

Quick Guide to the University's Complaints Procedure: Stage 1 Complaints

Information and Guidance is available on the Senate Office website under 'Information for Staff – Complaints' www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/studentcodes/staff/complaintsstaff/.

All staff are required to be aware of this Procedure, which was introduced on 14 August 2013. The terms of the Complaints Procedure have been set by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and compliance is a condition of the SFC Funding Agreement.

- The Procedure has two stages: Stage 1 'frontline resolution' (handled locally) and Stage 2 'investigation' (managed by Senate Office, investigated by an appointed investigating officer).
- We are required to provide the University's response to complaints within five working days (at Stage 1) and within 20 working days (at Stage 2). Therefore it is very important that when a complaint is received action is taken promptly.

1. What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as: 'An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more individuals about the standard of service, action or lack of action by or on behalf of the University.'

A complaint is NOT:

- a first time request for a service;
- an issue that should be dealt with under another procedure (e.g. an academic appeal, a staff Grievance) [See Further information on SO website at: '[Which Procedure should I use?](#)'];
- issues raised through routine feedback exercises (e.g. questionnaires, Annual Monitoring, Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings).

The Procedure states that a complaint does not need to be in writing, so you may receive a complaint by telephone or in person.

For further information on what constitutes a complaint please see SO website: '[What is a complaint?](#)'

2. I have received a complaint but I don't think it can be addressed in five working days

You may consider that the complaint is so complex that it cannot be resolved within five working days. For example, it may be obvious that several people will need to be consulted before an appropriate response can be provided or there is a large amount of documentation to be considered. In this case, you can seek an extension to ten days under Stage 1 or the complaint should be referred immediately to Stage 2 of the Procedure. Please contact the Senate Office by e-mailing complaints@glasgow.ac.uk or by phoning x 3292.

3. I am not the best person to respond to the complaint

The Complaints Procedure allows a complaint to be made to any member of staff. The person who receives the complaint therefore may not be best placed to address it. However, if the complaint has been made to you, you must identify who should deal with it and agree with that person that you will refer the complaint to them. It is not sufficient to tell the complainant that he or she needs to raise the complaint with someone else. If you are not sure who should deal with the complaint, discuss it with your line manager.

4. I am the appropriate person to handle the complaint. What should I do?

The emphasis of Stage 1 of the procedure is swift resolution. With a deadline of only five working days for addressing the complaint, the first step is to be sure that you understand the complaint and the remedy being sought. If not, check with the complainant. There may be several elements to the complaint so you may need input from colleagues who know more about what happened or who will be able to advise what normal procedures are and what would be reasonable. Consult any relevant documentation. Reach a view on whether the complaint is justified. If something has gone wrong, assess what should have happened, whether any remedy or an apology should be offered and whether action needs to be taken to avoid similar situations occurring in the future.

Please be aware that complainants acting on behalf of students will require their permission to be taken forward under the complaints procedure, which can be either sent to you in a signed letter or through a student email account and should include the student identification number. Please also note that the deadline for your response is calculated five working days from receipt of the third party mandate.

If the complaint includes an allegation regarding inappropriate behaviour of a student or staff member (discrimination, harassment, bullying etc), you should first seek guidance from a member of the Senate Office (SO) complaints team (see Section 7 below). Senate Office staff can confirm details of relevant University policies (Equality and Diversity, Dignity at Work and Study) and provide general advice in terms of the handling the complaint. Senate Office staff will be able to advise whether it might be more appropriate to address the matter should be addressed through another University procedure (Student Conduct, Staff Grievance etc).

It is also important to ensure that both students and staff members are made aware of the full range of advice and support services available to them.

Students should be encouraged to seek [advice and support through the SRC Advice Centre](#) (Including specific guidance for students about [bullying and harassment](#) and the University's [Complaints Procedure](#)), [Counselling and Psychological Services](#) and the Senate Office complaints team.

Advice and support is also available to any member of staff who is the subject of a complaint through their line manager, colleague and through [guidance](#) on the Senate Office website, which includes details of services offered by the University and external organisations. Specific guidance for staff accused of harassment and bullying is also available [online](#).

There is also a [Harassment Volunteer Network](#) which complements existing support structures to help students and staff members gain a better understanding of their rights and options.

5. **I have reached a conclusion in relation to the complaint. What should I do now?**

You should report your conclusion to the complainant. The Complaints Procedure says that this does not have to be in writing. This reflects the aim to address complaints as swiftly as possible. However, if you report in person or by phone, you should follow this up in writing (by post or e-mail), addressing the issues raised, with a summary of your conclusions. You should also state the outcome of your findings (complaint is not upheld, some aspects of the complaint are upheld, or all aspects of the complaint are upheld).

While we recognise that staff members might have concerns regarding potential legal implications of providing an apology, when a complaint, is upheld or partially upheld, it is the University's policy to apologise and provide an appropriate remedy.

The SPSO has provided advice to ensure an apology is genuine, meaningful and effective:

www.spsso.org.uk/sites/spsso/files/communications_material/leaflets_buj2011_March_SPSO%20Guidance%20on%20Apology.pdf

You can also make recommendations for service enhancement to ensure that the complaint issue(s) do not reoccur in the future.

In reporting the outcome to a complainant, you must advise them that if they are not satisfied with the outcome they have the right to escalate the matter to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.

The template of a [letter](#) reporting the outcome and giving advice about Stage 2 is available on the 'Information for Staff' section of the Senate Office website.

6. **Log a stage 1 complaint**

It is a requirement of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman that the University keeps a record of all complaints. When you have responded to a Stage 1 complaint, please complete and submit the online [form](#) which is available on the SO website. (You may be asked to log in using your GUID.) You will need to provide details of the complainant, the issues raised, the outcome (which in addition to options outlined above includes: complaint is withdrawn; out of time; and the complaint has been referred to another procedure), when the complaint was received and when the response was provided. Please submit the form together with any relevant documents (e.g. letter/e-mail reporting/confirming outcome, complaint form – if one was submitted). The record will be held confidentially in Senate Office and the information provided will be used to fulfil our reporting requirements. If you have any problems logging the complaint, please call Mr Pete Murphy on extension 3292.

7. **Contacts and Information**

Senate Office website (select from *Appeals, Conduct and Complaints*):

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/studentcodes/staff/complaints/

Generic e-mail address for complaints-related correspondence:

complaints@glasgow.ac.uk

Or contact: Clare Barnes (x 2863) Pete Murphy (x 3292)
Mhairi Evans (x 4247)