

HSU Complaints Policy

Overview

This policy explains who can complain about Hallam SU, what complaints might be about, how complaints are resolved, and what happens if you are unhappy with a complaint.

Who can make a complaint

1. Any student member or opted out student of Hallam Students' Union (HSU) is entitled to make a complaint if they feel that a service offered by the Union has fallen short of expectations, or about the conduct of a Hallam Students' Union staff member, Officer, student member or Trustee.
2. HSU staff should not use this process to complain about the Union - this should be done via the Union's Grievance Process. Where a staff member is also a student at Sheffield Hallam University, complaints relating to their employment should use the Grievance Process. Complaints relating to their engagement with HSU as a Student Member should use this complaints process.
3. Complaints from other individuals, such as University staff or members of the public who have made use of Union services or facilities, will be considered at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer, whose decision will be final.

Who and what a complaint can be made about

4. Below is a non-exhaustive list of issues that a Sheffield Hallam student may wish to submit a complaint about:
 - 4.1. The quality of the provision of an HSU service, activity, event, society, communications, or other activity.
 - 4.2. The conduct of an HSU staff member, Officer or Trustee.
 - 4.3. The conduct of a student member of the Students' Union, or a Hallam student who has opted out of Union membership, when taking part in events or activities that are affiliated with HSU. You can refer to the Students' Union's Code of Conduct for more information on what kind of conduct you might complain about.
 - 4.4. For opted-out students, if a student feels that they have been disadvantaged in their dealings with HSU due to the fact that they have opted out of membership.

What you shouldn't use the complaints process for

5. You shouldn't use the Union's complaints process to complain about the University - you should refer to the University Complaints process for this. Students of Sheffield Hallam are entitled to receive support from the HSU Student Advice Centre when submitting a complaint about the University.
6. To make a complaint in relation to an HSU Election, you should use the relevant Election Complaints process.
7. Initial complaints about the Student Advice Centre should go through the Student Advice Centre complaints process.
8. Complaints that are deemed to be malicious or vexatious (i.e. have clearly been submitted in order to cause distress or disadvantage an individual or the Union, without credible evidence) will not be investigated, and the complainant may be sanctioned according to the Union's Code of Conduct.

Informal resolution

9. Often, the quickest and easiest way to resolve an issue is via an informal route. If you would like to raise an issue, you can raise it with a relevant HSU staff member, who will meet with you to try to resolve the issue informally.

How a complaint is made

10. Complaints should be directed in writing to the Chief Executive Officer of the Students' Union, unless the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer. If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer, then the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. You should make it clear that you are submitting an official complaint, by using the word 'Complaint' in the subject line of your email, or the heading of the letter if submitting a complaint by mail.
11. Complaints should be submitted within one month of the issue arising. Complaints made after this period may be considered at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or Board of Trustees.
12. All complaints should include:
 - 12.1. The name and student number of the complainant.
 - 12.2. The nature of the complaint, including specifics about the issue faced, the time and date any incident occurred, and any supporting information if applicable.
 - 12.3. Anything that has already been done to informally solve the issue.
 - 12.4. What the complainant would like to happen to resolve the issue.

13. Group complaints are allowed, provided that all group complainants provide their name and student number, and that an individual student is identified as the lead complainant.
14. Anonymous complaints cannot be investigated.

How the complaints process works

15. The complainant will be informed of the receipt of the complaint within three working days of the complaint being submitted and will be provided with a timeline of when they can expect further information, or a resolution. Usually, we aim to investigate all complaints within fifteen working days. If this is impossible, the complainant will be informed and given a reason why the investigation may take longer.
16. The complaint will be investigated by a panel, depending on who the complaint is about:
 - 16.1. If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer, it will be investigated by a panel convened by the Chair of the Board of Trustees. The panel will consist of at least one Lay Trustee and the Students' Union President, unless this would cause a conflict of interest, in which case another appropriate person will be appointed.
 - 16.2. If the complaint is about anyone else, it will be investigated by a panel convened by the Chief Executive Officer. The panel will include at least one relevant, appropriately senior staff member and an HSU Officer, unless this would cause a conflict of interest, in which case another appropriate person will be appointed.
17. During the investigation, the complainant and any other relevant parties may be contacted for further information.
18. If the complaint is about an individual or group, then they will be given the opportunity to provide information in defence or mitigation. The individual or group will also be told when they can expect to know the outcome of the complaint.

What the outcome could be

19. If the complaint is upheld, then the CEO, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, or their nominee will recommend a resolution.
20. The panel will decide whether it is appropriate for the complainant to know the full details of the outcome of the complaint.
21. If the complaint is about a service, activity, or event run by the Students' Union, then the resolution could be an improvement to that service or a change to a policy, or something else.

22.If the complaint is about an individual or group of individuals, then the complaint may be dealt with according to the relevant procedure:

22.1. For Student Members, this is the Union Code of Conduct.

22.2. For SU staff, this is the disciplinary and grievance procedure.

22.3. For HSU Officers, this is the HSU Officer Accountability Procedure (for issues relating to their role as a representative), or the disciplinary and grievance procedure (for issues relating to their performance as a staff member).

22.4. For Trustees, this is the HSU Articles of Association.

What happens if you're not happy

23.If you believe that the issue hasn't been correctly dealt with, you may submit an appeal. Reasons the complainant may wish to appeal include:

23.1. The complainant believes that this complaints procedure has not been correctly followed.

23.2. The complainant believes that the resolution of the complaint is disproportionate.

23.3. There is new evidence that was not available at the time of the initial complaint.

24.The appeal should be submitted to whoever you submitted the initial complaint to and will be reviewed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees. If the complaint is about the CEO or Chair of the Board of Trustees, then another Trustee or appropriately senior staff member will be appointed to review the appeal.

25. Appeals should be submitted within ten working days of the receipt of the outcome of the initial complaint.

26.If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may appeal in writing to the University Board of Governors via the University Secretary (governance@shu.ac.uk) within 10 working days of receiving the appeal outcome. The Board will appoint an independent person of good standing, who will not be a University staff member, student or governor, to review the complaint and report findings and recommendations to you, the University Secretary, and the Students' Union.

Oversight of Complaints

27.The Board of Trustees will receive an annual report on complaints received over the academic year. The report will not contain detailed complaints, or personal information, but will outline the themes of complaints received, and actions taken to resolve them. The Board of Trustees will make recommendations for improving HSU services and processes based on the report.