The University of Dundee Complaints Procedure: Guidance for Members of the Public and Prospective Students

The University of Dundee is committed to providing an excellent education and high quality services to our students, as well as appropriate engagement with other stakeholders and the general public.

We take complaints seriously and use information learned from them to help us improve our services for the future.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about the application of policy, procedure and our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

Your complaint may relate to:

- the quality and standard of service
- failure to provide a service
- the quality of facilities or learning resources
- treatment by or attitude of a staff member, student or contractor
- inappropriate behaviour by a staff member, student or contractor
- the failure of the University to follow an appropriate administrative process
- dissatisfaction with the University’s policy, although it is recognised that policy is set at the discretion of the University

We ensure that you have the opportunity to raise matters of concern without any risk of disadvantage to you.

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 under for example the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act, Data Protection Act or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004
• a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
• a response to an invitation to provide feedback through a formal mechanism such as a questionnaire or committee membership will generally not be treated as a complaint
• an insurance claim
• an issue which is being, or has been, considered by a court or tribunal
• an attempt to have a complaint reconsidered where the University’s procedure has been completed and a decision has been issued
• a grievance by a member of staff which is eligible for handling through the grievance procedure
• an appeal about an academic judgement on (1) assessment or (2) admission

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice on these to help you.

Who can complain?

Anyone who receives, requests or is affected by University services. This includes, although is not limited to:

• the experience of a student during their time at the University
• members of the public, where they have a complaint about matters which are (or were at the time the issue arose) the responsibility of the University
• applicants to the University whose complaint does not relate to academic judgement
• The University will accept complaints brought by third parties representing the individual complaining only where that individual has given their personal written consent under the Data Protection Act 1998.

What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage 1 – frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This is shown on the flow chart at Page 6. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong and immediate action to resolve the problem. Where possible, your concerns should be raised with the relevant staff member, University
representative, School office or Professional Service Directorate. 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 you are not satisfied with the response we give 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 procedure - please contact complaintsresolution@dundee.ac.uk. You may choose to do this immediately or shortly after you get our initial decision.

Stage 2 – investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation. We have a complaint form, which will help you to state your complaint clearly to us. Although we will also accept complaints that are made in person or on the phone, we encourage you to complete the complaint form in the interests of clarity and in order to best assist the investigation process.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain 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.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

How do I complain?

You can complain in person, by phone, in writing, by email via our complaints form below. It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the School or Professional Service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff within the School or Directorate you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot. Where it is clear that a complaint will be considered at the investigation stage, you may be asked to complete the complaint form available at http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/dca/complaints/ to provide full details of the complaint and any relevant documentation if you have not done so.
When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

**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 if I’m still dissatisfied?**

After we have fully investigated, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO *cannot* normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- 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.

You can contact the SPSO:

**In Person:**  SPSO
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

**By Post:**  Freepost SPSO

**Freephone:**  0800 377 7330
**Online contact:**  [www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)
**Website:**  [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)
**Mobile site:**  [http://m.spsso.org.uk](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. There are a number of support services available which can provide helpful support to those who wish to pursue a complaint with the University.

For University students, the following are available to provide assistance and support:
- the Students’ Assessor (Professor Jeanette Paul, School of Art and Design [j.m.paul@dundee.ac.uk]);
- Disability Services [disability@dundee.ac.uk];
- the Counselling Service [counselling@dundee.ac.uk];
- the Chaplaincy [f.c.douglas@dundee.ac.uk].

The President of DUSA [president@dusa.co.uk] may also offer advice and representation for student complaints.

Other stakeholders and members of the public should contact the Directorate of Academic and Corporate Governance (complaintsresolution@dundee.ac.uk) for guidance on how to pursue their complaint.

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all complainants. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services.

Further information and our contact details are available at:
http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/dca/complaints/
Quick guide to our complaints procedure

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

We have a two-stage complaints 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 for your complaint to be considered at Stage 2 (contact complaintsresolution@dundee.ac.uk). You can also access our early dispute resolution and mediation service at http://www.dundee.ac.uk/edr/

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.