



Support Advice Centre

Complaining to the University

The aim of this document is to answer the most common questions about complaining at the University of Southampton. If you are not happy about a particular aspect of your student experience at the University of Southampton, you can use the Student Complaints Regulations to raise it.

Did you know?

Student Complaints Regulations are located on the University Calendar [here](#).

What kind of complaints can the University consider?

You can raise a complaint about any aspect of your University experience, in particular: facilities and services provided by the University, academic programmes, or conduct of University staff.

I want to complain about another student, what do I do?

If a student has clearly behaved in a way that breaches University regulations, for example the [Dignity at Work and Study](#) policy, you can raise a complaint using the [Student Discipline Procedures](#). See one of the Student Advisers in the Advice Centre for help with the process.

Can I complain about a low mark?

At the University you cannot question the academic judgement of the marker, unless you have evidence that proves that the mark awarded to you was incorrect (for example miscalculation of the final mark, or another administrative error affecting your grade). See our Academic Appeals guide on our website for more information on what you can do about this.

Can we raise a complaint as a group?

Yes, it is possible to raise a group complaint. Normally you would be expected to nominate a spokesperson who would raise the complaint on your behalf. Other students would have to agree in writing and confirm that they are also affected by the same issue.

If the concerns you have relate to the course delivery or structure and you all feel affected by it, you can speak to your course representative who can raise the concern with the faculty and relevant members of staff.



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Did you know?

University of Southampton will not accept anonymous complaints.

Can the Students Union, Advice Centre or someone else raise a complaint on my behalf?

Generally, the answer is no. The University does not accept third party complaints, unless in exceptional circumstances and the student provides a valid reason for not being able to do it themselves.

What is Mediation and can it help me with my complaint?

Mediation can be an alternative to a complaint, especially in helping to resolve a conflict. It is offered for free at the University and it is completely confidential. It does not affect your rights to complain. You can try it first and if it doesn't help you can still make a complaint. For more details please see:

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/corporateservices/mediation/studentpage.html>.

How do I raise a complaint?

There are **3 stages** of the University's Student Complaints process.

Stage 1

This is an informal stage and involves sending your complaint in a form of a statement, or through completing the relevant Stage 1 Complaint form – which you will find in Appendix A under the [Student Complaints regulations](#). If you are complaining about your course or academic staff, you need to send your complaint to the relevant Curriculum & Quality Assurance team. If you are complaining about facilities or a service, you need to submit your complaint to the service manager. If in doubt, check with the Advice Centre or in Appendix E of the [Student Complaints regulations](#).

Following submission of your form, you will be invited to a meeting during which you will have the opportunity to state your complaint and present any evidence you have. The faculty or service will then send you the outcome of their investigation (normally within 30 days of them receiving your complaint). If you are not happy with the outcome, you can move to Stage 2 - formal complaint.



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Stage 2

If you are not happy with the outcome of your Stage 1 complaint, you can escalate it to Stage 2. This formal complaint stage involves sending a Stage 2 Complaint form together with other relevant documents, to the Dean of your faculty (if your complaint is about academic programmes or faculty staff), or to the Director of Service (if your complaint relates to service), within 20 working days of the date of the Stage 1 response. The Dean (or Director of Service) will nominate an independent Stage 2 reviewer to investigate your complaint and compile a report.

The outcome of this stage is normally sent to you within 30 working days

Stage 3

The final stage, which can only be initiated if you have new information, which for valid reasons you were unable to disclose during the previous Stages, or the process of Stage 2 was not followed correctly and that is why you were disadvantaged (you must demonstrate how you were disadvantaged).

Advice Alert: What are the key 'ingredients' of an effective complaint?

- Be factual rather than emotional
- Refer to relevant evidence supporting your claims
- Remain calm
- Provide a good statement. You can use our guide to help you:
<https://www.susu.org/downloads/advice/Student%20Statement%20Guide.pdf>
- Take responsibility for your actions
- Be aware of what is expected of you by the University and what you can expect the University to offer you - see the Student Charter
<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/about/governance/student-charter.page>



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How long does the complaint process take?

It depends on various factors, including how complex your complaint is, your availability to attend a meeting, whether your complaint is upheld at an earlier stage, or whether you are pursuing it further. For information on the timescales, please see the summary of the complaints process under Appendix D of the [University's Student Complaints regulations](#).

Who can help me with my complaint?

The Advice Centre can help you with your complaint by providing you with independent advice, feedback and representation throughout the complaints process. If you want to make a complaint, book an appointment with an Adviser, prepare a draft statement and get feedback from the Adviser before you start the process.

Further guidance

For further guidance on the Complaints regulations and the process, contact the Advice Centre.

- 02380 592 085
- advice@susu.org

You can also visit us in Building 40, Highfield campus. Our opening hours are Monday–Friday 09.00–17.00.

Disclaimer: While care has been taken to ensure that information contained in the Advice Centre publications is true and correct at the time of writing, changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of this information. The Advice Centre and SUSU cannot accept responsibility for any actions taken as a result of advice given in this publication.

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