

## **Rule 8 – Complaints Procedure**

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*This Rule explains the Union's formal complaints procedure. The procedures and decisions in this process shall at all times be bound by the approach of speedy resolution and good customer service principles.*

### **1. Scope**

- 1.1 The Union Complaints Procedure is intended to address any complaint made in relation to the Union's activities, facilities and conduct of its members and other users of its facilities.
- 1.2 The Union will consider the availability of the Member Disciplinary Procedure (Rule 9) and the University of Southampton's own complaints and disciplinary procedures as alternative methods of dealing with a complaint made under this Procedure.
- 1.3 A complaint that relates to the conduct of an election shall be dealt with under Rule 7 (Elections) and not under this Rule.
- 1.4 A complaint that relates to the conduct of staff may be made under this Procedure, though it will be dealt with in accordance with the Union's policies and procedures relating to allegations of misconduct by staff.

### **2. Informal Complaints**

- 2.1 In the first instance, if an individual wishes to complain, they should discuss their complaint with the relevant Student Leader or Sabbatical Officer.
- 2.2 If for any reason this is difficult or inappropriate, the individual should discuss their complaint with an alternative Student Leader, Sabbatical Officer or a member of Union staff that they feel comfortable talking to.
- 2.3 The person who received the complaint will:
  - 2.3.1 take the appropriate steps to resolve the issue informally, in line with the Union's organisational values and behaviours, or
  - 2.3.2 escalate the issue to an appropriate sabbatical officer, or a more senior member of staff to resolve, where necessary;
  - 2.3.3 and record the complaint and outcome on the Union's central complaints system.
- 2.4 At this point, if an individual feels their complaint has not been appropriately or adequately addressed, they have the option to proceed to the formal complaints procedure.

### **3. Formal Complaints**

- 3.1 The Union requests all formal complaints be submitted in writing, either via letter, email or through online submission to the Union's central complaints system.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive shall nominate a member of staff to oversee the resolution of each formal complaint.

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- 3.3 Once a formal complaint has been received, the Union will:
  - 3.3.1 acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint in writing within two clear working days,
  - 3.3.2 inform the individual of the next steps and timeline of any further investigation, and
  - 3.3.3 complete any further investigation within ten clear working days.
- 3.4 To ensure a consistent, fair and appropriate response to all formal complaints, the Union will:
  - 3.4.1 interview the person(s) involved and investigate the circumstances surrounding the complaint,
  - 3.4.2 establish whether the complaint has substance,
  - 3.4.3 report on the process, evidence obtained and findings,
  - 3.4.4 recommend a clear outcome,
  - 3.4.5 implement the outcome, and
  - 3.4.6 maintain records of all the above centrally.
- 3.5 Where the formal complaint requires an individual to attend investigation meetings, they have the right to be accompanied by a friend or representative.
- 3.6 A written response will be sent to an individual via their preferred method of communication (i.e. email or post).
- 3.7 If an individual is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal complaints procedure, they have the option to appeal.
- 3.8 The Union shall publish, on an annual basis, a report in a format to be decided by Democracy Zone Committee, to include:
  - 3.8.1 the number of informal and formal complaints, and appeals (broken down by category),
  - 3.8.2 the outcomes of such complaints and appeals (broken down by category), and
  - 3.8.3 such other information as the Committee may determine.

### **4. Appeal**

- 4.1 To instigate an appeal of a formal complaints outcome, an individual should write to the Union President (or in the case of a complaint about the Union President, to the person nominated by them to be the Deputy President), outlining the reasons why they are not satisfied with the investigation or outcome.
- 4.2 The Union President (or Deputy President) will confirm receipt of the appeal within five clear working days.
- 4.3 At this stage, the Union President (or Deputy President) will approach an independent person, appointed by the University of Southampton, to investigate

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and report on the complaint.

- 4.4 The independent person will investigate the issue by consulting with those individuals leading and involved in the informal and formal complaints procedures.
- 4.5 The independent person shall make a report that includes:
  - 4.5.1 the information they have considered in their investigation of the complaint, and
  - 4.5.2 their recommendation as to the outcome of the complaint.
- 4.6 The independent person will send that report to the individual making the complaint, and to the Union, within ten clear working days. The independent person may make such redactions as they consider necessary.
- 4.7 The report will be made to Trustee Board, who will determine the outcome of the complaint, which shall be final and binding on the parties. This will be communicated to the parties as soon as is reasonably practicable.

### **5. Review by the University**

- 5.1 If, at the conclusion of the appeal process, the individual still feels the matter is not resolved, it may be referred to the Director of Student Services, being the independent person appointed by University Council in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Practice issued under the Education Act 1994.