



BRADFIELD COLLEGE

Parental Complaints Procedure

Last reviewed: 13 September 2023

The College's procedures for dealing with complaints by pupils are published in the Pupil Handbook on the PARENT PORTAL of the College website.

Notice

In accordance with the Independent School Standards (April 2019), Bradfield's **Parental Complaints Procedure** is made available to (and may be invoked by) all parents of pupils, prospective pupils and past pupils (but only if the complaint was raised before the pupil left the College – there are separate arrangements in place for complaints arising from a permanent exclusion/expulsion). This procedure is published under POLICIES on the College website.

Statement of intent

1. The importance of high quality teaching and pastoral care lies at the heart of Bradfield's aim to provide each pupil an outstanding education for life.

Parental Concerns

2. If any parent has reservations about the quality of the academic and pastoral experience enjoyed by his/her child, then it is important that those reservations are articulated. The Parents' Handbook (Page 44, entitled **Parental Contact with College Staff**) explains how concerns and questions can be raised with the College which is committed to responding expeditiously to all such communications.

Parental Complaints

3. Occasionally, a parent may not be happy with the response given when a concern or question is raised. Under such circumstances the parent may wish to make a formal complaint to the College.

The complaint may be about some aspect of the College as a whole, for example: about some House or Department within the College; about some Activity provided by the College; about an individual member of the Bradfield staff; about the way some particular matter has been managed within Bradfield. Such a complaint might be made orally, by letter or by email.

Definition of a complaint

It constitutes a complaint if, <u>seeking action</u> by the College, a parent communicates formally with someone employed at Bradfield regarding some matter about which the parents is <u>unhappy</u> .
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Treatment of a complaint

4. If a parent makes a formal complaint it will be treated as an expression of honest dissatisfaction, dealt with expeditiously and in accordance with these procedures.

The complaint will be treated confidentially, in accordance with the College's **Confidentiality Policy** (outlined in the College **Pastoral Protocols: Information for Parents and Staff**). No pupil will be penalised as a result of his/her parent making a complaint in good faith.

In circumstances where a parent of a current pupil, prospective pupil or past pupil contacts an employee of the College to express persisting dissatisfaction about some matter previously mentioned informally (see § 2), the employee will make the existence of this **Parental Complaints Procedure** known to the parent and ensure that he/she knows where the document is published and how it is made available to those wishing to consult it.

Management of a Complaint: Stage 1 (Informal Resolution)

5. In accordance with paragraph 8.1 (d) of the Independent School Standards April 2019), the College will make efforts to ensure that complaints are resolved quickly and without recourse to formal procedures.
6. Unless the complaint is against the Housemaster/mistress, a parent wishing to complain about some problem (either real or perceived, or one persisting after a matter has been drawn to the College's attention in the manner discussed at § 2 above) should initially contact their son/daughter's Housemaster/mistress.

The Housemaster/mistress will acknowledge the complaint (normally on the day it is received and in every instance within 5 working days) and make a written record of it, noting:

- the date on which the complaint was received
- the name[s] of the parent[s] making the complaint
- the name of the son/daughter
- details of all points of concern and dissatisfaction identified by the parent[s]
- the date of the acknowledgement sent to the parent[s]

Once the complaint has been investigated, the Housemaster/mistress will write to the parent[s] outlining the conclusion of the enquiries and detailing their consequent actions. In many cases the matter will thus be resolved straightaway to the satisfaction of the parent[s].

If the Housemaster/mistress cannot resolve the matter alone, then he/she will consult the Second Master or one of the other Deputy Heads (see § 9 below).

7. If the complaint is against the Housemaster/mistress, a parent wishing to complain about some problem (either real or perceived or persisting after the matter has been drawn to the College's attention in the manner discussed at § 2 above) should initially contact the Second Master.

The Second Master will acknowledge the complaint (normally on the day it is received) and make a written record of it, noting:

- the date on which the complaint was received
- the name[s] of the parent[s] making the complaint
- the name of the son/daughter
- details of all points of concern and dissatisfaction identified by the parent[s]
- the date of the acknowledgement sent to the parent[s]

Once the complaint has been investigated, the Second Master will write to the parent[s] outlining the conclusion of the enquiries and detailing their consequent actions.

8. Complaints against the Second Master should be referred to the Headmaster; complaints against the Headmaster should be referred to the Warden.

In circumstances where either the Headmaster or the Warden is in receipt of a complaint, they will acknowledge its receipt and make a written record, noting:

- the date on which the complaint was received
- the name[s] of the parent[s] making the complaint
- the name of the son/daughter
- details of all points of concern and dissatisfaction identified by the parent[s]
- the date of the acknowledgement sent to the parent[s]

Once the complaint has been investigated, the Headmaster (or Warden) will write to the parent[s] outlining the conclusion of the enquiries and detailing their consequent actions.

9. If a Housemaster/mistress has to consult the Second Master or one of the other Deputy Heads (see § 6) then, once the complaint has been investigated, the Housemaster/mistress will write to the parent[s] outlining the conclusion of the enquiries and detailing their consequent actions.
10. In the course of investigating a complaint, a Housemaster/mistress, Deputy Head or the Second Master will consult or inform the Head of Department when the conduct or competence of a member of staff in the Department is the subject of the complaint.

The Head of Department will record the information, noting:

- the date on which he/she was informed of the complaint
- the name[s] of the parent[s] making the complaint
- details of all points of concern and dissatisfaction identified by the parent[s]

11. Should the complaint not be resolved within ten working days, or in the event that the Housemaster/mistress or Second Master fails to reach a resolution satisfactory to the parent[s], then the parent[s] will be entitled to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Management of a Complaint: Stage 2 (Formal Resolution)

12. In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 of the Independent School Standards (May 2019), the College will provide arrangements for the Headmaster to formally investigate complaints.

If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parent[s] should renew the complaint, writing to the Headmaster. After considering the complaint, the Headmaster will decide on the appropriate course of action.

13. In most cases, the Headmaster will meet the parent[s] to discuss the matter, normally within ten working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

In very exceptional circumstances (most obviously on occasions when he has already been involved in Stage 1 procedures – see § 8 above) the Headmaster will delegate his Stage 2 role to the Chief Operating Officer who will act on his behalf in §§ 13 – 16 following.

14. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.

In such circumstances, he will appoint an Investigating Officer, usually the Second Master or one of the Deputy Heads; the use of an Investigating Officer independent of the College is also possible. After investigation the Investigating Officer will produce a written report for the Headmaster. A copy of this report will be sent to the parent[s] making the complaint.

The Headmaster (and any Investigating Officer) will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

15. Once satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the Headmaster will then meet the parent[s] in the company of the Investigating Officer to discuss the complaint further. Wherever possible this meeting will take place within 20 working days of the initial complaint (§ 6 *et al.*)

A decision will be made and parent[s] will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will give the reasons for his decision.

16. Should the complaint not be resolved within 20 working days of the initial complaint, or in the event that the Headmaster fails to reach a resolution satisfactory to the parent[s], then the parent[s] will be entitled to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of this procedure.
17. Any deviation from the normal timescale for dealing with complaints that is outlined in this policy will only be the result of very exceptional circumstances which will be explained in detail in a written document sent to parents at the time.

Management of a Complaint: Stage 3 (Panel Hearing)

18. Where a complaint is not resolved at Stage 2 of this process, independently facilitated voluntary mediation will be offered the complainant as a potential route to resolution and closure.

In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 (f) of the Independent School Standards (April 2019), the College will also make provision for the complaint to be formally examined before a panel, if requested by the complainant.

The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

The Council of Bradfield will appoint the Panel members and in accordance with Paragraph 8.1 (g) of the Independent School Standards (April 2019), one member will be independent of the management and running of the College. Where this independent person is from a non-educational background a retired Head (from some school other than Bradfield College) may also be asked to provide the Panel with advice on any *strictly educational* matters under consideration.

19. If a parent requests that he convene a hearing of the Complaints Panel, the Warden, will then acknowledge the application and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as it is practicable for the Panel to be convened, and normally within 20 working days of the parent's request.
20. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint (or any related matter) be supplied in advance of the hearing.

Copies of such particulars will be supplied to all parties not later than three working days prior to the hearing.

21. In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 (h) of the Independent School Standards (April 2019) the parent[s] may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
22. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parental complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. An Investigating Officer independent of the College may be used in such circumstances.

23. After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Panel will make its findings and may make recommendations.

In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 (i) of the Independent School Standards (April 2019), the Panel will write to the parent[s] informing them of its findings and recommendations, and the reasons for them, normally within 10 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final.

The Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent in writing or otherwise given to the complainant parents and, where relevant, the person[s] against whom the complaint was made. They will also be provided for inspection at the College to members of the Bradfield College Council and the Headmaster.

Timescale for the Management of a Complaint

24. In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 (c) of the Independent School Standards (April 2019), the College undertakes to address complaints expeditiously and within a clear time frame.

All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days, if received during term time and as soon as practicable during College vacations.

Other than in the most exceptional circumstances, the first two stages of the procedure pursuing resolution of a complaint lodged during term time will be completed within 30 working days. The first two stages of the procedure will be completed as soon as practicable when a complaint is lodged during a vacation and their completion will not be delayed beyond 20 working days once term has resumed.

The third stage of the procedure will also be completed expeditiously and in the defined timescale (see §§ 17-25).

Record Keeping

25. In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 (j) of the Independent School Standards (April 2019) a written record will be kept of all formal complaints and the action taken by the school in response to them (whether upheld or not). The Central Complaints Register will be maintained by the Headmaster Office.
26. Housemasters/mistresses, the Deputy Head (Pastoral), the Deputy Head (Academic) and the Second Master will maintain individual registers of complaints received at the initial stage of the Complaints Procedure (§§ 6-8).

Each half term the Headmaster's Office will write to the Second Master, Deputies, Head of Departments and Housemasters/mistresses requesting details of all parental complaints received over the previous half term.

The College also recognises that occasionally a Stage 1 complaint may arise outside the provision of this Complaints procedure. Additionally, therefore, the Headmaster's Office will write to Heads of Department, the Medical Centre Lead Nurse, the Examinations Officer and the Adjutant of the CCF. The information requested will be this:

- the date on which the formal complaint was received
- the name[s] of the parent[s] making the complaint

- the name of the son/daughter
- the name of the initial recipient of the complaint
- whether the complaint is resolved or on-going
- the stage at which the complaint was resolved (formal or informal resolution)

The information returned will be held alongside the Central Complaints Register.

Publication of the number of complaints

27. The Central Complaints Register of the preceding academic year will be reviewed by the Headmaster at the beginning of each academic year, to determine the number of complaints requiring formal resolution (“Stage 2 Complaints”) received by the College during this period.
28. In accordance with Paragraph 7.3 (f) of the Independent School Standards (April 2019), the College will make available to parents of current and prospective pupils the number of complaints requiring formal resolution registered under this ***Parental Complaints Procedure*** in the preceding academic year (see § 29). This figure will be published on the College website and will also be available to the Independent Schools’ Inspectorate and, on request, to the Chief Inspector of Schools and H.M. Secretary of State.

Number of complaints received under the formal procedure during the preceding academic year (2022/23) - 3

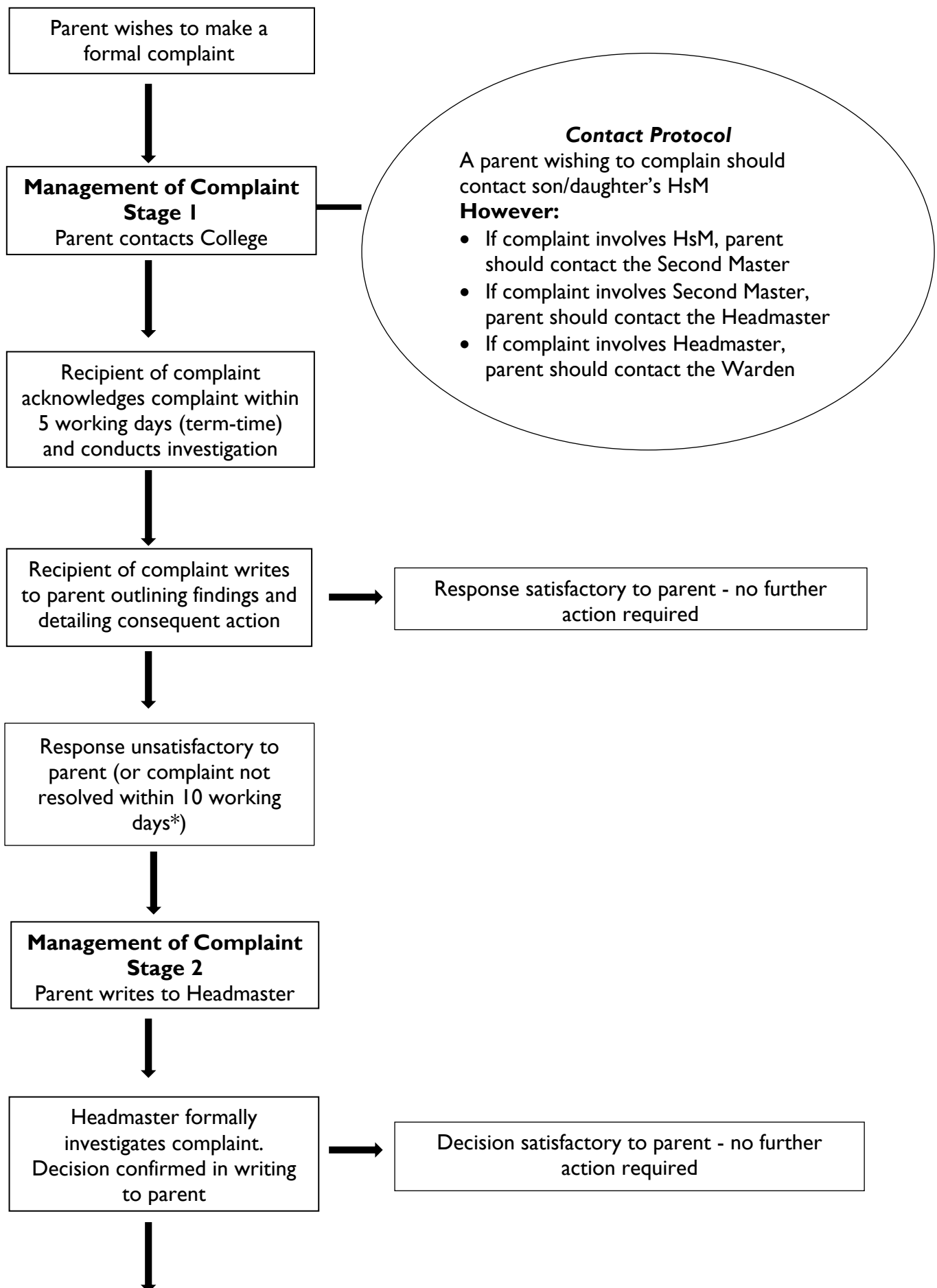
Parents’ entitlements

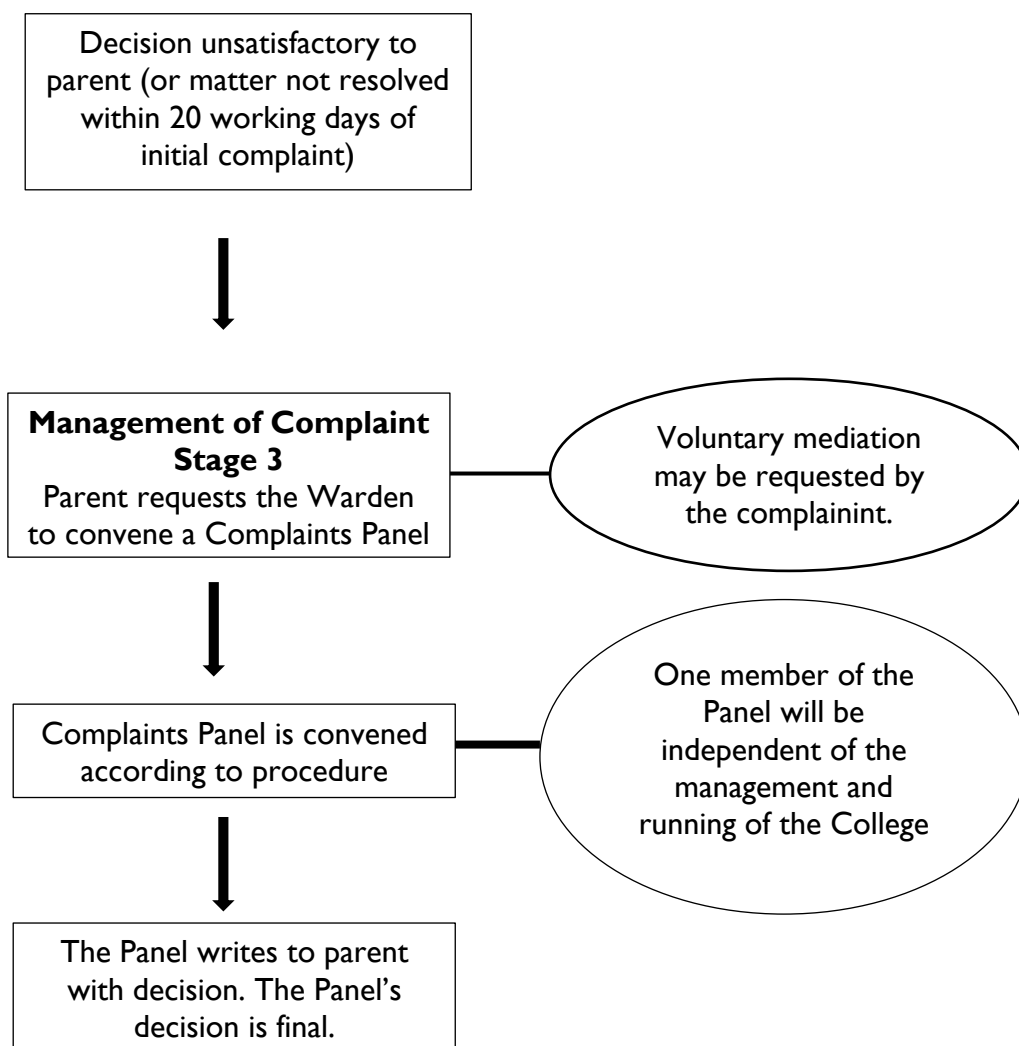
29. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required by Paragraph 7.3 (g) of the Independent School Standards (April 2019), where disclosure is required in the course of the College’s inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.
30. Parents are entitled to report any concerns about the boarding provision at the College to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1 9HA (Tel: 020 7600 0100), concerns@isi.net.
31. Parents of pupils resident overseas may pursue a complaint through an agreed representative, particularly if there are language barriers.

Additional information

32. This ***Parental Complaints Procedure*** is also available in hard copy, as a discrete document, from a pupil’s Housemaster/mistress or from the Second Master’s Office.
33. This ***Parental Complaints Procedure*** will likewise be made available, on request, to the Inspectorate, the Chief Inspector and H.M. Secretary of State.

Process for dealing with Parental Complaints:





** Other than in the most exceptional circumstances, the first two stages of the procedure pursuing resolution of a complaint lodged during term time will be completed within 30 working days. The first two stages of the procedure will be completed as soon as practicable when a complaint is lodged during a vacation and their completion will not be delayed beyond 20 working days once term has resumed.*