

# Guidelines for Students Lodging Complaints against Staff Members of the University

At our university, we value open communication and strive to provide a supportive and inclusive environment for all members of our community. We understand that concerns and issues may arise from time to time, and we are committed to addressing genuine concerns promptly and fairly:

1. These guidelines outline the process for students lodging complaints against staff members of the University, regardless of the nature of the complaint.
2. Students may first attempt to resolve the matter through discussion with the staff member(s) concerned, or with the relevant department or office.
3. If the issue cannot be resolved, students may submit their complaint to a designated email at [dst@ust.hk](mailto:dst@ust.hk) from their own university email account. The email should include the complainant's full name, contact information, and names of the subjects of complaint. Complaints not submitted through the complainant's own HKUST email account or without the complainant's real name will generally not be investigated.
4. The complainant should clearly and concisely describe the complaint, including dates, times, individuals involved, and any relevant details. It is essential that the complaint be specific and include supporting evidence or documents, as well as the names of witnesses, where available.
5. Upon receiving the email, the Dean of Students Office (**DSTO**) may contact the complainant for further information or, where appropriate, arrange a face-to-face interview to obtain statement or gather further evidence. Providing detailed, accurate, and truthful information is crucial for effective follow-up and investigation.
6. After an initial review of the matter and supporting evidence, if DSTO determines that the complaint is genuine and warrants further action, it will determine the appropriate handling for the complaint. This can range from informal resolution, summary assessment to full investigation by DSTO, relevant committee(s) / department(s) / office(s), or Office of the Provost. Various factors will be considered when determining the mode and extent of handling for each case, including the nature of the complaint, seriousness of the matter and the strength of the initial evidence, etc. Complaints falling within the scope of the University's other policies and procedures will be directed to the respective handling office or committee as required by those policies. DSTO will, where appropriate, consult other offices before deciding on the handling of the complaint.

7. The University retains the sole discretion in devising the most suitable way to handle each complaint based on the prevailing circumstances. DSTO's decision as to whether there is a genuine case, and the mode of handling, shall be final.
8. During investigation, the handling committee, department, office or personnel (the **Handler**) may, as appropriate, interview any individuals who may have information about the complaint or request information from them. The Handler may, where necessary, share with these individuals any information or evidence relating to the complaint to facilitate investigation. For example, for the subjects of the complaint to be fully aware of the allegations against them and to enable them to respond, the Handler may need to disclose to them all particulars of the complaint, including the identities of the complainants and the evidence. Whether such disclosure occurs will be determined at the Handler's discretion on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the relevant facts and circumstances of each case. The University may, but is not obliged to, disclose to the complainant, the accused and/or any witness involved the information it obtains during the investigation.
9. To avoid compromising the investigation, all personnel handling the complaint, as well as the complainants, subjects of the complaint and witnesses, must all observe the duty of confidentiality. None of them shall disclose any communications or details relating to the complaint procedures, including the existence of an investigation, the nature of complaint or identities of those involved, without the Handler's authorization. Breach of confidentiality may result in disciplinary actions.
10. It is crucial that all parties involved in the complaint procedures uphold the highest standards of truthfulness. If a complaint is found to be malicious, frivolous or vexatious, or if any party knowingly provide false information when bringing or defending a complaint, it constitutes serious misconduct which will result in disciplinary action.
11. The University may inform the complainant of the investigation outcome, if deemed appropriate. The decision reached at the conclusion of the investigation is final. For the avoidance of doubt, repeated complaints on the same matter or multiple complaints on substantially similar matters which have already been investigated upon may be considered frivolous and/or vexatious.
12. These Guidelines may be reviewed and/or amended by the University from time to time. Any updated version of these Guidelines will be posted on this website.