

THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

We are committed to providing an excellent education to our students from enrolment to graduation. In addition, we are committed to ensure high quality services to not only our students, but to anyone affected by them.

We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- the quality and standard of any service we provide
- the quality of our facilities and learning resources
- the quality and standards of academic services and personal support services available to you
- the quality and standards of administrative processes
- unfair treatment by a student or staff member.

Your complaint may involve more than one of [the University's] services or be about someone working on our behalf.

What can't I complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- a request under freedom of information or data protection legislation
- requests for compensation from the University
- things that are covered by academic appeals, such as academic judgement and decisions
- an issue which is being, or has been, considered by a court or tribunal
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision following an investigation. If you are still not satisfied, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for an independent review of the complaint.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

Who can complain?

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by the services of the University can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. If you are making a complaint on someone else's behalf you will need their personal written consent. Please also read the section on 'Getting help to make your complaint'.

How do I complain?

You can complain in person, by phone, in writing, email via our complaints form.

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff within the department you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about, or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

What will happen if I submit a complaint?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint (your case officer). Our complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage one: Frontline Resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem. Where possible, your concerns should be raised with the relevant staff member, tutor, university representative or school office. This can be done face-to-face, by phone, in writing or by email.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next. If you choose to, you can take your complaint to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure. You may choose to do this immediately or shortly after you get our initial decision.

Stage two: Investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation. We have a complaint form, which will help you to state your complaint clearly to us. Although we will also accept complaints that are made in person or on the phone, we encourage you to complete the complaint form in the interests of clarity and in order to best assist the investigation process.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

The SPSO's contact details are:

SPSO
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

SPSO
Freepost EH641
Edinburgh
EH3 0BR

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online: www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

Mobile site: <http://m.spsso.org.uk>

Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We

can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your written consent to complain for you.

The Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) can provide independent advice, assistance or support to students in regard to complaints. Staff in the Information and Advice Centre within AUSA can provide assistance including:

- Assisting students in deciding whether a complaint is the most appropriate course of action or whether some other approach may be more appropriate;
- Provide advice on how the complaints procedure works;
- Assistance with and comment on draft complaint submissions to help students ensure their complaint is clear and comprehensive.