

Lancaster Social Work Placements Complaints Process

This complaints procedure is for use by a social work student in relation to the practice learning opportunity, Practice Educator or On-Site Supervisor. It is considered as Stage 1 (within the Lancaster University Student Complaint process principle of timely resolution). Any other concerns about the programme should be dealt with using the procedures governing other aspects of the programme, that is, through the academic complaints procedures or the examination board appeals. Complaints about practice which takes place within an agency (not the practice teaching or learning opportunities) should be dealt with through the agency's normal complaints or whistle blowing procedure. All students are considered to be operating on placement as students, irrespective of their employment status and should, therefore, use this complaints procedure in relation to complaints about their practice learning opportunity.

Grounds for complaint

There are only two grounds for a complaint:

1. The Practice Educator or On-Site Supervisor is significantly failing to carry out their duty as negotiated in the Practice Learning Agreement.
2. The Practice Educator or On-Site Supervisor is deemed by the student to be engaging in unprofessional conduct or discriminatory behaviour, which the student must specify.

During a placement a student is expected to raise any concerns directly with the Practice Educator (or a manager within the agency if more appropriate) in the first instance and work collaboratively on a satisfactory resolution. This collaborative approach recognises the power imbalance present for students during social work practice learning placements. The student should also work with key people in the university, including their Placement Tutor, to obtain further support and guidance. All efforts should be made at the time of the concern to reach a resolution; Practice Learning Agreements can be reviewed and action plans put in place to support students on placement. This complaints procedure should only be used for complaints after normal negotiations have been exhausted.

All complaints must be registered within the duration of the placement or within 6 weeks of the end of the placement.

Procedure

Students may make a complaint during placement or within 6 weeks of the end of the placement using the complaints form (see [Guidance for Students in the Practice Learning Resources section](#)) and send it to both the Lead Social Worker and the Head of Department.

The student should provide sufficient detail to clearly outline their complaint. Include a summary of what actions the student has already taken and why these have been unsuccessful in resolving the issue. It is useful to include evidence to support each element of the complaint. The student is asked to provide an indication of potential resolution and the outcome being sought.

The Lead Social Worker is responsible for the following:

- Checking that the complaint meets one of the two grounds outlined above
 - If the complaint does not meet either of the two grounds, the Lead Social Worker will inform the student and may refer the student to an alternate more appropriate procedure.
- Acknowledging receipt of the complaint within 15 working days.
- Looking into the complaint.
- Determining whether or not to uphold the complaint which may include highlighting lessons learnt and actions to follow.

The Lead Social Worker will usually meet with the student who has raised the complaint and may interview other relevant parties including the Practice Educator and other staff within the placement setting. The student may have representation at meetings.

In attempting to resolve the complaint The Director may seek support of the Head of Department or others and can consider drawing upon other relevant procedures and policies.

Outcome

The student and Head of Department will receive an outcome letter to advise whether or not the complaint has been upheld and may include actions taken and other points to be noted. The student will be advised that if they are not satisfied with the outcome they may raise a Stage 2 complaint [Student Complaints - Lancaster University](#)

Last Updated 25/7/24

Clare Stone

Lead Social Worker