



Title: Student Complaints
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2N: Student Complaints Policy

Introduction

1. The University is committed to providing a fulfilling, rewarding and enjoyable learning experience for all its students and endeavours to provide an excellent standard and quality of service in all its activities.
 2. There are several ways in which students may put across their views about their learning experience and the services provided by the University. These include direct contact with members of academic or service staff, a system of student representation at course level, student membership of University committees and student feedback surveys at course and unit levels and in relation to services.
 3. Occasionally, an individual or a group of students may feel dissatisfaction with their learning experience or with the services provided by the University and will want to bring this to the attention of the University. It is expected that students would try to resolve such dissatisfaction through the mechanisms outlined above in paragraph 2 before calling upon the formal Student Complaint Policy.
 4. The University defines a complaint as:

'An expression of concern about the University's academic provision or a related service, or about the actions or a lack of action by the University, its partners or its staff.'
- See Annex 1 for examples of types of complaints that can be considered under this policy and Annex 2 for a list of types of complaints not covered by this policy.
5. The Student Complaint Policy applies to students currently registered at Southampton Solent University or who have completed their course/unit in the last month. The University will not normally accept complaints by a third party on behalf of a student. Where a group of students wishes to make a collective complaint, a spokesperson must be nominated as the point of contact and main representative of the group.
 6. Students studying with a Southampton Solent University partner should make use of the partner institution's Student Complaints procedure in the first instance.
 7. The University will have in place support mechanisms and guidance for staff to enable local and early informal resolution to complaints.

8. Help and guidance on how to make a complaint is available from a student Advisor in the Students 1st Information Centre, the Student Hub and the Students' Union Academic Caseworker.

9. Where a matter raised under the Student Complaint Policy needs to be referred to an alternative University Policy or Procedure (e.g. a serious complaint alleging misconduct of a member of staff may need to be dealt with under the University Staff Disciplinary Procedure) the student will be advised.

10. Complaints must be made in a timely manner, usually within a month of the incident/event. Where a complaint is received outside of this timeframe, students will be required to provide an explanation as to why they did not raise their concerns at the appropriate time. Consideration of a complaint received outside of the deadline will be at the discretion of the Head of Student Achievement (or nominee)

11. The Student Complaint Policy is based on the concept of reasonable behaviour and expects students to submit any complaint in a responsible manner. Where the University receives a frivolous or vexatious appeal, the University will terminate consideration of the matter and inform the student of the reasons for doing so and any right of appeal against that decision. Examples of such complaints include:

- complaints which are obsessive, harassing, or repetitive
- insistence on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and/or unrealistic, unreasonable outcomes
- insistence on pursuing what may be meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value
- malicious or knowingly untrue.

12. Where a complaint is found to be malicious or knowingly untrue the University will refer the matter to the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

13. The University will ensure that student complaints will be:

- i. treated seriously, fairly, transparently and with impartiality;
- ii. addressed within a reasonable timescale;
- iii. fully investigated;
- iv. dealt with sensitively, in confidence and without fear of recrimination;
- v. considered within the framework of the University's policies and practices; and
- vi. dealt with having due regard to UK legislation.

14. The aim of the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure is to reach a conclusion which all parties find reasonable in the circumstances.

15. In determining whether a complaint is justified or not the standard of proof is on the 'balance of probability' rather than 'beyond all reasonable doubt'.

16. Academic Services will maintain a record of recommendations that arise from student complaints and monitor school/service responses to those recommendations.

17. An annual report on those complaints relating to academic matters will be provided to Academic Board.

18. An annual report on non-academic complaints will be provided to Management Board.

19. Summaries of suitably redacted appeal and complaint outcomes, together with decision of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, will be circulated to the Student Union and Directors of Schools and Services for further dissemination and reflection as appropriate.

Annex 1 Examples of types of complaint

1. Concerns about the delivery of courses and related services (e.g. standard of supervision and tuition received, assessment arrangements) if these are unable to be resolved by the relevant Course/Programme Committee.
2. Shortfalls in standards of service and/or failure to apply procedures in relation to Halls accommodation and service departments of the University.
3. Failure to meet obligations including those outlined in prospectuses, course/student handbooks and correspondence from the University.
4. Misleading information in prospectuses or in advertising or promotional material.
5. Complaints over any aspect of a student's experience at the University in relation to communication with and service delivery of administrative or support services.
6. Complaints concerning discrimination in contravention of the University's equality and diversity policies.

Annex 2 Areas not covered by the Complaints Policy

The Student Complaint Policy does not cover complaints that relate to:

- i. **Assessment** - please refer to section 2M of the Academic Handbook, Academic Appeal Policy;
- ii. The **outcomes of disciplinary action** - please refer to the student disciplinary procedure/ 'Halls contract' for appeal procedure;
- iii. Reporting of **faults in Hall** - please refer to the resident comment form for accommodation issues;
- iv. **Admissions** - please refer to section 2J of the Academic Handbook, The admission and recruitment of students to courses leading to academic awards, paragraph 64;
- v. **The Solent Students' Union** - please refer to the Students' Union Complaints Procedure;
- vi. The **behaviour of another student** - in such instances students should inform a relevant member of staff who will consider whether to refer to the Student Disciplinary Procedure; and
- vii. Complaints about **the local community** - in such instances students should communicate with the relevant local public authorities.