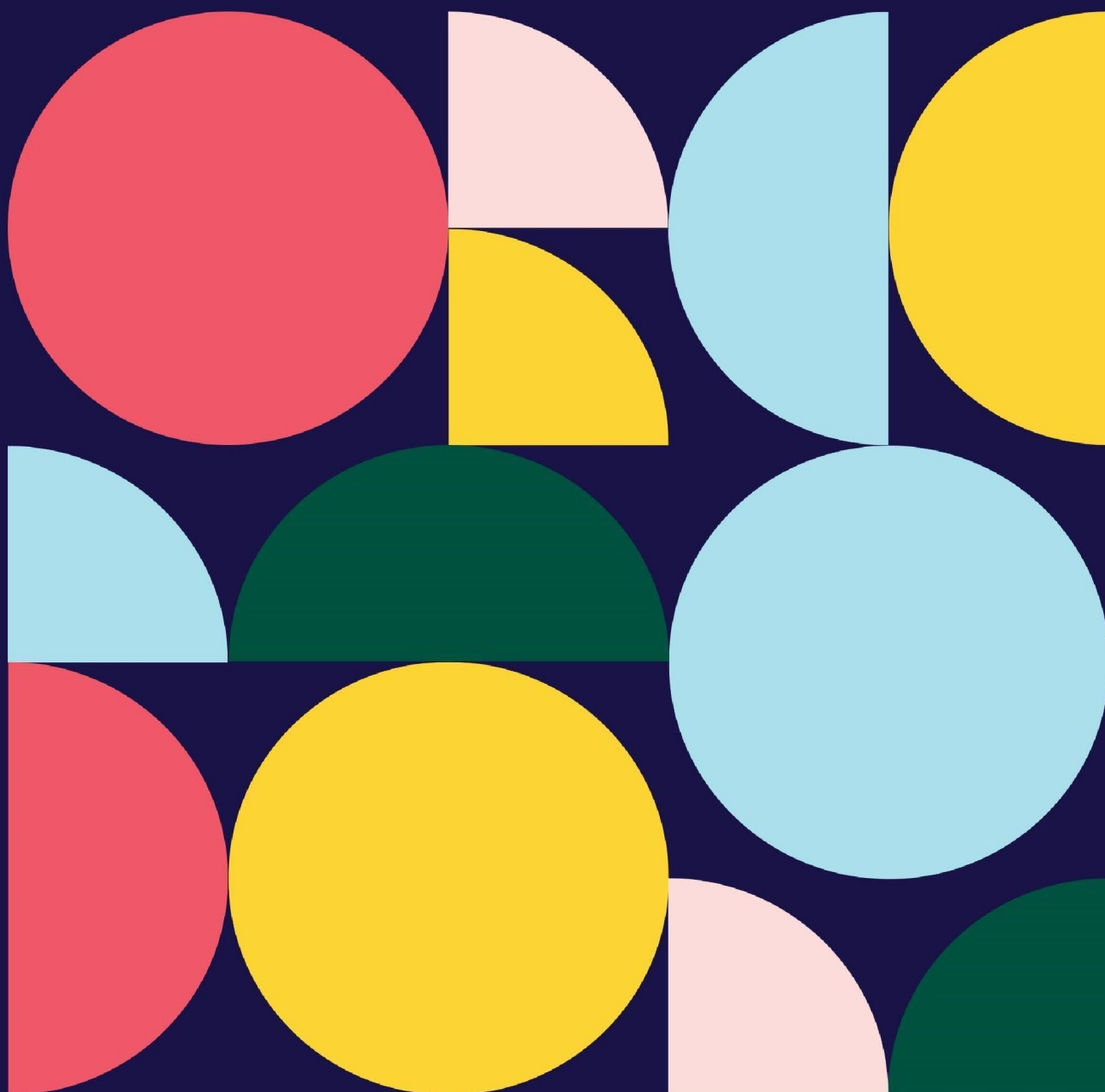




Complaints Policy

Owner: Complaints Manager
Approval: Trustees

1. What is a Complaint?

1.1. For the purpose of this policy, a complaint is defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction or concern by one or more individuals about something that Bristol SU, one of our groups, staff or members has or hasn’t done, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of Bristol SU’.

1.2. In practice, this may take a number of forms:

- Giving feedback to the Students’ Union – sharing your thoughts on something without an expectation of a resolution or outcome;
- Informally raising concerns and issues – for example sharing your concerns about some behaviours or a particular situation without a formal investigation;
- Making a formal complaint regarding the Students’ Union itself e.g. an event, service or product;
- Making a formal complaint regarding a student group;
- Making a formal complaint regarding an individual or individuals e.g. a Full Time Officer, staff member, student group leader, volunteer or student.

2. Why do we have a Complaints Policy?

2.1. We (Bristol SU) aim to provide a positive experience for all students, staff and visitors and are committed to the provision of high-quality services and activities. When we get things wrong we want to correct them and learn from them.

2.2. We value equality, diversity and inclusivity and expect individuals to be treated with respect and consideration. We expect all staff, students and visitors to act with honesty and integrity.

2.3. We recognise you may wish to give [feedback, or complain](#) about an aspect of our work or notify us of any concerns. You should feel free to raise these concerns. We use feedback and complaints to help us improve, and any concerns, including suspected fraud or dishonesty would be investigated.

3. Before Submitting a Formal Complaint Online

3.1. Wherever possible our aim is to resolve complaints informally.

3.2. If you feel comfortable to, you should attempt to resolve your complaint by talking to the most relevant person. The relevant person could be.

- The person you’re unhappy with (if your complaint is about someone’s conduct).
- The manager of the staff member or service (if your complaint is about the SU).
- The leadership of the student group or event (if your complaint is about a student group).
- Or any other [Bristol SU staff member](#).

3.3. As much as possible, Bristol SU staff will work with you to resolve issues informally. This might include mediation or correcting the problem ourselves e.g. through a refund.

3.4. If you are still not satisfied after that, you do not feel safe to talk directly to the most relevant person in the first place, or the complaint is of a serious nature, you can submit a complaint as detailed below.

3.5. We resolve complaints using a formal process that includes a thorough and fair investigation.

4. Complaints we will Investigate

4.1. You can make a complaint about any of the following:

- The Students' Union itself e.g. an event, a service, website, a decision etc;
- A student group;
- An individual or individuals e.g. a Full Time Officer, staff member, student group leader, volunteer or student.

4.2. To help the Students' Union investigate and respond effectively, your complaint should ideally be raised as soon as possible after the incident, issue or situation that is the subject of your complaint. We appreciate there may be certain reasons why you can't always do this (for example if you only find out relevant information at a later date). If there is a significant delay in raising your concern you should explain the reason for this within the initial complaint. If we feel that an unreasonable delay in raising your complaint significantly hinders our ability to investigate or manage your case, we will explain this to you.

4.3. We will accept complaints raised by anyone that may have cause to complain about our services / activities, student groups or members. The process that we follow may depend on your relationship to the SU e.g. student, University colleague, member of the community etc. Students' Union employees or officers should refer to the staff grievance policy to raise any concerns or complaints.

5. Complaints we will not Investigate

5.1. Bristol SU is independent of the University of Bristol and cannot investigate a complaint about the University, its services or its staff.

5.2. If you are a student, you can [report to the University](#):

5.2.1 Unacceptable Behaviour:

If you have experienced or witnessed unacceptable behaviour from a University of Bristol student, then you can submit a [Request contact from an Adviser form](#) to be put in contact with an Adviser from the Student Resolution Service. More information is available on the website, including what to expect when you [talk to the Student Resolution Service](#).

If the behaviour involves a University of Bristol staff member, you can report it using the [staff unacceptable behaviour form](#). You can contact the Student Complaints and Mediation Manager at student-complaints@bristol.ac.uk for help and advice before submitting your form.

5.2.2 Anonymous Reporting of Unacceptable Behaviour:

You can [anonymously report](#) incidents of unacceptable behaviour by a University of Bristol student. The University will not be able to contact you or act on this information, but it will be used to better understand the issues impacting the university community, and to shape their prevention and response to unacceptable behaviour.

5.2.3 Sexual Misconduct or Other Potentially Criminal Behaviour;

If you have a concern relating to any form of sexual misconduct or other potentially criminal behaviour by a University of Bristol student please contact the Student Resolution Service by submitting a [Request contact from an Adviser form](#) or emailing srs-casework@bristol.ac.uk There is more information on the [sexual misconduct webpages](#).

5.2.4 University service or action:

If you have a complaint about action or lack of action by the University, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University (for example halls, your course) you can submit a complaint using the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).

5.3. Bristol SU can help support you with complaining to the University:

- Our [Academic Advice](#) advisors can help you think about the most appropriate way to raise your issue and if needed, support you to do so.
- Our [Full Time Officers](#) or Chairs of Networks can raise general issues to the University or external bodies. You can contact one of your student representatives, who can advocate for changes to policy or practice that would result in better outcome for students. This tends to be most effective when the issue affects a larger number of students e.g. a whole course or all students in certain accommodation.
- Your Academic Rep or other elected representatives can raise issues that affect a whole course or year group.

5.4. Where a matter is being investigated by the police or the University, the SU will usually not investigate, but may apply precautionary measures during the investigation and/or a disciplinary outcome based on the findings and outcome of any external investigation / process.

6. Complaints about the Students' Union – an event, activity, service, decision etc

6.1. If you have a complaint about a Students' Union service, event, activity, decision or information that you cannot resolve informally, you should [register your complaint here](#).

6.2. On this form you will be asked whether you wish to provide your concern as feedback (if you are letting us know about something but don't expect any resolution or investigation) or whether you wish to submit it as a formal complaint (if you would like us to investigate and formally respond).

6.3. If you wish to complain formally, you will be asked to clarify your desired outcome. This may be a refund, an apology or for us to change something about our service.

6.4. Depending on the nature and context of your complaint, it will be designated to an appropriate manager within the Students' Union who will investigate the complaint.

6.5. The Investigating Manager will determine the facts, consider any mitigating circumstances and determine the appropriate outcome. Depending upon the seriousness of the complaint, it may be necessary for us to contact you to request additional information or evidence.

6.6. The Investigating Manager will usually contact you within 14 days of your complaint to provide a response to your complaint. If any extension is required to this timeline, the Investigating Manager will update you.

6.7. If you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may appeal the outcome by writing to the SU Complaints Office at bristolsu-complaints@bristol.ac.uk. Your appeal should be submitted within 7 days of receiving the original outcome from your complaint. Please outline the reasons why you wish to appeal.

6.8. Your appeal will be allocated to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (who has not previously been involved in your complaint). They will review your original complaint, the investigation and response

and then will reply to you with an outcome to your appeal within 14 days from the date you submitted your appeal.

7. Complaints about a Student Group

- 7.1. If you have a complaint about a student group that you cannot resolve informally, you should [register your complaint here](#).
- 7.2. On this form you will be asked to outline the nature of your concern and provide details of specific information and evidence that is relevant to your complaint. You will also be asked to clarify your desired outcome. We have a Code of Conduct for student groups that is [available here](#). Where you can, you should highlight if / where you think this Code has been breached.
- 7.3. Depending on the nature and context of your complaint, it will be designated to an appropriate manager or staff member within the Students' Union's Student Opportunities team who will investigate the complaint.
- 7.4. The Investigating Officer will determine the facts, consider any mitigating circumstances and determine the appropriate outcome. Depending upon the seriousness of the complaint, it may be necessary for us to contact you to request additional information or evidence.
- 7.5. You will normally expect to receive an outcome from your complaint within 30 days. If there is any variation to this (for example, because of a delay in speaking to witnesses) then the timeframe may be extended. The Investigating Officer will inform you of any extension to the timeline. If the outcome from your complaint involves disciplinary action for the student group (or individuals) you will be given broad information but may not be given specific details of the action taken.
- 7.6. If you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may appeal the outcome by writing to the SU Complaints Office at bristolsu-complaints@bristol.ac.uk. Your appeal should be submitted within 7 days of receiving the original outcome from your complaint. Please outline the reasons why you wish to appeal.
- 7.7. Your appeal will be allocated to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (who has not previously been involved in your complaint). They will review your original complaint, the investigation and response and then will reply to you with an outcome to your appeal within 14 days from the date you submitted your appeal.

8. Complaints about an Individual (a student, student group leader, volunteer, staff member, Full Time Officer)

- 8.1. If you have a complaint about an individual, or individuals, that you cannot resolve informally, you should [register your complaint here](#).
- 8.2. On this form you will be asked to outline the nature of your concern and provide details of specific information and evidence that is relevant to your complaint. You will also be asked to clarify your desired outcome.
- 8.3. You will receive acknowledgement to your complaint from the SU Complaints Officer, who will confirm the details of the process and expected timelines. They will also inform you the details of the Investigating Officer that will be investigating the allegations / complaint.

- 8.4. We operate a [Member Code of Conduct](#) which all students and associate members are expected to abide by. If your complaint is about the behaviour / conduct of a member, your case will be investigated and managed under the [Member Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#).
- 8.5. If your complaint is about a staff member, Full Time Officer or Trustee, your allegations will be investigated and managed using our separate staff policies and protocols.
- 8.6. If your allegations are serious in nature and relate to a student in the University, this would usually be investigated by the University. In these cases, we would refer to complaint to the Student Resolution Team (SRS) in the University and request that they investigate. We will inform you of this and pass on any relevant information that you may need to know.
- 8.7. Depending on the nature and context of your complaint, the Investigating Officer may ask to meet with you to gather further information.
- 8.8. The Investigating Officer will treat your complaint with discretion and only share details on a need-to-know basis. Some details of the complaint will need to be shared with others to effectively investigate. The Investigating Officer will discuss this with you.
- 8.9. The Investigating Officer will establish the facts, gather evidence and meet with witnesses. They will produce an investigation report which will recommend next steps which could include:
- No further action should be taken;
 - That the matter should be dealt with informally by issuing an informal warning letter to the respondent;
 - Requiring other informal action to be taken including an informal conversation, training, guidance, mediation and/or requesting an apology;
 - That the matter should be dealt with formally and progressed to a disciplinary hearing for the respondent(s).
- 8.10. You will normally expect to receive an outcome from your complaint within 30 days. If there is any variation to this (for example, because of a delay in speaking to witnesses) then the timeframe may be extended. The Investigating Officer will inform you of any extensions to the timeline.
- 8.11. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome from your complaint, you may appeal the outcome by writing to the SU Complaints Office at bristolsu-complaints@bristol.ac.uk. Your appeal should be submitted within 7 days of receiving the original outcome from your complaint. Please outline the reasons why you wish to appeal. Your appeal will be managed in line with the [Member Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#).

9. Wellbeing Support

- 9.1. We are committed to supporting the wellbeing of our students including reporting parties (complainants), respondents, witnesses and other people involved in complaints and allegations of misconduct.
- 9.2. If you would like to explore your options regarding wellbeing support please raise this with the Investigating Officer involved in your complaint. They will discuss this with you and share potential options.

9.3. If we have concerns about your wellbeing or mental health, for example because of the nature of a complaint, we may make an automatic referral to the [University Wellbeing Service](#). They may contact you to offer support.

10. Will your Complaint be Kept Confidential?

- 10.1. In order to deal with formal complaints fully and fairly, it will usually be necessary to identify the complainant to those involved in the investigation and outcome decision. If your complaint is about someone else, they will usually be entitled to know who has complained about them, especially if the complaint progresses to a disciplinary hearing.
- 10.2. At all times during investigations, confidentiality and discretion must be maintained by all those involved, regardless of the nature of the incident.

11. How is my Complaints Data Managed?

- 11.1. The records (including emails, evidence, personal data) will be kept in line with our [Privacy Policy](#).
- 11.2. After this time, we will remove all personal details and just keep a basic record of the complaint and outcome for the purposes of future complaints and improving Bristol SU's services and activities.
- 11.3. Complaint information will be stored safely and securely on a database and held in the complaints email mailbox with access only available to relevant staff.

**Complaints are normally received by the Executive and Governance Manager, so if your complaint is about the Executive and Governance Manager please contact the [Chief Executive](#) who will take over the complaint process.*