

**KEELE UNIVERSITY LEGAL ADVICE CLINIC**

# Compliments, Complaints and Comments

## 1 Introduction

Keele University’s Legal Advice Clinic ([Legal advice clinics - Keele University](https://www.keele.ac.uk/law/employability/legaladviceclinics/)) is committed to providing a quality service and working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our clients and stakeholders, and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

Therefore, we aim to ensure that:

* making a compliment or complaint is as easy as possible
* we deal with your matter promptly, politely and confidentially
* we respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc.
* we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints process

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally and dealt with quickly.

* This process ensures that we welcome compliments and provide guidelines for dealing with complaints from members of the public about our services, facilities, staff and volunteers.

**2. Definitions**

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction about the standard of service we provide.

A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction; however, it is expressed. This would include complaints expressed face to face, via a phone call, in writing, via email or any other method. All staff should have sufficient knowledge to be able to identify an “expression of dissatisfaction” even when the word “complain” or “complaint” is not used.

**3. Compliments**

We are always glad to hear from people who are satisfied with the services we offer. All compliments are recorded, acknowledged, and a copy is sent to the relevant person to provide feedback to the member of staff or service.

**4. Complaints**

The following process is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

**5. Responsibilities**

Keele University Legal Advice Clinic’s responsibility will be to:

* acknowledge the complaint in writing;
* respond promptly and within the time stated at paragraph 7 below;
* deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint; and
* take action where appropriate.

A complainant's responsibility is to:

* raise concerns promptly and directly with a member of staff in Keele University Legal Advice Clinic;
* explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date and any provide any documentation which will help us to understand your complaint;
* allow Keele University Legal Advice Clinic a reasonable time to deal with the matter, and
* recognise that some circumstances may be beyond Keele University Legal Advice Clinic’s control.

**6. Confidentiality:**

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and Keele University Legal Advice Clinic maintain confidentiality. However, subject to data protection legislation, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own facts). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

**7. Complaints Process:**

Written records must be made by Keele University Legal Advice Clinic at each stage of the process.

**Early Resolution**

In the first instance, staff member(s) must establish the seriousness of the complaint. An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. If concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints process set out below, should be followed.

**Formal Complaints Process - Stage 1**

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the member of the public should be advised that a formal complaint may be made and the following process should be explained to them. It may sometimes be appropriate for a different member of staff, to make this explanation.

1. A formal complaint can be made either verbally or in writing. If in writing the attached form should be used. If verbally, a statement should be taken by the relevant Supervising Solicitor responsible for the Legal Advice Clinic.
2. In all cases, the complaint must be passed on to the relevant Supervising Solicitor responsible for the Legal Advice Clinic. In the event of a complaint about the relevant Supervising Solicitor, the complaint should be passed to an alternative Supervising Solicitor who has not previously been involved in the matter.
3. The Supervising Solicitor or alternative Supervising Solicitor, depending on the nature of the complaint, must acknowledge the complaint in writing within one week of receiving it.
4. One of the above will investigate the complaint.
5. The person making the complaint will receive a response based on the investigation within four weeks of the complaint being received. If this is not possible then a letter or email must be sent explaining why.

**Formal Complaints Process - Stage 2**

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the above decision, then a meeting will be convened by the Supervising Solicitor and Reader in Legal Education. If the complaint concerns the Supervising Solicitor and Reader in Legal Education, a meeting will be convened by the Head of Law.
2. The Supervising Solicitor and Reader in Legal Education (or the Head of Law if appropriate) will examine the complaint and may wish to carry out further interviews, examine files / notes. They will respond within four weeks in writing. Their decision will be final.

#### **What to do if we cannot resolve your complaint**

The Legal Ombudsman can help you if we are unable to resolve your complaint ourselves. They will look at your complaint independently and it will not affect how we handle your case.

Before accepting a complaint for investigation, the Legal Ombudsman will check that you have tried to resolve your complaint with us first. If you have, then you must take your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman:

* Within six months of receiving our final response to your complaint

and

* No more than one year from the date of the act or omission being complained about; or
* No more than one year from the date when you should reasonably have known that there was cause for complaint.

##### For more information about the Legal Ombudsman contact:

[www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/)

Call: 0300 555 0333 between 9.00 to 17.00.

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Legal Ombudsman PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton, WV1 9WJ

#### **What to do if you are unhappy with our behaviour**

The Solicitors Regulation Authority can help if you are concerned about our behaviour. This could be for things like dishonesty, taking or losing your money or treating you unfairly because of your age, a disability or other characteristic.

Visit their website to see how you can raise your concerns with the [Solicitors Regulation Authority](https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor/).

 8. **Data Protection**

The provision of a complaints process is provided as part of the contract we have with our clients. Where you have provided any sensitive personal data (special category data\* and data related to criminal convictions and offences), we will need your explicit consent to process this information.

The information that you give in your complaint, together with any supporting evidence, will be processed by the following:

* The Supervising Solicitor dealing with your matter
* Members of the Legal Advice Clinic deal who process your complaint
* Any other person named in your complaint who may need to contact to check the issue you have raised, e.g. a student adviser
* The Head of the Law School

Our use of your information is subject to the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and Data Protection Act 2018. If you think that we have used or got your information wrong, please tell us so that we can put it right. If you have any concerns about the way we handle your information, you can also tell the Information Commissioner <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/handling/>.

(\*This includes data related to your health, racial or ethnic origin, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, sex life, sexual orientation or genetic/biometric data.)

Information regarding your complaint will be kept securely for 6 years following the last action on the case.

Our full Privacy Notice, which contains further information and details your rights (including withdrawing consent), can be found at: [insert link]



**KEELE UNVERSITY LEGAL ADVICE CLINIC**

**COMPLAINTS FORM**

You may use this form to make a suggestion or to make a formal complaint about Keele University Legal Advice Clinic.

We would like you to return this form as soon as possible.

**Your Name** …………………………………………………………………………..

**Address** …………………………………………………………………………...

 …………………………………………………………………………..

**Telephone** …………………………………………………………………………..

**Date of incident**

**Approximate time of incident**

**Suggestion / Complaint**

**What action would you like to be taken?**

**What times are convenient for you to have an appointment to discuss this?**