

Complaints

This leaflet explains the University's regulations regarding making a complaint. This is intended as an outline only. For full details go to Rules and Regulations on ShuSpace and then scroll down to other codes and policies.

Note that your faculty will also have an informal complaints procedure which you should usually use before taking formal action. You can find details on the faculty's virtual reception.

WHAT COMPLAINTS ARE COVERED?

The University defines a complaint as any specific concern about teaching-related or service-related provision. Complaints can also be made regarding abusive behaviour by staff or other Hallam students, health and safety issues, and unauthorised disclosure of confidential information. However some complaints may concern matters which may be criminal offences and which would be more properly dealt with through law enforcement agencies. Some examples of eligible complaints include:

- Teaching and facilities
- Placement procedures
- Maladministration
- Harassment
- Disability discrimination
- Supervision of research

Sometimes there is confusion between the Complaints Procedure and the Appeals Procedure. The Appeals procedure should only be used when students believe they have suitable grounds for requesting a review of an assessment decision made by an Awards Assessment Board, Academic conduct panel or Extenuating Circumstances panel. If you are in any doubt, you should seek advice immediately.

Complaints should normally be brought within a "reasonable period" or of the incident or problem occurring, or within six months of the complainant ceasing to be a student.

WILL I BE DISADVANTAGED IF I MAKE A COMPLAINT?

No. Students will not be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint in good faith i.e. neither frivolous nor malicious.

HOW WILL THE UNIVERSITY TREAT MY COMPLAINT?

- At each formal stage of the procedure the student has right of access to relevant information and documents, subject to certain considerations such as privacy, confidentiality and the reasonable interests of third parties.
- At any meeting held at any formal stage the student has the right to be accompanied by one other person.
- Where a complaint is upheld, whether through an informal process or the formal procedure, a course of action to put things right (if possible) will be determined and notified as part of the decision. If it is not possible to put things right compensation may be considered if appropriate.
- The University has a duty to act fairly towards everyone involved, including any person against whom a complaint is made.

HOW DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT?

Informally

Where appropriate, students are advised to use the informal mechanisms for resolving concerns before they use the formal complaints procedure. A written statement should be available in each Faculty stating the procedures in place for resolving issues informally and this will include an indication of whom to approach. If this statement is not clearly visible, ask at the Faculty Office to see it.

If your complaint is about an individual, you might approach the member of staff concerned, or designated member of staff where it is a resource/service-related problem. If this is difficult or has previously been unsuccessful, you may be able to approach a more senior member of staff to pursue an informal resolution. You have joint responsibility with the staff member to resolve the problem by mutual agreement, if possible. Most concerns can be resolved informally.

Some matters are too serious to be dealt with informally, such as abusive behaviour, some health and safety issues, and unauthorised disclosure of confidential information and so you may be able to go straight to the formal procedures.

Formally

You can use the formal procedures if there is repeated cause for complaint that has not been resolved by informal approaches or where there has been a single instance which is so serious as to render

informal approaches insufficient. This includes abusive behaviour, actions likely to cause injury to or impair safety of students, unauthorised disclosure of confidential information to a third party.

Stage 1

Complete form SC1 and send it together with any evidence to the relevant Dean. In the case of **teaching-related problems** this will be the Executive Dean of your faculty. In the case of **service-related problems**, you can obtain the name of the appropriate person from your Faculty Office. If your complaint is against the Dean, go straight to Stage 2 of the procedure. The Dean or nominee decides whether the Complaints Procedure is appropriate, whether it can be resolved informally and, if so, how.

Within three working days the Dean will send you an acknowledgement that will outline who will be responsible for investigating the complaint.

What happens if the complaint is upheld by the University?

If the complaint is upheld at any stage, appropriate redress will be determined and notified as part of the decision. The University sees the most appropriate form of redress as involving an apology and speedy removal of the cause of complaint. This might be, for example, ensuring the prompt return of marked work.

What happens if the complaint is not upheld?

You will be notified of the reason for the decision not to uphold the complaint. If you feel that the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved at this stage, you can move to stage 2 of the procedure. There are time limits by which you must submit a stage 2 complaint.

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, you may refer the matter to Stage 2, but you have to do this **within ten working days** of receiving the response. Complete form SC2 reporting the outcome of Stage 1 and saying why you do not consider the matter to have been resolved satisfactorily. Only complaints already raised at stage 1 can be considered at stage 2. You may submit, and comment on, any evidence collected by the Dean at stage one. Submit the SC2 to the Vice Chancellor. Within three working days the Vice Chancellor or nominee will send you an acknowledgement that will outline who will be investigating.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

If you think that your complaint has not been resolved by the University you can apply to the OIA Student Complaints Scheme. You must go through Stage 1 and 2 Complaints or Appeals procedures first and apply to the OIA within 3 months of exhausting Stage 1 and 2. The OIA operates an independent student complaints scheme, and there is no charge. You must apply using a Scheme Application Form, which is available from:

OIA, Third Floor
Kings Reach
38 – 50 Kings Road
Reading
RG1 3AA

Tel: 0118 959 9813
www.oiahe.org.uk

Further advice is available from:

Advice Centre

The HUBS
Paternoster Row
Sheffield
S1 2QQ
Tel: 0114 225 4148
Fax: 0114 225 4943
Email: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk
Web: www.hallamunion.org/advice

Student & Learning Services

Sheffield Hallam University
City Campus:
5th Floor, Owen Building
Tel: 0114 225 3813
Collegiate Crescent Campus
Heart of the Campus
Tel: 0114 225 2491