



# **Patient Complaints Policy & Procedure (General Clinic)**

<b>Core Documentation Cover Page</b>					
<b>Patient Complaints Policy &amp; Procedure (General Clinic)</b>					
<b>Version number</b>	<b>Dates produced and approved (include committee)</b>	<b>Reason for production/ revision</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Location(s)</b>	<b>Proposed next review date and approval required</b>
V1.0	July 2010 QAEC	To provide a procedure for listening to and discussing patients' concerns and to take action as appropriate.	Head of Clinical Practice	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Jul 2011
V2.0	Dec 2014 SMT	General Review Major Amendments to update staff role titles, and details of external agency guidance.	Head of Clinic	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Dec 2016
V3.0	Feb 2017 SMT	General review	Head of Clinical Practice	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Feb 2019
V4.0	Jul 2017 PRAG Chair	Administrative Amendments to update institution name change from British School of Osteopathy to University College of Osteopathy.	Head of Clinical Practice	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Feb 2019
V5.0	May 2018 PRAG Chair	Administrative Amendments to reflect title changes (i.e. from Principal to Vice-Chancellor, etc.)	Head of Clinical Practice	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Feb 2019
V6.0	April 2019 SMT	Biennial Review Minor Amendments to clarify procedure and update weblinks / staffing.	Head of Clinical Practice	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Website	April 2022
V7.0	Jan 2020 PRAG Chair	Administrative Amendments to reflect the new committees' structure	Head of Quality	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Website	April 2022
V8.0	Mar 2021 PRAG Chair	Administrative Amendment	Head of Clinical Practice/Head of Quality	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Website	March 2024
<b>Equality Impact</b>					
Positive equality impact (i.e. the policy/procedure/guideline significantly reduces inequalities)					

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Neutral equality impact (i.e. no significant effect)	X
Negative equality impact (i.e. increasing inequalities)	
<b>If you have any feedback or suggestions for enhancing this policy, please email your comments to: <a href="mailto:quality@uco.ac.uk">quality@uco.ac.uk</a></b>	

## Patient Complaints Policy & Procedure (General Clinic)

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## 1. SCOPE

- 1.1 The aim of the Patient Complaints Procedure is to listen to and discuss patients' concerns and to take action as appropriate.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The University College of Osteopathy (UCO) always endeavours to make sure that you receive the highest standard of care during your time as a patient. We welcome comments about the services we offer and regret any patient having cause to make a complaint. We accept and are sorry that on occasion the service we give may not be to an individual's satisfaction. Consequently if you are unhappy with the standard of care you have received or with the way we have organised your care, we would like to hear about it and recognise that it may be important for you to make a complaint. The UCO clinical centre takes all comments, suggestions and complaints seriously; listening to what you have to say can help us improve the quality of what we do to better meet your needs and the needs of the community.
- 2.2 If you are unhappy about any aspect of your care, please speak to your student practitioner, the supervising member of staff, or the clinic reception team in the first instance. They are there to help you and will try to resolve the matter in an efficient and satisfactory way. We hope that the majority of informal complaints can be dealt with in this way.
- 2.3 If you do not wish to complain but would like to make a comment or suggestion for improvement of our services, please complete a patient feedback form which you will find located in the clinic reception, or on request from the clinic receptionists. These can then be left in the comments box in the reception area, either anonymously or with your contact details if you require a response. You may also email the reception team with any comments, feedback or suggestions for improvement and this can be done by emailing [clinicappointments@uco.ac.uk](mailto:clinicappointments@uco.ac.uk)
- 2.4 However, if you feel that you wish to make a complaint, this procedure is written to explain precisely how to go about this, how the process works and what to do if you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint.
- 2.5 The UCO Patient Complaints Procedure has been developed with best practice in mind. To that end it is informed by current NHS guidelines regarding handling patient complaints. Consultation has also taken place with the General Osteopathic Council who regulate the practice of osteopathy in the United Kingdom.

## 3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the Patient Complaints Procedure is to listen to and discuss your concerns and to take action as appropriate. The principles upon which this complaints procedure is based are:
- a) That complaints from patients will be dealt with seriously and fairly.
  - b) That complaints will be investigated promptly.

- 3.2 That all complaints will be considered on their individual merits, but in accordance with the UCO's equal opportunities policy, all complainants will be treated equally; there will be no victimisation of a complainant. Any ongoing care or provision of service will be unaffected by the instigation of a complaint.
- 3.3 The process will be fair to you and to our staff and students.
- 3.4 That all complaints will be dealt with in confidence, although as a matter of good practice, the Head of Clinical Practice will be notified of all informal and formal complaints.
- 3.5 Information will only be shared with staff and students who need to know.
- 3.6 That the UCO's Teaching Quality & Standards Committee (TQSC) will review a summary of all complaints annually and will reflect on all comments and complaints made and where appropriate identify how to improve current practice for the benefit of staff, students and patients in the future.
- 3.7 That the principles of natural justice are followed in a manner which is appropriate to the individual circumstances of the complaint. Those who investigate or adjudicate on a complaint will do so impartially and fairly, and will not act in relation to any matter in which they have, or may have, a material interest, or an actual or potential conflict of interest.
- 3.8 The UCO also has a Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) policy that can be found at:  
<https://www.uco.ac.uk/about-uco/who-we-are/policies-procedures-and-privacy>

#### 4. DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

- 4.1 For the purposes of this policy a complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction received from a patient, carer or service user about any aspect of the UCO's services which require a response, whether it be verbally or in writing.”
- 4.2 Such expressions of dissatisfaction may be made in a variety of ways; verbally, in person or by telephone, email or in writing.
- 4.3 This wide definition is designed to empower as many service users to report concerns, and for members of staff to resolve minor comments, concerns and problems immediately and informally.
- 4.4 The decision as to whether a matter is dealt with informally as a concern or as a formal complaint should rest with you, the patient/relative/carer. The decision should be based on information about options available to you provided by our staff.

- 4.5 Complaints should normally be made within six months of the event or six months of the date of discovering the problem, provided that it is within 12 months of the initial event. The UCO has the discretion to extend this time limit where it would be unreasonable in the circumstances of a particular case for the complainant to have made their complaint earlier. Such decisions will be made by the Head of Clinical Practice in consultation with senior colleagues when necessary. All complaints received will be heard appropriately, but it should be recognised that if a complaint is received about an event that took place outside of the timeframes above, that it may be difficult to do anything about the incident.

## 5. WHO CAN COMPLAIN?

- 5.1 Anyone who is receiving or has received treatment or services from the UCO clinics can complain. If a patient is unable to complain themselves, then a relative, carer or friend can complain on their behalf.
- 5.2 If a complaint is raised on behalf of a relative or friend, the patient must provide written consent, unless the complainant is the parent or guardian of a child aged 16 or under.
- 5.3 If a complaint is raised concerning a deceased patient, then this must be made by a suitable representative, preferably a close family member.

### A) EXCEPTIONS

- 5.4 There are exceptions as to who can make a complaint, whether formal or informal. For example:
- a) Individuals making complaints on behalf of someone else who is unable to provide written consent.
  - b) Individuals who are pursuing legal action against the UCO in relation to their complaint. In such a case any complaints in process will be suspended pending the completion of any legal process.
  - c) The complaint is registered outside the recognised time frame detailed above without any mitigating circumstances.

## 6. HOW TO COMPLAIN: A THREE STAGE PROCESS

### A) STAGE ONE – INFORMAL COMPLAINT STAGE

- 6.1 If you have a complaint, you are encouraged to speak with the student practitioner, the supervising member of staff, or the UCO's clinic reception team about the matter to try and resolve it informally. If you would rather speak with a senior member of staff about any matters then this can be arranged. Please ask any member of your care team to organise this.
- 6.2 It is expected that many complaints will be resolved amicably and quickly in this informal way. Normally, informal complaints of this sort should be acknowledged and responded to immediately if received face-to-face, or via the telephone, and between three to five working days if received via email or letter.

- 6.3 If an informal complaint requires the UCO to look into the matter further (i.e. it cannot be resolved immediately) then a response will be given to the complainant within two to four weeks. Typically, responses in such circumstances will be responded to via letter or email.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that this informal procedure will enable many complaints to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- 6.5 If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved in this informal manner, or you feel that you would like to complain formally, you may make use of the next stage of the procedure.
- 6.6 Typically, all informal complaints will be logged on the Informal Complaint Form (Appendix 1), so that they can be audited and reviewed. This allows the clinic to act on particular issues and identify any themes or trends that require further evaluation. Such complaint forms will be completed by the individual receiving the complaint whenever possible. Supervising members of staff will be expected to lead on the completion of complaint forms and involve students in this; likewise, the reception team can complete these forms if needed.
- 6.7 Informal complaint forms can be obtained in the following ways:
- a) From the UCO's clinic reception team. Please either ask in person, or call 020 7089 5360 or email [clinicappointments@uco.ac.uk](mailto:clinicappointments@uco.ac.uk)
  - b) They can also be downloaded from the UCO's website at: <https://www.uco.ac.uk/about-uco/who-we-are/policies-procedures-and-privacy>

## B) STAGE TWO – FORMAL COMPLAINT STAGE

- 6.8 A complaint that cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally may be submitted formally. This means that the details of the complaint are recorded on a formal complaints form. All formal complaints require a full complaint report to be written on a Formal Complaint Form (Appendix 2).
- 6.9 For any formal complaint to proceed, patient's (or appropriate other where the patient has provided their consent) must provide their consent for the following:
- 6.9.1 - that the UCO can disclose my complaint and any information that I have given, to relevant staff and students involved; this may include staff and students who are sitting on a Complaints Committee.
  - 6.9.2 - I agree that relevant staff and students can disclose any relevant information regarding my case so that my complaint may be fully investigated.
  - 6.9.3 Without this consent from you the patient, the UCO will be unable to proceed with a formal complaints process.
- 6.10 You can obtain a formal patient complaint form in the following ways:
- a) From the UCO's clinic reception team. Please either ask in person, or call 020 7089 5360 or email [clinicappointments@uco.ac.uk](mailto:clinicappointments@uco.ac.uk)
  - b) From the UCO's website at: <https://www.uco.ac.uk/about-uco/who-we-are/policies-procedures-and-privacy>

- c) By writing directly to:
- The Patient Complaints Officer  
The University College of Osteopathy  
275 Borough High Street  
London SE1 1JE
- 6.11 On the receipt of a formal complaint and your consent as a patient, the Patient Complaints Officer will:
- a) Provide a verbal or written acknowledgement of your concerns within two working days and will keep you up to date with any progress or developments as appropriate.
  - b) Inform any member(s) of staff and/or students concerned that a formal complaint has been received.
  - c) Appoint an appropriate Investigating Officer to investigate the formal complaint. The Investigating Officer will seek relevant documentation or statements from any member(s) of staff or student(s).
- 6.12 The Complaints Committee will be made up of three members, at least one of which should be a lay member, and will typically be chaired by either, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) or the Dean of Academic Development. The Chair of the Complaints Committee shall then convene a Complaints Committee hearing.
- 6.13 The Complaints Committee will consider the evidence, and will be able to make one of the following recommendations:
- a) That the complaint is not upheld, and that no further action should be taken.
  - b) That the complaint is upheld, and that appropriate action is necessary.
  - c) In situations where the complaint relates to student behaviour, the case may be referred to the Fitness to Practice and Professional Behaviour policy for appropriate action.
  - d) In situations where the complaint relates to staff behaviour, complaints may be referred to human resources for further action under the staff disciplinary policy.
  - e) That the costs associated with treatment may be refunded.
- 6.14 Patients are entitled to be accompanied by a friend or representative at any hearing where their complaint is to be discussed. This could be a family member or personal friend. Legal representation is not considered appropriate under such circumstances.
- 6.15 A friend or representative may speak on behalf of the patient provided clear written consent has been given by the patient prior to the hearing.
- 6.16 Normally the Complaints Committee will provide a written decision to the complainant within twenty-five working days of receiving the complaint. The reasons for the decision will normally be given. However, if your complaint is complex or raises a number of serious issues, it may take longer to investigate. You should be kept informed of the progress being made and of the reasons for any delays.

- 6.17 The outcome of the Complaints Committee will be reported to the complainant on completion of the appropriate process.
- 6.18 It is important to note that all members of staff who may supervise students in their clinical practice, are bound by the standards published by their governing body. For example, the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) for the regulation of osteopaths. The UCO has a responsibility to inform regulatory bodies if any of its clinical staff fail to adhere to the relevant codes of practice. The UCO has a duty to inform the regulatory bodies of any serious breach of standards. Therefore, it may be appropriate for the Committee to refer the complaint to relevant regulatory bodies if they feel that the evidence indicates that the relevant code has been breached.

### C) STAGE THREE – APPEAL PROCESS

- 6.19 If you are not, for any reason, satisfied with the outcome of Stage Two of the procedure, you have the right to appeal. In this instance you may take your complaint further by referring it in writing to the Vice-Chancellor of the UCO:

The Vice-Chancellor

University College of Osteopathy

275 Borough High Street

London SE1 1JE

- 6.20 The complainant shall submit a statement in writing to the Vice-Chancellor, clearly stating the reason(s) why s/he is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage Two procedure. The Vice-Chancellor shall be provided with the details of the case and all relevant documentation by the Patient Complaints Officer and will review the case and may, if necessary, take further advice. It may be possible for the complaint to be resolved using the documentation already collected however, the Vice-Chancellor may investigate further by calling for more evidence relevant to the case. A hearing may be called at which both the complainant and any other persons involved may put their views forward.
- 6.21 Following this, a decision will normally be communicated to the complainant in writing within twenty working days of the submission to the Vice-Chancellor. Throughout this process you shall be kept informed of the progress being made and the reasons for any delays.
- 6.22 The Vice-Chancellor's decision regarding the outcome of the complaint shall be final.
- 6.23 The Vice-Chancellor may propose that a complaint which has reached Stage Three of the process and is proving difficult to resolve, be referred to a mediation procedure. Such a procedure would normally involve a mediator, in order to assist the UCO and the complainant to resolve the matter. Any mediator should not be a member of staff or a student of the UCO. The mediation procedures to be adopted would be agreed between the complainant and the Patient Complaints Officer dealing with the matter.
- 6.24 Further to the processes outlined above, the regulatory bodies of any relevant profession may be contacted.

If your concerns are in relation to osteopathic services, then you should direct your concerns to the Fitness to Practise department where they will be able to advise you on an appropriate course of action. The GOsC contact details are:

General Osteopathic Council  
176 Tower Bridge Road  
London SE1 3LU  
[www.osteopathy.org.uk/](http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/)  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7357 6655  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7357 0011

The GOsC's complaints procedure can be found at:

<http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/information/complaints/making-a-complaint/>

[If your concerns are with regards to nutrition services, then please contact the Association for Nutrition \(AfN\) whose complaints](#)

<https://www.associationfornutrition.org/about/complaints-and-concerns>

## 7. OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

### A) THE CARE QUALITY COMMISSION

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) (formerly the Healthcare Commission) is the independent regulator of health and social care in England. Their aim is to make sure better care is provided for everyone, whether that's in hospital, in care homes, at GP's, dentists or elsewhere. They do this by inspecting services and publishing their findings. They can be contacted at:

CQC National Customer Service Centre  
Citygate  
Gallowgate  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 4PA

Telephone: 03000 616161

Fax: 03000 616171

There is also an online contact form available at:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/content/contact-us-using-our-online-form>

The CQC's website can be found at:

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/>

## B) THE PATIENTS ASSOCIATION

The Patients Association was set up in 1963 to promote the voice of patients in healthcare. They are a registered charity committed to making a difference to the 'patient journey'.

The Patients Association

PO Box 935

Harrow

Middlesex HA1 3YJ

Telephone: 020 8423 9111

Fax: 020 8423 9119

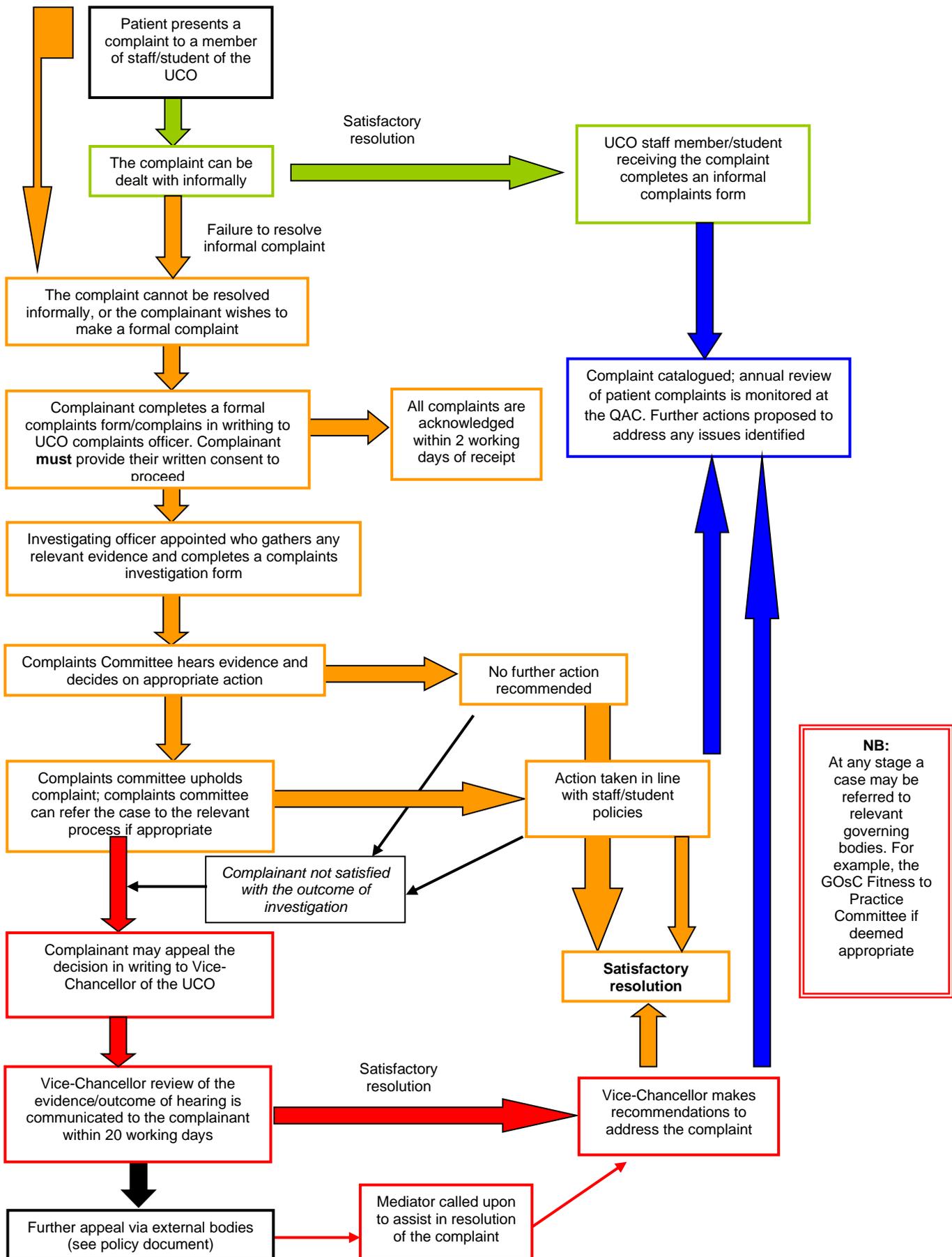
Website: <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/>

The Patients Association Helpline offers you independent information and advice on a range of healthcare issues.

Telephone: 020 8423 8999

Email: There is also an online contact form available at:

<https://www.patients-association.org.uk/contact-us/>



APPENDIX 1: INFORMAL PATIENT COMPLAINT FORM

# Patient Complaints Procedure: Informal Complaint Form

This form is designed to be completed when a patient makes an informal complaint or has a concern with regards to any aspect of the UCO, services or facilities.

Although a complaint may be dealt with effectively at the time it is very helpful for us to identify what problems arise so that we are able to act to alter our policies and processes to address them in the future.

The UCO staff member who dealt with the complaint is responsible for completing the form, in conjunction with the patient and any other relevant parties (such as students, other staff members).

To help us understand the complaint and deal with it efficiently please give as much detail as you can.

Please complete this either in blue or black ink, or electronically so that the information is as clear as possible.

UCO Staff member to complete in conjunction with the patient as appropriate:

Complaint received by (UCO staff)	
Name of member of staff:	
Role at UCO:	
Complainant's details	
Name:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Email:	
Patient's name and address, if different to complainant	
Name:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Email:	

**Brief details of complaint/incident (including date, time, place and names of people or staff involved and any relevant background information):**

**Is any on the spot action possible which would/was able to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the complainant?**

**If so, give details.**

**Please include any further action taken following discussion or any other relevant information:**

If the matter cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant at the time, is judged to be more serious or requires further investigation, please inform the complainant of action to be taken e.g. referral to the appropriate line manager. The complainant will receive confirmation that the complaint is being investigated further.

Has the complaint been resolved? (Please delete as appropriate)	Yes		
	No	If no, please refer to the appropriate line manager.	
Has the complaint been referred to the appropriate line manager? (Please delete as appropriate)	Yes	If yes, please specify the name of the referee below.	
		Name:	
	No		

<b>Completed by:</b>		
<b>Date:</b>		
<b>Does the patient require written confirmation of the informal complaint and the actions taken?</b> (Please delete as appropriate):	Yes	
	No	
<b>Patient Informed of Outcome by:</b> (Please delete as appropriate):	Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Date:	DD/MM/YYYY

**Please forward this Informal Complaint Form to the Head of Clinical Practice so that the issues raised can be logged, which forms part of the quality assurance processes of the UCO.**

## APPENDIX 2: FORMAL PATIENT COMPLAINT FORM

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# Patient Complaints Procedure: Formal Complaints Form

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This form is designed for use if you have a complaint that cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally and you wish to **complain formally**.

**The details of the formal complaints process can be found within the University College of Osteopathy Patient Complaints Procedure accompanying this form.**

To help us understand your complaint and deal with it efficiently please give as much detail as you can. Please complete this either in blue or black ink, or electronically so that the information is as clearly as possible.

If you are unsure about anything and would like to speak with someone about completing this form, then please call the UCO's Patient Complaints Officer (020 7407 5353).

### **Consent and Declaration:**

For the UCO to deal appropriately with your complaint, we will need to disclose the details of it to relevant staff and students and their line managers. We are unable to proceed any further with your complaint unless you agree to this and sign and date this section as an indication of this.

***I agree that the UCO can disclose my complaint and any information that I have given, to relevant staff and students. I also agree that relevant staff and students can disclose any relevant information regarding my case so that my complaint may be fully investigated.***

**Signature of patient or complainant (as authorised on Page Three of this form):**

<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

**To be completed by the complainant or their representative:**

<b>COMPLAINANTS DETAILS:</b>		
<b>TITLE:</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Male</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Female</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Prefer not to say</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Prefer to self-identify as.....</b> <b>(please select and complete as appropriate)</b>
<b>FULL NAME:</b>		
<b>ADDRESS:</b>		
<b>HOME PHONE:</b>		
<b>MOBILE PHONE:</b>		
<b>E-MAIL (if you have one):</b>		
<b>If you are complaining on behalf of a patient, then please state your relationship to them:</b>	e.g. relative, carer, next of kin, solicitor	

**To be completed by the complainant or their representative:**

<b>DETAILS OF THE PATIENT (if different from above)</b>		
<b>THE PATIENT'S TITLE:</b> e.g. Mr, Mrs, Miss, Dr etc		<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Male</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Female</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Prefer not to say</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Prefer to self-identify as.....</b> <b>(please delete select and complete as appropriate/circle)</b>

<b>PATIENT'S FULL NAME:</b>		
<b>PATIENT'S ADDRESS:</b>		
<b>PATIENT'S HOME PHONE:</b>		
<b>PATIENT'S MOBILE PHONE:</b>		
<b>PATIENT'S EMAIL:</b>		
<b>PATIENT'S DATE OF BIRTH:</b>		

## **Patient Consent to appoint a Representative: to be completed by the patient:**

**Please note, if the patient is 16 years of age or younger, then this section does not need to be completed by the patient.**

If you are complaining on behalf of a patient, then you will need to get them to declare that they consent to this and they will need to sign the declaration below.

**I agree for .....(name of complainant) to make this complaint on my behalf and agree that they may see information that is relevant to the complaint. This may include relevant medical records and any other healthcare records as part of services provided by the UCO.**

<b>Signed (by the Patient):</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

To ensure that you are able to make a fully informed complaint it is recommended that you read the full UCO Patient Complaints Procedure.

**I hereby declare that I have read a copy of the University College of Osteopathy Patient Complaints Procedure.**

<b>Signed (by the Patient):</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

**To be completed by the complainant or their representative:**

**DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT:**

Please describe the nature of your complaint as fully as possible, including details such as when and where and who was involved.

**If needed, please use separate sheets and attach these securely to this form.**

**Please state here how many additional sheets you have attached:**

**Did you speak to anyone informally at the time to help you with these concerns?  
Yes / No (Please delete as appropriate/circle)**

**If yes, please describe any action that was taken at the time to resolve your complaint.  
Please include the staff or students' name, role at the UCO, and whether this was in  
the general clinic or a specialist clinic or community clinic if possible:**

**If you have any relevant documents such as letters or medical records that may  
support your complaint, then please list them here and enclose copies of them when  
you return your form:**

**How do you propose the complaint could be resolved to your satisfaction?**

**Checklist for the complainant – has the following been included:**

<b>The patient's consent for you to complain on their behalf</b>	
<b>The patient's consent for the UCO to proceed with the formal complaint process</b>	
<b>The patient's confirmation that they have read a copy of the UCO's Patient Complaint's Policy &amp; Procedure</b>	
<b>Clear details of how to contact the patient, and the complainant (if needed)</b>	
<b>A full and clear description of the complaint</b>	
<b>Attached additional sheets if used</b>	
<b>Any relevant documents such as letters or medical records</b>	

<b>Where to return this form to:</b>	<b>What happens next:</b>
<p><b>The Patient Complaints Officer</b>  <b>The University College of Osteopathy</b>  <b>275 Borough High Street</b>  <b>London SE1 1JE</b>          Email: <a href="mailto:complaints@uco.ac.uk">complaints@uco.ac.uk</a>          Tel: 020 7089 5353</p>	<p>You should receive a verbal or written acknowledgement of your concerns within two working days of a complaint being received.</p> <p>You would normally receive a written decision to your complaint within twenty-five working days of the UCO receiving the complaint.</p>

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY (PATIENT COMPLAINTS OFFICER):**

<b>DATE RECEIVED:</b>		<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SENT:</b>	
<b>Action Notes:</b>		<b>Action Notes:</b>	