

STUDENT COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

If you require any help or advice regarding this document, you can contact:

[Hallam Help](#)
[Students' Union Advice Centre](#)

Student Complaints Policy

<i>Definition</i>	For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is a concern raised by one or more of our enrolled students about teaching or service-related matters which cannot be resolved informally.
<i>Who can complain?</i>	<p>Anyone currently enrolled on a course delivered by the University may submit a complaint.</p> <p>If you are studying for a Sheffield Hallam award at one of our collaborative partners, you must raise any concerns with this partner in the first instance.</p> <p>Concerns raised by former students will be considered if they relate to issues that arose when they were still students at the University and if the case is initiated within 3 months of the termination, withdrawal from, or expiry of their enrolment contract with the University. We consider an enrolment contract to have expired upon the completion of a course, i.e. the date on which final results are issued. Whether and how any matters raised beyond this point are considered remains entirely at the university's discretion.</p>
<i>Group Complaints</i>	Students may complain as a group where the concerns raised affect more than one student. We will normally ask the group to identify a lead representative to communicate with about the complaint. People named in the complaint will be asked to confirm they wish to participate in the group complaint.
<i>Eligibility</i>	<p>We will consider a complaint if it has been raised within the academic year in which the concerns occurred. Complaints raised outside the academic year in which they occurred will not be considered unless you can demonstrate there are valid reasons why you could not have raised them sooner.</p> <p>Complaints which repeat concerns that we have already responded to, or are considered to be vexatious or malicious, will not be considered.</p>
<i>Representation</i>	<p>We expect students to submit complaints themselves. Only in exceptional circumstances can a third party submit a complaint form on your behalf. You must request permission in writing via appealsandcomplaints@shu.ac.uk with evidence stating reasons why you are unable to raise issues yourself.</p> <p>Our internal processes do not seek to imitate the legal justice system. As such, it is our position that professional legal representation is not necessary for either party at any point of the complaints procedure. If you believe your case is of such complexity that you require the person representing you to be a member of the legal profession, you must request permission in writing via appealsandcomplaints@shu.ac.uk stating reasons.</p> <p>The Head of Student Policy, Casework and Compliance, or nominee, will decide on all requests.</p>

<i>Consideration</i>	<p>Decisions on complaints will be made by senior members of the University. No one involved in decision-making will have had prior involvement in the issues raised in the complaint.</p> <p>We aim to complete consideration of a complaint and any associated review within 60 working days providing you meet any deadlines we set for submitting information and evidence. We will however be mindful of any factors that require more urgent consideration, for example where the matters raised affect progression to the next level of study.</p> <p>We will update you on the progress of your complaint, including where it is necessary to extend the deadline for response.</p>
<i>Outcomes</i>	<p>We will issue complaint outcomes in writing, setting out the findings on the core aspects of the complaint and any remedial action to be taken.</p> <p>Outcomes will include information about the next steps you can take if you remain dissatisfied with the response to your complaint.</p>

Student Complaints Procedure

- 1 We encourage you to raise any concerns you may have as quickly as possible with an appropriate person, for example, your module leader, academic adviser, student support adviser, or Hallam Help. If this does not resolve your concerns, you can initiate the complaints procedure by completing the online concerns form:

- SHU Students: [Student Concerns Form](#)
- External Parties: [Student Concerns Form \(external\)](#)

- 2 There are a maximum of three stages through which a concern may be considered: -

Triage	A preliminary assessment of the concern form to decide on the most appropriate way of responding	See sections 3-5 below.
Investigation (Complaint Stage 1)	Complaints will be referred to this stage when concerns cannot be quickly resolved during the triage process.	See sections 6-8 below.
Review (Complaint Stage 2)	Students may escalate their concerns to this stage on certain grounds if they remain dissatisfied with the response at Stage 1	See sections 9-13 below.

Triage

- 3 The Head of Student Policy, Casework and Compliance (or nominee) will undertake a preliminary assessment of the concerns reported on the concerns form and decide whether we can quickly resolve those concerns outside of the formal complaints procedure.
- 4 If the nature of your concerns means that a quick resolution is not possible, it will be referred to the Investigation Stage of the complaints procedure if it meets the eligibility criteria set out in the Student Complaints Policy. The reasons why it may not be eligible are:
 - You have submitted the concerns outside the timescale stated in the Student Complaints Policy.
 - You are reporting concerns that have already been responded to under the complaint procedure or alternative university procedure.
 - We consider your concerns to be vexatious or malicious.
- 5 We will write to you to confirm your form has been received and is being considered within the triage stage. We will aim to complete the triage stage within 10 working days and will write to you again at the end of this to confirm the action we are taking, including whether your concerns have been passed to the investigation stage.

The Investigation Stage (Complaint Stage 1)

- 6 The investigation will be proportionate to the scale of the issues being raised and the material impact they have had on you. The investigator may indicate where they feel a meeting is not necessary because they have all the information they require. However, you will have the opportunity to meet with the investigator should you wish to do so.
- 7 The findings of the investigation will be considered by a Complaint Panel comprising senior managers from academic and professional services areas. The Complaint Panel will make an overall decision (i.e., whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld) and decide upon any redress and remedial action to be applied.
- 8 The Complaint Panel's findings will be reported to you in writing. The response will:
 - Confirm the decision, comment on the key aspects of the case, and direct you to the more detailed findings set out within the Complaint Investigation Report.
 - Set out the nature and terms of any offer made in full and final settlement of the complaint.
 - Explain the grounds and timescales by which you may escalate your complaint to the Review Stage (Complaint Stage 2).

The Review Stage (Complaint Stage 2)

- 9 You may request a review of the Stage 1 decision in one or more of the following situations:
 - Where you have evidence that the procedures were not properly followed during Stage 1, and that this impacted the decision on your complaint.
 - Where you have new, relevant evidence that you can demonstrate you were unable to provide earlier for reasons beyond your control.
 - You believe the outcome at Stage 1 was clearly unfair or manifestly unreasonable.
- 10 You can request a review of the Stage 1 decision by completing the Complaint Review Form: <https://forms.office.com/e/N9EhKZdJUz>. You should do this within 10 working days of us sending you the Stage 1 outcome. Forms received beyond the 10-working day period will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where you have provided a valid reason, with evidence, for the delay.
- 11 The Group Director, Student and Academic Services (or nominee) will determine whether the request is eligible for consideration. The reasons why it may not be eligible are that:
 - It is late without a valid reason.
 - It does not relate to any of the situations by which a review can be requested.
 - It is not supported by new, relevant evidence.
 - It is raising new issues not reported in the Stage 1 complaint.
- 12 A Review Panel meeting will be convened comprising the Deputy Vice-Chancellors or their nominees. No member of the Panel will have had any previous involvement with your case. You will have the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Review Panel if you wish. If you choose to attend, we will:
 - Confirm the date of the meeting and the names of those attending no later than two weeks before it is due to take place.
 - Provide you with a copy of all the information sent to the Review Panel regarding your appeal.
 - Permit you to be accompanied by one other person.
- 13 The Review Panel's findings will be reported to you in writing and, where appropriate, will explain any action we will take. The Review Panel's decision will be final from a university point of view. If you remain dissatisfied with that response, you can apply for a review of your case by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). We will issue a Completion of Procedures letter which will explain how to do this.

14 The OIA is the independent body appointed in the higher education sector to review complaints by students against higher education providers. The OIA will not normally consider a case until the internal procedures of the University have been exhausted and a Completion of Procedures statement is issued. We will issue, or offer, a Completion of Procedures statement at the point that we issue a final decision on your complaint. This will normally be in one of the following scenarios:

- Where your complaint is ruled ineligible for progression at either of the formal stages of the complaint's procedure.
- Where we issue the final decision at the review stage of the complaint's procedure.

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