiries as they see fit, which may include requesting further information of, or interviewing, the complainant and other persons who may have relevant information.
10. The person who is the subject of the complaint or responsible for the relevant service will be entitled to meet with the panel if they so choose, and may be accompanied by an appropriate third party, such as a union representative or colleague. The complainant may also be accompanied by a current member of BSIT or by his or her Religious Superior.
11. Notes will be taken of all interviews. The investigation will be conducted as swiftly as the subject matter and the academic calendar allows (ideally within six weeks of the panel's appointment).
12. The panel will produce a written report setting out the details of their enquiries, their recommendations and any supporting documentation or evidence. Copies of this will be provided to the complainant and to any person or body who or which is the subject of the complaint within ten working days of the panel completing their enquiries. Both parties will be invited to submit written comments or objections within a further five working days, upon the expiry of which the Director (or Vice-Director or Secretary of Studies, if the Director is the subject of the complaint) will be provided with copies of the report and any supporting documentation or evidence, along with any written comments or objections made.
13. The Director (or Vice-Director or Secretary of Studies, if the Regent is the subject of the complaint) will consider the complaint and make a decision as to remedies or action to be taken, basing their decision on the report and documentation provided. The student complainant and the subject(s) of any complaint will be notified of the outcome of the formal SCP, along with the reasons for it, as soon as possible after the Director has received the panel's report.

Review and Appeal

1. If the student complainant or the subject of the complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal SCP, they can request a review by writing to the Director. This should be done within ten working days of the date of the letter from the Officer informing the complainant and the subject of the complaint of the outcome of the formal SCP.
2. If the Director is the subject of the complaint, a review should be requested via the Vice-Director.
3. A review will be undertaken by the Director (or another senior officer, if the complaint involves the Director) and will only consider:
 - whether the appropriate procedures were followed at the formal stage;
 - whether the outcome of the formal stage was reasonable in view of the circumstances;
 - any new and material evidence which the complainant was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.
4. The subject(s) of any complaint, or the complainant, as the case may be, must be notified that a review has been requested and the grounds for that request. The subject of the

complaint is entitled to submit a response to those grounds. Should any new and material evidence be presented, the subject of the complaint will be entitled to view it and provide a written response.

5. A review may overturn the outcome of the formal SCP, without the need for the complaint to go through the formal SCP again.
6. The outcome of the review stage will be communicated in writing, along with the reasons for the decision, to the student complainant and any subject(s) of the complaint, within twenty working days of delivery of the request for a review, at which point the reviewer will also issue a Completion of Procedures notice to the complainant.

Monitoring Arrangements

The BSIT Academic Registrar will keep a yearly register of the number of complaints made using the formal procedure, and a summary of numbers and outcomes will be submitted to the Executive Body, along with recommendations for any action required in response to the issues identified in complaints. The register will indicate the number of formal complaints made and whether they have been resolved by the panel, with details of any recommendations or referrals.

Approved by the Directorium on 16 June 2026