

Academic Issues

Your Rights And Responsibilities As A Student

Details of what you can expect from the University and what it expects from you are available from a number of sources:

The Student Handbook

This is given to you at the start of the course and contains details on course related requirements, student regulations and procedures such as equal opportunities policy, disciplinary procedures, complaints policy, etc and matters relating to exam regulations, mitigating circumstances and academic appeals.

Your Course Handbook

This contains details of attendance requirements, course structure and content, resit information and the grades you need to progress into the following year.

University Website And The Intranet

Correspondence between you and the University

It is important that you become familiar with the Student handbook and your Course handbook and check the appropriate passages before embarking on discussions, disputes or appeals with the University.

These documents are often used by the Students' Union to assess the validity of your case. In any event, if you have any concerns regarding your course you should contact the Students' Union Vice President Education and Representation.

Course/Academic Staff Problems

Problems affecting groups of students

These could be problems relating to course structure, content or teaching methods and delivery, etc

These type of problems are often best dealt with collectively through the Student Course Representative (please contact the Student Programme Office to find an up to date list of Representatives).

Early in the year you will have an opportunity to elect a Course Representative. This person will represent your academic interests at Course Committees and Student Council, and may also take up group grievances informally with the relevant member of staff.

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, then you should contact the Students' Union Vice President Education and Representation for further advice and representation.

Individual Problems

These could be relationships with academic staff such as personal tutors, pathway leaders, supervisors, other students, etc.

If you have a problem or grievance, which is affecting your studies, you may wish to discuss the issue in confidence with your personal tutor or another tutor. They should be approachable and help you find a constructive solution to your problem.

However, we recognise that in the first instance you may not want to speak to someone who is connected with the course. You can also contact the following:

- Students' Union Vice President Education and Representation
- Counsellor at the Student Centre
- Chaplain at the Student Centre
- Students' Union Advice Unit.

If informal approaches fail to resolve the matter then you should consider taking formal action under the University's complaints procedure.

Financial Problems

Many students face some financial problems during their studies at the University. If your problems are so severe that they may place your studies in jeopardy, then you should contact the Advice Unit as soon as possible. We will check that you are receiving the maximum amount of funding from your LEA, any eligible welfare benefits, negotiate with creditors on your behalf (including the University). We can also advise you on applying to the University's Access to Learning Fund.

If you have had an exceptional financial crisis which has caused you to perform badly in an assessment or exam. e.g., repossession of home, then a written submission will be required for the Board or Examiners to consider.

Health problems affecting your studies

It is vital to speak to your personal tutor, pathway leader or head of department about any health problems, which arise because of ill health. They may be able to arrange coursework and assignment extensions and offer other practical ways of support. If you perform poorly in assessments because of a medical problem, it is essential to notify the Board of Examiners of the problem before the meeting of the Board and to include documentary evidence using the Mitigating Circumstances Form. These can be obtained from your faculty office or the Students' Union Vice President Education and Representation. If a valid reason is found then provision will be made for re-assessment according to the Academic Regulations.

Student Support Funding Whilst You Are Absent Through Illness

If you are absent for up to 60 days, your student loan and your grant (if applicable) should continue to be paid, provided that you have submitted sick notes from your GP to your department. If the illness lasts for more than 60 days your absence will be automatically notified to the LEA by the University of Bolton, but both the LEA and Student Loans Company have discretion to continue payments in exceptional circumstances.

You should contact the Advice Unit if you experience difficulties with funding whilst you are ill.

Missing Lectures, Seminars, Tutorials, Practicals, Presentations, Exams or Assessments Due To Illness

You must follow the University's instructions under the academic regulations outlined in the Student Handbook 2008-2009 if you are unable to attend any component of your course due to ill health.

If you are absent for 3 to 7 days then you should inform your tutor or Head of Department in writing detailing the nature of your illness. If you are unable to provide a written statement (for example you are in hospital) then you should telephone or ask someone to telephone on your behalf.

If you are absent for more than 7 days then you should obtain a sick note/medical certificate from your GP.

Absence From Exams Or Assessments

If possible you should speak to a tutor as soon as possible, preferably before the missed assessment or exam and obtain a medical certificate confirming that you were ill on the day of the exam or assessment. Otherwise you should submit a medical certificate as soon as possible after the exam.

If you do not follow this procedure then you risk failing the assessment or exam.

Feeling Unwell During An Exam

Tell the invigilator as soon as you feel unwell, ask your GP for a medical certificate confirming this and submit it to your department as soon as possible. Some students will sit exams or assessments even though they know they are ill, physically or mentally. This can be risky. If you really do want to take the assessment then speak to your tutor beforehand and obtain a sick note from your GP confirming your condition on the day in question.

If you perform badly and raise the issue of illness after you receive your results then it may be very difficult to get your marks changed.

Students With Disabilities

By law the University must produce a Disability Statement providing details of its policies and provisions for assisting students with disabilities. A copy of the Disability Statement and Code of Practice is available from Katie Jennings (Disability Advisor) in the Student Centre. Katie is a full time staff member and is available in the Student Centre, Chancellors Building. Contact the Student Centre for more details.

However, students who declare their disability on their UCAS form will automatically be sent a Disability Pack from the Student Centre, and will be invited to make contact with Katie Jennings prior to starting the course.

If you are disabled you may qualify for help in the form of:

A Disabled Students Allowance from your local LEA, which can help towards equipment, personal helpers, note takers, extra travel costs, etc.

Adjustments to the University's assessment and exam procedures such as allowing extra time in exams.

Adaption To University Premises

If this is a concern, you should contact the Student Centre at the earliest possible date, preferably prior to enrolment.

If you need advice or assistance in completing any welfare benefit forms you should contact the Students' Union Advice Unit, or if you need help with completing an Access to Learning Fund application form then you should contact the Advice Unit to discuss your eligibility and financial needs assessment.

If you think you may be dyslexic or have been referred by your tutor for a dyslexia screening, you should contact Katie Jennings as soon as possible.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism - this means 'copying' or presenting somebody else's work as your own, this can be either from published text such as book or the internet or another student's work. Penalties for plagiarism can be very severe, and can include failing your course!!

To Be Safe:

Whenever you use a quotation from a book or a website or reproduce another persons ideas (even in your own words) you should always note down the original source - this is known as referencing. Make sure you check with your tutor about how you should reference your work!!

If you are an international student and english is not your first language it can sometimes be tempting to copy things from books, journals and websites. This is ok, but you must reference your work before handing in your work for assessment.

Make sure you leave enough time before your deadline to check that everything in your work has been referenced.

Below are ideas on where to go for more information on plagiarism and where to find out how to reference your work correctly;

There are books available in the University library

Make sure you read your subject handbooks

Speak to your tutors

Visit <http://data.bolton.ac.uk/bissto/infoskills/useinfo/plagiarism.htm>

Academic Appeals

Please note: you are strongly advised to contact the Students' Union Vice President Education and Representation as soon as possible if you wish to submit an appeal to the Board of Examiners. Contact 01204 900850 or e-mail suvpedu@bolton.ac.uk

All students have the right to appeal against their results if they think that the Board of Examiners has made an incorrect decision. You must establish clear grounds for appeal. The

Students' Union VP Education and Representation who receives specialist training by the National Union of Students can make this assessment.

You cannot appeal simply because you either disagree with the examiners or think the decision is unfair.

Grounds For Appeal

Mitigating Circumstances

You must demonstrate that this adversely affected your performance. Examples are illness, personal problems, and crisis at a crucial time. Remember, you should have completed the Mitigating Circumstances form within 5 days after the exam or assessment in question, if this was not practicable then you will need to provide a satisfactory explanation for failing to disclose this information prior to the Board of Examiners meeting. Consult the Vice President of the Students' Union for advice.

Material Administrative Error, Procedural Irregularity, Breach of Regulations Which Cast Doubt On The Validity Of The Assessment Result

Examples where this can occur is if the invigilator stopped the exam too early, or the Board of Examiners have applied the regulations incorrectly.

Consult the Vice President of the Students' Union for advice.

Use Of Unfair Means:

If you feel that the sanction you have received is unreasonably severe.

Please remember, you cannot submit an appeal, which questions the academic judgment of an Exam Board. If you appeal on this basis, your appeal will be automatically rejected.

In any of the above events you should consult the Students' Union for advice and representation. Telephone 01204 900850 and speak to the President or simply drop in to the Students' Union.

Debts To The University

If you have any outstanding debts to the University such as tuition fees, halls or library fees and fines, you should treat these as priority debts, as the University may impose a number of sanctions to enforce payment. These can be withholding your exam results or degree or refusing you to re-enrol the following year. You should consult the Vice President if your exam results are being withheld due to outstanding debts.

You should contact the Finance office as soon as possible to make arrangements for payment or consider applying to the Access to Learning Fund during the academic year.

If you cannot resolve the problem, seek advice and assistance from the Advice Unit on 01204 900850.

Disciplinary Proceedings

Your responsibilities as a student are clearly defined in the Student Handbook, which is governed by a series of regulations dealing with different issues.

If you are subject to any proceedings especially plagiarism, cheating in exams or poor attendance, you are strongly advised to contact the Vice President of the Students' Union as soon as possible to advise and possibly represent you.

Remember, if you experience any problems connected with your course or as discussed in this section, it is important to contact us.

All the content of this section was correct at the time of creating this page, but as changes can occur during the year, you are advised to consult the Student Handbook 2008 first.

As your Union, we are experienced in dealing with such issues and can offer independent advice, support and representation on your behalf.