

The University of Strathclyde complaints handling procedure – a guide for students

The University of Strathclyde is committed to providing an excellent education and high quality services to all students from enrolment to graduation.

The University values complaints and uses the information from them to help improve services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with any of the University's services, please tell us. This leaflet describes the complaints handling procedure and how to make a complaint. Full information on the University's complaints handling procedure is available at:

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/contactus/complaintsprocedure/>

What is a complaint?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about an action or lack of action by the University 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 University service;
- the quality of 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; or
- 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 only;

- an academic appeal against a progress or admission decision;
- an issue which is being, or has been, considered by a court or tribunal;
- an attempt to reopen a complaint where we have already given our final decision following an investigation; or
- information received through routine feedback mechanisms such as responses to questionnaires or committee meetings.

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. The University encourages individuals who are dissatisfied to approach us directly; however, you may ask someone to make a complaint on your behalf. (e.g. a representative from the Advice Hub, a friend or a family member) In this case the complaint **must** be accompanied by a **signed** statement from you confirming that the person is acting on your behalf.

How do I complain?

You can complain in person, by phone, in writing or email. It is easier for us to resolve a complaint if you make it as soon as you become aware of the issue and directly to the service concerned. Please talk to a member of our staff within the area of the University you are complaining about so they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name, contact details and matriculation number
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you would like the matter to be resolved.

A Privacy Notice explaining how we will use your information and your rights under legislation can be viewed at:

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/dataprotection/>

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 happens when I have complained?

Our complaints handling procedure has two stages:

Stage one – frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and as close to the service being complained about as possible. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation, if something has clearly gone wrong, along with immediate action to resolve the problem. Where possible, you should raise your concerns with a relevant staff member in the department/service area where the issue arose. 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, at any stage, we judge that the issues raised warrant more detailed consideration, we may decide to investigate the complaint under our Stage 2 procedure (see below).

If you are not satisfied with the response 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 handling procedure. You may choose to do this immediately or shortly after you get our initial decision. **We recommend that you wait no longer than 2 weeks before letting us know if you wish to take your complaint to Stage 2.**

Stage two – investigation

Stage 2 deals with complaints that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation. The University has a Stage 2 complaint form, which will help you to state your complaint clearly and you are **strongly encouraged** to complete this if you wish your complaint to be considered at Stage 2, although we will also accept complaints that are made in person or on the phone. When you do not complete the complaint form, the complaints investigator will normally discuss the complaint with you, assist in completing the complaint form and ask you to confirm that the details of your complaint have been captured correctly.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint and tell you who is dealing with it within three working days
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you are 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.

In particularly complex cases, which require information from a wide range of individuals, or during periods of intense activity, our investigation may take longer than 20 working days. Where this is likely to be the case, we will tell you, agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

If you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we handled your complaint after a full investigation, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at your complaint.

The SPSO **cannot** normally look at:

- a complaint relating to 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.
- a complaint that has not completed the University's complaints handling procedure (**so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO**).

The letter advising you of the decision on your complaint after Stage 2 will state that you have exhausted the University's procedures and remind you of your right to contact the SPSO.)

You can contact the SPSO:

In Person:

SPSO
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS

By Post

Freepost SPSO

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact 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 and you may ask someone to make a complaint on your behalf. (e.g. a representative from the Advice Hub, a friend or a family member) In this case, a signed statement must accompany the complaint confirming that the person is acting on your behalf.

We strongly encourage any student considering making a complaint to consult the Advice Hub. The Advice Hub is the University of Strathclyde Students' Union's free, independent advice and support centre. The friendly staff can help students with academic appeals, complaints, personal issues and much more. The Advice Hub is located on Level 5 (access via Level 6) of the Union building. Appointments can be made in person Monday to Friday between 9-5pm or students can drop in from 10am-4pm.

The Advice Hub can be contacted by emailing strathunion.advice@strath.ac.uk , by calling 0141 567 5040 or online at <http://www.strathstudents.com> .

The University is committed to making its services 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 language or format, such as large font, or Braille, please let us know. Contact your Faculty Office or email us at complaints-admin@strath.ac.uk .

Contact details for Faculty Offices and Directorates

Faculty/Service Area	More information/Contacts
Business School	sbs-appealscomplaints@strath.ac.uk
Faculty of Engineering	eng-appealscomplaints@strath.ac.uk
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	hass-appealscomplaints@strath.ac.uk
Faculty of Science	science-appealscomplaints@strath.ac.uk
Finance	http://www.strath.ac.uk/finance/
Human Resources	http://www.strath.ac.uk/hr/workforus/recruitmentatstrathclyde/commitmenttoapplicants/
Information Services	http://www.strath.ac.uk/is/aboutus/
Marketing and Development	http://www.strath.ac.uk/mds/
Research and Knowledge Exchange	http://www.strath.ac.uk/rkes/contactrkes/
Strategy and Policy	http://www.strath.ac.uk/ps/strategyandpolicy/
Student Experience and Enhancement	http://www.strath.ac.uk/sees/
Estates	http://www.strath.ac.uk/estates/

Quick guide to our complaints handling procedure

Complaints handling procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by e-mail or in writing.

We have a **two-stage complaints handling procedure**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage 1: frontline resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within **five working days** if we can.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2.

Stage 2: investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **three working days**. We will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than **20 working days** *unless* there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.