



Newcastle University Students' Union

**STRATEGY AND GUIDANCE
DOCUMENT**

Annexe D

FORMAL COMPLAINTS

Definition of a Formal Complaint

1. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by an individual or a group about the quality of service or standards of the Students' Union or in connection with officially authorised Students' Union activities.
2. In most circumstances, issues raised about the quality of services and standards of the Students' Union or in connection with officially authorised Students' Union activities can be dealt with informally. These can be raised by contacting the appropriate department in the first instance.
3. Complaints may be brought by Student Union members, University staff, or by members of the public. Complaints received by members of the public will be subject to verification checks. Internal Union staff complaints are really grievances and must be handled via the Grievance Procedure.
4. Complaints cannot be submitted anonymously but will be kept confidential as far as possible. On receiving a complaint with such a request, NUSU will confirm who would be privy to the identity of the complaint, at which point the complainant can choose to proceed or raise concerns about those privy to the information. Anonymous complaints cannot be received to protect against conflict of interest.
5. If any party feels as though the issue has not been effectively resolved through informal processes or is regarding gross misconduct a formal complaint may be raised. Gross misconduct shall be described as but is not limited to:
 - a. Violence or threat of violence
 - b. Any illegal behavior
 - c. Damage to Students' Union property or property belonging to a member or guest.
 - d. Harassment of any kind
 - e. Failure to follow Health and Safety provisions that have or are likely to put someone in danger or serious injury, illness or death.
 - f. Serious negligence that causes or might cause unacceptable loss or injury.
 - g. Reckless or avoidable behavior which exposes the Union to potential significant financial risk or legal action.
6. All formal complaints must be submitted via the complaints form.
www.nusu.co.uk/complaints.
7. The complainant can withdraw their complaint at any point throughout the process.

On receipt of a formal complaint

On receipt a standard letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 1 working day.

8. Complaints will be forwarded to the relevant Departmental Manager, including complaints regarding members and NUSU affiliated groups (Societies, Clubs and Media). Complaints relating to other aspects of Students' Union business shall immediately be referred to the appropriate body as follows, who will follow the relevant appendix of this complaints procedure:
 - a. Actions of individual Officers relating to their Performance, to Scrutiny Committee.
 - b. Complaints regarding Freedom of Speech to the Governance and Compliance Manager.
 - c. Decisions of Executive Committees in the first instance to Scrutiny Committee.
 - d. Complaints against the Students' Union as an institution may be referred to the Academic Registrar at Newcastle University.

For any complaints received regarding the conduct of members, including members of affiliated student groups, NUSU reserves the right to recommend these be dealt with informally or by the University in the first instance.

For complaints regarding the NUSU Student Elections please see [Election Regulations](#)

Investigation

9. On receipt of the complaint, the appropriate investigating officer will carry out a full investigation. Any behavior that causes a student, guest or staff member to lodge a formal complaint about a member will be sufficient grounds for an investigation.
10. The investigation should request comments in writing from any staff members or officers concerned, and/or conduct minuted interviews with those involved, to establish the facts surrounding the complaint as fully as possible. The aim should be to provide an update into the outcome of the investigation to the complainant within a maximum of 10 working days. In exceptional circumstances the investigation team may decide to extend the investigation period beyond 10 working days and all parties will be informed of this extension. The time for an investigation can only be extended once.
11. Following the investigation, if the investigating team believe there is enough evidence to substantiate the possibility of the complaint being upheld, they will initiate a hearing.

Hearing

12. Once the investigation team have decided this will be taken to a hearing, the procedure will be followed as highlighted in the relevant appendix to this document.

Response

13. The complainant will be written to as per the respective part of the relevant appendix of this document. Where appropriate, correspondence must inform all parties of the appeal grounds should they be dissatisfied with the hearing's outcome.

Review

14. Where a complaint is regarding NUSU members, NUSU affiliated groups (Societies, Clubs and Media) or their members, the outcome of the appeal will be final.
15. Where a complaint is received regarding the services or standards of the Students' Union, the outcome of the investigation and any subsequent hearing will be reviewed by the appropriate Director or Chief Executive (as long as they were not involved with the original investigation).
16. If either party is dissatisfied with their dealings with NUSU, they have the right to complain to the University. It should be noted however that recourse to the University does not constitute a further appeals procedure.

Record Keeping

17. Notes should be taken of all interviews or meetings at any stage in any process.
18. Detailed records for any formal complaint must be kept and recorded.

When the Complaints Procedure may not be appropriate

19. If legal action is started in relation to the complaint, the complaints process will cease, although it may be necessary for internal investigations to continue.

Some complaints concerning the quality of advice provided by the Students' Union's Student Services may lead to a public liability claim. Failure to comply with this may invalidate the Students' Union's insurance.

Appendices

Appendices to the Formal Complaints document will cover the various circumstances as follows:

- Appendix 1: Members Code of Conduct
- Appendix 2: Trustee Code of Conduct
- Appendix 2a: Disciplinary Regulations relating to all NUSU Trustees in Breach of NUSU’s Trustees Code of Conduct or Misconduct in Employment
- Appendix 3: Disciplinary Policy and General Misconduct Regulations
- Appendix 4: Disciplinary Regulations relating to Elected Officer’s Performance

REVISION HISTORY

Rev.	Date	OWNER	APPROVAL	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
1	Nov 2024	DMS/GCM	Yes	Policy renewal and updates