



**University of Plymouth Students' Union
Complaints Policy and Procedure**

UPSU Approvals and Review Details

Approval route:	Governance & Staffing
Last full review:	December 2025
Last administrative review:	June 2026
Date of next review:	December 2027
Director/ Manager responsible:	Deputy CEO/Governance and Compliance Manager

1 Complaints Policy

1.1 Complaints Process

UPSU is committed to delivering a high-quality service and a great student experience. However, we recognise that there may be occasions when things fall short of expectation. We encourage students and other stakeholders to advise us when they believe there is cause for concern and a case for improvement.

1.2 Who can make a complaint?

Any individual student, student group, staff member or member of the public may submit a complaint if they are dissatisfied with UPSU, a UPSU staff member, student group or, in the case of an individual student, their conduct in relation to UPSU activity.

1.3 Submitting a complaint

Every complaint submitted to UPSU will be treated confidentially and with sensitivity. We will not be able to investigate complaints if they are made anonymously or made on behalf of another person, unless permission has been expressly given by the person/people impacted and there is justifiable reason. We will not progress complaints that we consider to be malicious, vexatious, or made out of spite or revenge.

The complaints process cannot be used to express dissatisfaction with UPSU policy or the decisions of elected representatives. Dissatisfaction in these areas should be directed to su.governance@su.plymouth.ac.uk and the most appropriate course of action will be discussed with you.

This complaints procedure does not interfere with licensees' obligations to the Courts concerning the running of licensed premises. A licensee has the right to exclude persons from the premises in appropriate circumstances for the safety of others. Please refer to [venue and nightclub entry terms](#)

If your complaint relates to the University, you should use their complaints process. The Students' Union Advice Centre can advise students how to navigate that process in relation to the issue in question.

All time limits provided are to be used as a guide only and may vary depending on the nature of the complaint, time necessary to carry out the investigation and the availability of those involved. You will be kept informed if the timeframes need to be extended.

2. Informal complaints

Most complaints can usually be quickly and satisfactorily resolved informally and, where possible, these should be dealt with as soon as the matter arises. Therefore, in the first instance, you should initially approach the manager involved in the relevant service or activity within UPSU. If you are unable to find the correct contact, please email upsucomplaints@su.plymouth.ac.uk

There is no fixed process for dealing with an informal complaint, the most effective way forward will be discussed with you at the time. Ways to resolve an informal complaint may include, but are not limited to; having an in-person conversation, email communication, implementing a change to operational practice or policy, or mediation to agree a way forward.

An informal complaint should be made, in writing by email to the relevant contact as soon as possible, but no later than 20 working days from the event or circumstance taking place. On receipt of your written complaint, the manager or other relevant person will acknowledge and enquire into the complaint. They will aim to advise you of any outcome within 10 working days. However, on occasion, this may take longer and where this is the case, you will be kept informed of progress.

3. Formal Complaint

If your complaint cannot be resolved in accordance with an informal approach and it is relevant to do so, or if it is not appropriate to progress with an informal resolution to your complaint, a formal complaint can be initiated. This should be submitted in writing within 20 working days of the event or circumstance relating to your complaint. This may be extended with compelling reason.

On acknowledgement of receipt of your complaint, the relevant member of staff, dependant on nature of the complaint, will speak with everyone involved and you may be asked to provide more detailed evidence. If appropriate, a panel will be convened to review any evidence. You will receive a written response to your complaint, normally within 20 working days from your submission. If this timeframe needs to be extended, you will be kept informed.

The panel may decide that disciplinary action is appropriate, this is at the discretion of the panel, not the complainant. Complaints may run concurrently with other UPSU or University processes and timeframes and decision making may be impacted by these factors.

Where any complaint exceeds the scope of internal investigation, UPSU will refer details of a complaint, along with any evidence to any relevant external organisations, including, but not limited to the University and/or the Police.

Event	Complaint timeline	UPSU responsibilities	Next steps
Incident occurs	Informal complaint submitted ASAP after the event or circumstance and no later than 20 working days after the incident.	Acknowledgement of informal complaint and response within 10 working days or as soon as practically possible	May be extended due to investigation, mediation or vacation time. Complainant to be kept informed and involved in resolution, if appropriate
Response to Informal complaint	<p>Complainant is satisfied with the informal resolution – no further action necessary.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Complainant is dissatisfied with the informal resolution – formal complaint should be submitted within five working days of informal response.</p> <p>If informal resolution is not appropriate – a formal complaint should be received within 20 working days of the event or circumstance. This may be extended in exceptional circumstances</p>	<p>Acknowledgment of formal complaint within five working days</p> <p>Timeframe to be considered, taking into account the nature of the complaint and the informal steps already taken.</p> <p>If possible, a full response should be provided within 20 working days of acknowledgement of formal complaint.</p> <p>Depending on the severity and nature of the complaint, UPSU may inform external organisations e.g. the University and/or the Police</p>	<p>UPSU to keep complainant up to date with timeframes.</p> <p>Any additional evidence to be collected, investigation to be conducted and any necessary meetings convened.</p>
Outcome of Formal Complaint	Complainant receives a written response detailing the outcome of the formal complaint.	The outcome of the investigation is communicated to all relevant parties, as appropriate.	Any penalties are enforced and any changes to training or process are implemented.

[Link to complaint form](#)

4 Your right to appeal the outcome of a formal complaint

We aim to arrive at a resolution that is fair and that satisfies all parties involved in your complaint. However, if the formal stage does not provide an outcome that you find acceptable, either as the complainant or the respondent, you may consider the appeal stage.

Appeals will usually only be considered if;

- New evidence has come to light since the complaint was submitted but before the appeal deadline
- There is reason to believe and evidence provided that the investigation process was not fair or not conducted properly
- There is reason to believe and evidence provided that the sanction was disproportionate to the complaint.

Event	Appeal timeline	UPSU responsibilities	Next steps
Outcome of Formal complaint	<p>The complainant/respondent is not satisfied with the initial outcome and believes that there are grounds to appeal.</p> <p>Complainant/respondent appeals the outcome of the initial formal complaint within 5 working days of receiving news of the decision.</p> <p>Clear explanation should be given as to why the outcome should be reconsidered, along with any additional new evidence, should there be any.</p>	<p>Consider the request for an appeal. If the request is upheld, then a meeting will be convened comprising staff and elected representatives not involved in the original investigation or hearing. The meeting will usually occur within 15 working days of the receipt of the appeal.</p> <p>If the request to appeal is not upheld, response with a rationale will be provided, usually within 7 working days of the request.</p>	<p>If upheld, UPSU will carry out any further investigation until they are satisfied they have all the information they need to make a decision. All parties will be informed if the original outcome is upheld or revised.</p> <p>Any decision at this stage is final and all avenues of complaint within UPSU will be exhausted.</p>

If you have any questions about this process please email:

upsucomplaints@su.plymouth.ac.uk

Following the conclusion of the UPSU Complaints Procedure, if you are a University of Plymouth student and you feel that the complaint has not been handled in accordance with this procedure, you have the right to ask that the University review the matter.

You can request a review by contacting the University Registrar at vc@plymouth.ac.uk