Complaints and academic appeals within the Department of Statistics

1. The University, the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division and the Department of Statistics all hope that provision made for students at all stages of their programme of study will make the need for complaints (about that provision) or appeals (against the outcomes of any form of assessment) infrequent.

2. However, all those concerned believe that it is important for students to be clear about how to raise a concern or make a complaint, and how to appeal against the outcome of assessment. The following guidance attempts to provide such information.

3. Nothing in this guidance precludes an informal discussion with the person immediately responsible for the issue that you wish to complain about (and who may not be one of the individuals identified below). This is often the simplest way to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

4. Many sources of advice are available within colleges, within departments and from bodies like Oxford University Students’ Union or the Counselling Service, which have extensive experience in advising students. You may wish to take advice from one of these sources before pursuing your complaint.

5. General areas of concern about provision affecting students as a whole should, of course, continue to be raised through the Graduate Liaison Committee or via student representation on the department’s committees.

Complaints

6.1 If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by the Department, then you should raise it with the Director of Graduate Studies (Professor Gesine Reinert in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms, and Professor Colin McDiarmid in Trinity Term) for graduate students. Within the department the officer concerned will attempt to resolve your concern/complaint informally.

6.2 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, then you may take your concern further by making a formal complaint to the University Proctors (http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/complaints.shtml). A complaint may cover aspects of teaching and learning (eg teaching facilities or supervision arrangements), or non-academic issues (eg support services, library services, university accommodation or university clubs and societies). A complaint to the Proctors should be made only if attempts at informal resolution have been unsuccessful. The procedures adopted by the Proctors for the consideration of complaints and appeals are described in the Proctors and Assessor’s Memorandum and the relevant Council regulations (http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/).

7. If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by your college, then you should raise it either with your college advisor or with the Senior Tutor or Tutor for Graduates (as appropriate). Your college will also be able to explain how to take your complaint further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of its consideration.

Academic appeals

8. An appeal is defined as a formal questioning of a decision on an academic matter made by the responsible academic body.
9. For taught graduate courses, a concern which might lead to an appeal should be raised with your college authorities and the individual responsible for overseeing your work. **It must not be raised directly with examiners or assessors.** If it is not possible to clear up your concern in this way, you may put your concern in writing and submit it to the Proctors via your college. As noted above, the procedures adopted by the Proctors in relation to complaints and appeals are on the web (http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/).

10. For the examination of research degrees, or in relation to transfer or confirmation of status, your concern should be raised initially with the Director of Graduate Studies. Where a concern is not satisfactorily settled by that means, then you, your supervisor, or your college authority may put your appeal directly to the Proctors.

11. Please remember in connection with all the cases in paragraphs 8-10 that:

(a) The Proctors are not empowered to challenge the academic judgement of examiners or academic bodies.
(b) The Proctors can consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed; i.e. whether there was a significant procedural administrative error; whether there is evidence of bias or inadequate assessment; whether the examiners failed to take into account special factors affecting a candidate’s performance.
(c) On no account should you contact your examiners or assessors directly.

12. The Proctors will indicate what further action you can take if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or appeal considered by them.