



Complaints Procedure

STUDENTS' GUILD

Complaints Procedure

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1. Purpose

- 1.1. The University of Exeter Students' Guild (the Guild) is committed to delivering high quality levels of service to our members. We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when members feel that they have cause for complaint.
- 1.2. This policy outlines the Guild's approach to ensuring that a fair and consistent process is in place for students to resolve issues as quickly as possible and that complaints are investigated consistently and promptly.

2. Principles

- 2.1. The Guild is committed to being inclusive, collaborative and empowering in the way it operates. We expect that most day-to-day concerns, complaints or difficulties will be resolved in an open and informal way.
- 2.2. Any student or group of students that is dissatisfied with the services and facilities provided by the Guild has the right to make a complaint.
- 2.3. Anonymous or third-party complaints will not be investigated under this procedure. Staff members that receive anonymous complaints should seek advice from their line manager.
- 2.4. We will treat every complaint fairly but will not engage with malicious complaints or persistent and repeated contact from complainants. These reduce the amount of time that can be dedicated to carrying out investigations.

3. What types of complaints can the Guild investigate?

- 3.1. We can investigate the following types of complaints:
 - **Service complaints** - The Students' Guild prides itself on the quality of its staff and representatives and the service we provide to students. If you're unhappy about any of our services, including the service provided by Guild staff, you can complain under this procedure.
 - **Code of conduct complaint about an individual or group** – Our [Code of Conduct](#) sets out our standards of behaviour for all members of the Guild. If you believe that another member or group of members have breached our code of conduct during a Guild event or activity, or whilst volunteering or participating in a Guild society or group (including online), you can complain under this procedure. You can also complain to the Guild if an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct by another member(s) has impacted your ability to access and/or participate safely in our activities, opportunities or events.
- 3.2. We are not able to consider complaints relating to the University. Please contact our Student Advice Service for support if your complaint relates to your course or services provided by the University.

4. Informal complaints

- 4.1. We hope that most complaints will be resolved via an informal discussion about the matter at the earliest opportunity. Members should therefore bring the matter to the attention of a Guild staff member, or Full-Time Officer responsible for the area, who

will help you to resolve your concerns informally. This may be in person or in writing, via the 'Contact Us' section of the Guild website or at info@exeterguild.com.

- 4.2. There is no fixed process for dealing with an informal complaint, and we will agree the best way forward with you at the time. It might be possible to resolve your complaint with a simple conversation or e-mail exchange, or by implementing a change to the way something is being done. In other cases, a face-to-face meeting to talk things through in more detail might be required. An informal complaint might also sometimes lead to some form of mediation.

5. Mediation

- 5.1. Mediation is an informal and flexible process that can be used to resolve disputes between individuals. It provides you with the opportunity to discuss your complaint with the help of a mediator, who will be someone that is not involved in the complaint. The mediator's role is to help you agree on a way forward together.
- 5.2. Usually, those involved in the complaint will meet with the mediator (together or separately) to explain their concerns and to hear the other's concerns. The mediator will then work with both sides to find a resolution.

6. Formal complaints

- 6.1. If the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved, or if the nature of the complaint is serious, you can raise the matter as a formal complaint.

7. Making a complaint

- 7.1. A formal complaint must be made in writing either by letter or via e-mail and addressed to the Chief Executive. If the complaint is concerning the Chief Executive, it should be addressed to the President.
- 7.2. For a complaint to be considered, it should be raised with 28 days of the event occurring and must briefly set out:
 - Your full name and contact details
 - The details of your complaint – focusing on the necessary information and leaving out anything that is not relevant
 - The informal steps taken already (if applicable) and why you're unhappy with the outcome of these
 - What outcome or resolution you would like.
- 7.3. If you do not provide all of the above, this could result in a delayed response or mean that we are unable to investigate the complaint. We will not usually be able to consider anonymous complaints, however if there is certain information that you would like to remain private and confidential, please state this clearly in your complaint, otherwise, we will assume that we have your permission to share any information provided when appropriate and necessary.
- 7.4. We will acknowledge your complaint within 7 days.

8. Investigating a Complaint

- 8.1. After acknowledging the complaint, we will check that all of the required information and evidence has been provided and that the complaint falls within the Guild's remit to investigate. If so, an appropriate person will be appointed to investigate the complaint. This will usually be a manager or External Trustee that has received the appropriate guidance and training and is not otherwise involved in the complaint, e.g. as a witness.
- 8.2. The person carrying out the investigation will determine the facts, consider any mitigating circumstances and determine the appropriate outcome. Depending upon the seriousness of the complaint, it may be necessary for us to contact you to request additional information or evidence.
- 8.3. We'll always try to investigate complaints promptly and you will be kept informed of progress throughout. We will aim to respond to your complaint within 28 days of the start of the investigation.
- 8.4. There are two possible outcomes:
 - **Your complaint is upheld** - on the basis that the grounds and evidence justify the complaint. Follow up action will vary according to the nature of the complaint.
 - **Your complaint is not upheld** – on the basis that the grounds and evidence do not justify the complaint.

9. Will your complaint be kept confidential?

- 9.1. In order to deal with formal complaints fully and fairly, it will usually be necessary to identify the complainant to those involved in the investigation and outcome decision. If your complaint is about someone else, they will usually be entitled to know who has complained about them if the complaint progresses to disciplinary action.
- 9.2. At all times during investigations, confidentiality and discretion must be maintained by all those involved, regardless of the nature of the incident.

10. What happens if a complaint is made against you?

- 10.1. If a complaint is made against you, an investigating officer will investigate it to see if there is a case to answer. If there is a case to answer, you will be invited to attend a disciplinary hearing where you will have the opportunity to hear the case against you and set out your own case.

11. Appeals

- 11.1. You can appeal against the outcome of your complaint if you feel that:
 - the outcome is unreasonable given all the circumstances and evidence considered;
 - the correct procedure was not followed; or,
 - you have new evidence to show which you were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process, and which would have had a significant effect on the outcome.
- 11.2. If you wish to appeal, you should outline the grounds for your appeal in writing to the Chief Executive within 7 days of receiving the complaint outcome.

11.3. Once your appeal has been considered, you will be informed of the outcome, usually within 14 days and without unreasonable delay.

12. Reporting

12.1. The Guild logs, monitors and evaluates all complaints and feedback data to improve our service to members and to identify trends and patterns to inform and support our development. This information may also be made available to the University where appropriate.

Appendix 1: Complaints Process

