**The University of Stirling Students’ Union**

**Complaints Procedure**

**A Guide for Students**

As a Students’ Union we are committed to providing an excellent experience and high quality service to all our members’ through the activities and services we provide. 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 guide describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. A copy of the full complaint policy can be accessed at www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/aboutus/governanceandplanning/

**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 service
* failure to provide a service
* the quality of facilities
* treatment by or attitude of a student officer, staff member, student or contractor
* inappropriate behaviour by a student officer, staff member, student or contractor
* the failure of the Students’ Union to follow an appropriate administrative process
* dissatisfaction with the Students’ Union’s policy, although it is recognised that policy is set at the discretion of the Students’ Union, this does not include democratically approved policy.

Your complaint may involve more than one of the above services/departments 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 for compensation only
* a response to an invitation to provide feedback through a formal mechanism such as a questionnaire or committee membership will generally not be treated as a complaint
* an insurance claim
* an issue which is being, or has been, considered by a court or tribunal
* an attempt to have a complaint reconsidered where the Students’ Union’s procedure has been completed and a decision has been issued
* a grievance by a member of staff which is eligible for handling through the grievance procedure

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you, please just contact us for more information and guidance.

**Who can complain?**

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by the services of the Students’ Union can make a complaint to us. If you are not able to complain in person you may nominate someone to act on your behalf. You must provide us with your written consent to liaise with your representative. 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 or email using 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 so that they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

* your full name, address and contact details
* as much information 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 issue arising, 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 happens when I have complained?**

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. 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. The complaint form and any supporting documents will be seen by the person investigating your complaints, by anyone named in the complaint and by relevant staff in the department(s) being complained about.

When using Stage 2 we will:

* acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days and tell you who is dealing with your complaint
* 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.

Stage 2 complaints should be submitted to theunion@stir.ac.uk or in writing to:

The Chief Executive

The University of Stirling Students’ Union

University of Stirling

Robbins Centre

Stirling

FK9 4LA

**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 Office of the Scottish Charity Register (OSCR) to look at it.

OSCR can only investigate complaints where it has the legal power to do so.  This covers inquiries into cases where:

* the trustees are not acting in accordance with the governing document or charity law
* it appears that misconduct in the charity may be putting assets at risk
* the charity's income is not being used for its stated charitable purposes
* the way in which the charity is administered is detrimental to its beneficiaries or causes served
* an organisation is calling itself a charity when it is not.

OSCR does not regulate every aspect of a charity's business.  Those matters that may not be appropriate for OSCR to deal with include:

* employment issues; including those dealt with by [employment tribunals](http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/courts-and-tribunals/tribunals/employment/index.htm)
* issues relating to the quality of service provided by a charity; dealt with through the charity's own complaints system
* disputes within a charity or between a charity and a third party unless OSCR has good reason to believe that the dispute is putting charity assets at risk or endangering the charity's ability to meet its charitable objects
* complaints against Registered Social Landlords (RSLs); dealt with by [The Scottish Housing Regulator](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/shr_homepage.hcsp)
* concerns about policies pursued or actions taken by the trustees within the law and the provisions of the charity's governing document or when another organisation is best placed to deal with the concern.

**Getting help to make your complaint**

As the Students’ Union is here to support students, we can assist those considering making a complaint. The Students’ Union has specific staff with experience of supporting student through complaints and can:

* help you decide whether making a complaint is the best course of action, or whether another procedure may be more appropriate
* explain how the complaint procedure works, and what the potential outcomes may be
* read drafts of any correspondence you write to the Students’ Union (including complaint forms), to help you make your case as clearly as possible
* support you at any meetings you attend with Students’ Union staff in relation to your complaint if requested.

The main staff contact is the Academic Representation and Development Coordinator who can be contact at:

The University of Stirling Students’ Union

The Robbins Centre

The University of Stirling

FK9 4LA

01786 467166

theunion@stir.ac.uk

Should your complaint be in relation to this member of staff and you wish to seek support from the Students’ Union you could contact the Chief Executive for further information.

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all students. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another format, such as large font, or Braille, please contact us either by e-mail at theunion@stir.ac.uk or in writing to:

The Complaints Investigations Co-ordinator

The University of Stirling Students’ Union

University of Stirling

Robbins Centre

Stirling

FK9 4LA