

The Complaints Handling Procedure - A Guide for Students

The right to complain

Abertay University is committed to providing an excellent education and high quality services to our students from enrolment through to graduation.

Although we aim to offer an outstanding experience for our students, we are aware that we may occasionally get it wrong. If you feel that the services and treatment you have received from us fall short of your reasonable expectations, we would like you to let us know. This will assist us to provide more efficient and improved services in the future, enabling us to:

- put things right; learn from our mistakes, and improve our services.

The University is strongly committed to maintaining an effective complaints procedure which allows all members of our community to make a legitimate complaint. We aim to investigate all complaints fairly, and consistently. In line with other Scottish universities, we have introduced a standardised complaints handling procedure.

This guide 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.

Who can complain?

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

Complaints can be raised by any person who receives, requests or is directly affected by the services the University provides.

There will be occasions where someone is reluctant or unwilling to make a complaint on their own. Please note that you cannot make a complaint on someone else's behalf unless you are legally responsible for the complainant or unless the complainant is unable to make the complaint themselves (e.g. for reasons of disability). The University will consider anonymous complaints if there is enough information in the complaint to enable the University to make further enquiries. If the complaint does not provide enough information to support further action, the University may decide not to pursue the matter. The University will, however, give consideration to the issues raised.

What can I complain about

Problems or concerns that may be brought to your attention under the complaints procedure could 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

What can't I complain about?

The definition of a complaint is very broad, however, but not every concern raised with the University is a complaint. For example, a complaint is not:

- a routine, first-time request for a service
- a request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act or Data Protection Act
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- a request for compensation only
- 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
- an appeal about an academic decision on assessment or admission.

These issues will be dealt with under alternative appropriate processes rather than under the Complaints Handling Procedure. It should be noted, however, that some situations can involve a combination of issues, some are complaints and others are not, and each case should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

If you are in any in doubt, you can obtain further advice from the Support Enquiry Zone, Student Services, or from the University website.

The Complaints Procedure

The Complaints Handling Procedure is made up of two stages: Frontline Resolution; and Investigation.

Frontline Resolution

Most complaints can be resolved quickly and informally. Ideally, complaints should be raised at the time of the first occurrence. Where possible, your concerns should be discussed with the relevant academic staff member, programme tutor, student programme/school representatives, Support Enquiry Zone, School office, or relevant Service. This can be done face-to-face, by phone, in writing or by email. If you later formalise your complaint, you will be asked to demonstrate the steps you took to resolve the matter informally.

We aim to resolve all complaints subject to the frontline resolution process as close as possible to the initial point of contact and within **5 working days**.

Investigation

If you are not satisfied with the response at the frontline resolution stage, you should submit a request for investigation of your complaint in writing to Academic Registry, Abertay University, Bell Street, Dundee DD1 1HG, [using the Complaint Investigation Request Form which is available from Academic Registry](#).

All sections of this form must be completed accurately and, where possible, include any supporting documentation. You should also state your preferred outcome or identify a satisfactory resolution.

Your submission will be acknowledged within **3 working days** and the Investigating Officer or a member of the team will carry out a thorough investigation of your complaint.

There may be a number of possible outcomes, including:

- The complaint being resolved through mediation
- The complaint being upheld;
- The complaint being dismissed on the grounds of there being no case to answer, or where the complaint is judged to be malicious or vexatious.ⁱ

Where possible, the University will aim to resolve your concern and provide you with a final written response within **20 working days** of your initial submission at the investigation stage. You should expect to be kept informed if, for whatever reason, the University is unable to meet this deadline.

Still Dissatisfied?

If you are dissatisfied with the University's final decision or handling of the complaint, you may take your complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), who will consider your case for an independent review. Please note that the SPSO will only consider cases where complaints have been issued within a 12 month period. Further details can be found from the SPSO website: www.spsso.org.uk

Who to contact

Please note that complaints should, wherever possible, be addressed at the frontline resolution stage by the member(s) of staff closest to the point at which the complaint has arisen.

Support Enquiry Zone

Location: Level 1, The Bernard King Library, Abertay University, Bell Street

Tel: 01382 308000 **Email:** sez@abertay.ac.uk

Student Services

Location: Level 2, The Bernard King Library, Abertay University, Bell Street

Tel: 01382 308000 **Email:** studentservices@abertay.ac.uk

Academic Registry, Abertay University, Bell Street Dundee DD1 1HG **Tel.** 01382 308000 **Email:** complaints@abertay.ac.uk

University of Abertay Dundee Students' Association

Location (office): Kydd Building, Bell Street, Abertay University

Tel: 01382 308000 **Email:** enquiries@uadsa.com

Search: **Abertay University Students' Association**

ⁱ Students making malicious or vexatious complaints may be subject to disciplinary action under the appropriate disciplinary policy.