

Union of Brunel Students Complaints Procedure

The Union is committed to providing an excellent service to its members and other stakeholders, working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect. We have developed a Complaints Procedure that explains our approach to the receipt and handling of complaints.

We encourage all complaints in the first instance to be submitted via our [online complaint's portal](#), if this is not possible, please do send to a staff member or Elected Officer who will pass it onto the relevant team member.

We aim to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as easy as possible
- We treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response
- We deal with it promptly, politely and (when appropriate) confidentially.
- We will respond in the appropriate way – for example with an explanation or apology or information on any action taken.
- We will learn from complaints both upheld and not upheld and use them to improve the services that we offer.
- We will regularly review our complaints policy and procedures.

Scope

This procedure covers complaints about:

- Any service, activity, or facility provided by the Union of Brunel Students.
- The conduct of Union staff, elected officers, trustees, or Union volunteers, where that conduct relates to their role in or on behalf of the Union.

Complaints must relate to Union activities, services, or governance. This includes, but is not limited to, behaviour or decisions made while carrying out Union duties, delivering Union events, providing Union services, or representing the Union in any capacity.

This procedure does **not** cover complaints about the conduct of a student in their capacity as a student at Brunel University London, where the matter does not relate to Union activities. Such complaints should be raised through the University's procedures.

Where a complaint is made under the Union complaint procedure concerning an employee of the Union it will be discussed with the appropriate manager. If it is considered that the alleged actions by the member of staff may constitute misconduct it will be investigated and progressed in accordance with the Company's Disciplinary Procedure.

Complaints Relating to Clubs and Societies

The Union is responsible for ensuring that all clubs and societies operate in line with our values, policies, and code of conduct. This procedure covers complaints about the conduct of members,

committee members, or volunteers when they are participating in, organising, or representing a club or society in any activity affiliated with or supported by the Union.

Such complaints will normally be investigated under this Complaints Procedure and, where appropriate, may also be referred to the Union's Member Disciplinary Procedure. Where a complaint relates to behaviour that breaches University regulations or involves potential criminal activity, the matter may be referred to the University or the relevant external authority, in addition to any Union action.

Where a complaint concerns a club or society as a whole, rather than an individual member, it may, at the discretion of the investigating staff member, be referred to the Clubs and Societies Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.

Complaint time scales

A complaint should be submitted within 3 months of the issues occurring. The Union may only look at a complaint submitted after the 3 month deadline if there are credible and compelling reasons for the delay. This means that exceptional and unavoidable circumstances have prevented the complaint from being submitted any earlier. If you are worried about meeting this deadline, please contact the Advice Service for support.

Please note that CCTV is only kept for 31 days, so if your complaint would require CCTV footage to be reviewed it is important to ensure you submit your complaint within 25 days to ensure we are able to gain access to the required footage.

Writing your Complaint:

When submitting your complaint, it is important you cover the following information:

- Introduction - state the course you are studying and the year you are in. Provide a brief summary of the reasons for your complaint.
- Set out full details of the problems you have faced in the main body of your complaint.
- Include the dates the issues occurred and write your complaint in chronological order.
- Explain any action you may already have taken in attempt to resolve the issues.
- Provide any reasons why you aren't satisfied with the department's response so far.
- Explain the impact of the issues on you personally and academically.
- Evidence can be submitted, such as: email correspondence; print screens of social media and WhatsApp chats, witness statements, etc... These can be submitted by replying to the email acknowledging receipt of the complaint.
- Conclusion - state what outcomes / response you are hoping for. Sign off - state if you would like to arrange a zoom meeting to discuss the issues further or if you would like to hear back in writing. Give a timescale in which you would like to receive a reply. 5-10 working days may be appropriate but you can ask for quicker response for urgent circumstances.

Stage One – Informal Complaint

The first step to take when an issue arises is to see if it can be resolved informally. This stage is known as making an informal complaint or seeking local or informal resolution.

Complaints will be handled within the department where the individual(s) to whom the complaint relates works. All parties will take a constructive approach with a view to providing a solution and an acceptable remedy.

If you are not happy with the result of the complaint under this stage or if the complaint is serious or confidential, it will be dealt with under stage two.

The Union reserves the right to refer a formal complaint back to the informal stage if it believes that there has been no reasonable attempt at informal resolution. Following the informal process will help to protect against this.

Procedure

You can expect the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt.

The Union will explore the complaint and aim to respond with an outcome within 10 working days. You may be asked to give more information about the issue. If we are unable to resolve the complaint in this timescale, you will be kept fully informed of the complaints progress until it is resolved.

If you are not satisfied with the response from stage one, you should write to the relevant staff member who handed stage 1 (email/post) for further action at stage 2. When writing to the Manager you should state the reason you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint. This should be done within 10 working days of receiving the written response from stage one.

Stage Two – Formal Complaint

Complaints received by the organisation will be investigated and led by the appropriate Head of Department in relation to the nature of the complaint.

A panel will be convened by the Head of Department and will normally comprise of one of the following:

- Head of Department or their nominee
- Student Officer/Trustee

You will meet with the panel and discuss the complaint so that the panel can fully understand the issues you have raised. The individual(s) to whom the complaint concerns will not be present at this meeting. The complainant will be entitled to bring a fellow member to support them, and will be invited to inform the panel of any reasonable adjustments required.

The individual(s) to whom the complaint concerns will be provided with a summary of the complaint and given an opportunity to respond to the panel in relation to the issues raised. They will be entitled to bring a fellow member to support them, and will be invited to inform the panel of any reasonable adjustments required.

Both you the complainant and the individual the complaint concerns should be given the opportunity to provide additional information after the initial meeting with the panel.

The panel has the discretion to meet with any other individuals that may have witnessed or been party to the complaint. If a member is called to speak to the panel they are entitled to bring a fellow member to support them.

In the case of a complaint made against a society/club this will be dealt with under the Club and Societies complaints and disciplinary procedures.

If you have a good reason for not being able to attend a meeting with the panel, the meeting can be re-arranged. However, should you fail to attend two meetings and the panel feel that that you have not provided a suitable reason, the investigation will continue without the meeting.

What will the Panel do?

The panel will review the complaint and decide whether it should be upheld. They will then decide upon any action that should be implemented as a consequence.

During the period between the complaint being received and the panel making a decision, the individual(s) the complaint concerns may be prohibited from accessing services and/or facilities in order to undertake an effective investigation and to avoid risk of harm or distress to staff or students.

Procedure

You can expect the complaint/appeal to be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt, with the expected time scales of the investigation.

The relevant history of the complaint will be made available to the key investigating staff members. Additional investigations may be undertaken and may include interviews with you, any staff involved, and any witnesses and will also include documentary evidence where appropriate.

The outcome of the investigation will be communicated to you in writing within 30 days, with details of any action taken and time-scale for implementation (if applicable).

If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage 2 complaint, you have the right to appeal within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome of the investigation

Courses of action:

The panel will decide whether to dismiss, partly uphold or fully uphold the complaint after reviewing all appropriate information. The possible outcomes of a formal complaint are:

1. A recommendation of specific action to address your concerns.
2. An explanation of the circumstances which led to the complaint.
3. Referral for further investigation under another procedure;
 - Referral to the Unions member Disciplinary Procedure.
 - If the offence is committed by a member who is a Student and the offence is found to be serious enough, the member must be referred to the Student Disciplinary Procedure. Once the University is notified of this, the Student becomes subject to University's Disciplinary Procedures.
 - It may be necessary to consider disciplinary action against staff members as a consequence of issues being brought to the attention of the Union via a complaint. In such cases, disciplinary action shall be considered in accordance with the Company's Disciplinary Policy.
4. The complaint being dismissed – if your complaint isn't upheld the investigators should provide you with a written explanation on why this decision has been made.

Appeal

If you are not happy with the outcome of the complaint, you are able to submit an appeal under one of the following grounds:

- The Complaints process has not followed the correct procedure; and/or
- New information has become available that for good reason could not be presented during the Complaints Process at the time of the original investigation; and/or
- The actions applied as a result of the investigation are disproportionate

An appeal should be submitted in writing to the relevant staff member who dealt with the stage 2 process within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome of the investigation.

Appeals will be considered by the Chief Executive, or a Trustee where appropriate, and will normally respond with an outcome within 30 days.

Further Action

If the initial complaint is regarding how the Union, as a charity is run, you can seek further redress from the Charity Commission.

If the initial complaint is about any other matter relating to your dealings with the Union, you can write to the University, as the responsible body under the 1994 Education Act, who will in turn appoint an independent person to investigate and report on your complaint. However, this is only for the following instances:

- You are unhappy with the conduct of the Union
- You feel the complaint process followed has not been fair