

Guidance on the role of a friend or supporter

This guidance is intended for all students currently involved in formal University Procedures. It sets out the circumstances where students may ask a friend or supporter to accompany them to formal meetings, who may act as a 'friend or supporter', and what role they will take in formal meetings.

What procedures does it cover?

It covers all formal University Procedures, including but not limited to:

- Academic Queries and Appeals
- Assessment Irregularities
- Complaints and Resolution
- Disciplinary
- Fitness to Practise
- Support to Study

Who can be a friend or supporter?

It is the decision of the Student involved in the formal University Procedure whether or not they choose to bring along a friend or supporter to any formal meetings, and who they choose to fill that role. You are normally only permitted to bring along one person to act as a friend or supporter.

For Disciplinary and Complaints and Resolution procedures, your friend or supporter must not be connected to the case (for example, they cannot be a witness).

You can ask someone from within the University to act as your friend or supporter (for example, your Personal Tutor or PhD Supervisor, a friend from your course, or someone from the Student Advice Centre of the Students' Union), or you may decide to ask someone external to the University (such as a partner or family member).

In certain circumstances – for example if your programme of study leads to professional registration, or if you are the subject of a Fitness to Practise investigation – it may be appropriate to invite a Trade Union Representative to attend the meeting as your friend or supporter.

You may, if you wish, bring a member of the legal profession as your friend or supporter. However, you should be aware that this is normally unnecessary, may be very expensive for you, and could delay proceedings without altering the facts of the case. Free support and advice is available from the Student Advice Centre of the Students' Union.

What role will the friend or supporter take?

The friend or supporter is there to provide you with moral, emotional and wellbeing support throughout the formal University Procedure. It is the responsibility of the Student to ask someone to act as their friend or supporter and to provide them with relevant details of the case.

Your friend or supporter will have no formal role in the meeting and cannot normally act as your advocate (for example, by representing you or answering questions on your behalf) or ask questions of witnesses.

They will be asked to state their name and relationship to you at the beginning of any meeting they attend, and they may be asked to contribute a comment at the end of the meeting.

Anyone acting as a friend or supporter is expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and polite manner and must not interrupt the proceedings. If there are interruptions, or your friend or supporter behaves in a way that is perceived to be discourteous, the meeting may be adjourned and you may be asked to select a different friend or supporter to accompany you to the meeting once it is reconvened.