

General principles applying to Birmingham City University student procedures

These general principles apply to all our procedures which directly affect students. They are supported and characterised by our values which are as follows.

- “Excellence – We take pride in ensuring the highest quality standards of academic achievement and professional service delivery.
- People Focused – We value everyone, recognising that what we do is for the benefit of all those connected with the University.
- Partnership Working – We work constructively with each other, fellow students and wider University community to create strong and successful working relationships.
- Fairness and Integrity – We take a fair and balanced approach to our activities and are mindful of the impact of our actions.”

Our procedures will be clear and easy to access

- We will write our procedures in plain English and make them easy to follow.
- We will tell you how to access advice and support.
- We will help you understand which process you should follow.
- We will explain what each procedure does and does not cover.
- We will include clear information about time limits.
- We will respond to your needs as an individual.
- We will review our procedures regularly to make sure they are still relevant and working well.
- We will tell you who you will deal with and make sure that different parts of the University work together effectively.
- We will keep clear and effective records.

Our procedures will be fair and impartial

- We will make sure that staff who make decisions have the necessary training, resources and support to make fair and consistent decisions.
- We will give all those involved an equal opportunity to present their case honestly and clearly.
- We will give clear reasons for our decisions.
- We will make sure that you are not disadvantaged as a result of raising a legitimate issue.
- We will base decisions on the balance of probability (this means we will accept the explanation that is most likely to be true).

- We will make sure that staff who make decisions do not have a conflict of interests.
- We will provide the opportunity for an independent review of a decision where there is good reason for this.

Our procedures will be flexible and timely

- We aim to deal with issues informally and quickly wherever possible and will encourage the use of mediation where it will help. Mediation is a voluntary process where someone who is impartial and independent helps settle issues confidentially.
- We are flexible about which approach to use when you raise issues which fall under more than one procedure.
- We will set clear time limits within which we normally expect to complete each process.
- We will identify issues which require fast action and respond quickly.
- We will keep you informed of our progress at all stages.

Our procedures will include support for students

- We will tell you about the support services available to you, for example the Students' Union and Student Services, which can provide helpful independent support and advice.
- You have the right to take someone with you to meetings to provide you with advice and support, but not to act on your behalf or in a legal capacity. This person cannot be a member of staff.
- We will make reasonable adjustments where appropriate to make sure that if you have specific needs, including disabilities, you will be able to use our procedures.
- We will make sure that if you have disclosed mental-health issues which you have formally told us about, we will tell you about specific support services that are available to you within the University (for example, counselling services) and outside the University if needed.
- If you appear to be unable to effectively take part in a procedure, we will suspend the procedure until you get appropriate support. Or, we may allow you to appoint a representative to act on your behalf.

We will use our procedures to improve the student experience

- We will learn from issues raised, act to deal with them and avoid them happening again.
- We will use the information we gather to do things better in the future and so improve your experience as a student.

We will maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality

- We will only release information to people who need it for the purposes of investigating or responding to the issues raised.
- We will only share information with others if we need to do this to get relevant information from them.

- We are not able to share information about another student or a member of staff if this would affect their right to confidentiality.
- We will make sure that information we hold in our record systems about your use of our procedures is only available to those who need to see it.
- We will only share the outcome of a procedure with others if there is a good reason for this. We will tell you when this is the case.

We expect everyone involved to behave appropriately

- We expect everyone involved to take part fully in the process, to act reasonably and fairly towards each other, and to treat each other and the processes themselves with respect.
- We have a responsibility to protect our staff and students against unacceptable behaviour, but we recognise that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. We accept that a person acting in an unacceptable way may still have a legitimate concern. We will treat all issues seriously and assess them properly.

We will not allow our procedures to be misused

- We will not tolerate frivolous or vexatious use of our procedures. In line with guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator this includes:
 - actions which are obsessive, harassing or repetitive;
 - people insisting that we consider unreasonable claims or reach unrealistic and unreasonable outcomes;
 - people insisting that we consider reasonable claims in an unreasonable manner;
 - actions which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance; and
 - demands for action which lack any serious purpose or value.
- We will stop considering any matter we believe is frivolous or vexatious. In such cases, we will write to you explaining why we have stopped and how you can ask us to review this decision.

