



Privy Council Office Guidance on Petitioning the Visitor

Background

In certain cases, if a member of the university's academic staff is aggrieved by an act or omission of a university, he or she may petition the Visitor for redress. The President of the Council exercises the visitor's jurisdiction on behalf of His Majesty The King concerning 16 Universities and Colleges. This note sets out information which should be useful for staff thinking of submitting a petition to the President of the Council in this role.

Changes to the Visitor's jurisdiction were made by the [Higher Education Act 2004](#). The Visitor no longer has any jurisdiction to consider complaints made by students or former students (or complaints made in respect of an application for admission), or from members of the academic staff in relation to an employment dispute. The Visitor's jurisdiction is limited to adjudicating on petitions from members of the university's academic staff on the interpretation and application of the institution's Charter, Statutes, Ordinances etc, provided the point at issue is not an employment dispute.

The Visitor has no jurisdiction concerning complaints by students or former students, or complaints in respect of an application for admission, regardless of the nature of the complaint. Student complaints are now dealt with by the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#) (OIA). Details of how to submit a complaint to OIA can be found on their website.

Submitting a Petition

The Visitor may consider a petition from a member of the academic staff of a qualifying institution (see list below) only if the matter has been raised internally within the institution and the petitioner has been informed that a final decision has been taken.

The Visitor's role is to review the application by the University of its own internal procedures in dealing with the petitioner's grievance. The Visitor will not normally intervene unless it can be shown that the University has failed to observe its own

rules or procedures; or that, although it has followed the proper procedures, it has reached a decision that no reasonable body (properly directing itself, and taking account of all relevant factors) could have arrived at.

If a preliminary examination indicates that there is a prima facie case the petition will be sent to the institution for its answer, on which the petitioner will have an opportunity to comment. Cases are normally determined on the papers.

Petitions should be addressed to:

The Clerk of the Council
Privy Council Office
Room G/04
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Where possible the Petition should be submitted by email to enquiries@pco.gov.uk and should be clearly marked "Petition to the Visitor".

Institutions for which the Lord President of the Council acts as Visitor

1. University of Birmingham
2. University of Bristol
3. University of Hull
4. Imperial College of Science Technology and Medicine
5. University of Keele
6. University of Leeds
7. University of Leicester
8. University of Liverpool
9. University of Nottingham
10. University of Reading
11. University of Sheffield
12. University of Southampton
13. University of Sussex
14. University of Wales

Note:

As above, the Visitor no longer has jurisdiction over student complaints. These should be submitted to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#).