

Complaints Procedure (Members)

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1. Purpose

- 1.1. Liverpool Guild of Students (the Guild) is committed to delivering high quality services, facilities and activities. We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when students will feel that they have cause for complaint.
- 1.2. This policy outlines the Guild's approach to ensuring that a fair and consistent process is in place for students to resolve issues as quickly as possible and that complaints are investigated consistently and promptly.

2. Principles

- 2.1. The Guild is committed to being welcoming, helpful and inclusive in the way it operates. It is expected that most day-to-day concerns, complaints or difficulties will be resolved in an open and informal way.
- 2.2. Any student or group of students that is dissatisfied with the services and facilities provided by the Guild has the right to make a complaint.
- 2.3. Whenever, in the course of this procedure being followed, an individual is invited to discuss a complaint or attend a hearing, they may choose to be accompanied by a fellow Guild member.
- 2.4. The Guild will aim to arrange any hearings in connection with the investigation of a complaint during semester time. If, in exceptional circumstances, the investigation of a complaint requires attendance to a hearing outside of semester time, reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.
- 2.5. Anonymous or third-party complaints will not be investigated under this procedure. Staff members that receive anonymous complaints should seek advice from their line manager.

3. Informal complaint

- 3.1. We hope that most complaints will be resolved via an informal discussion about the matter at the earliest opportunity. Members should therefore bring the matter to the attention of the Manager of the service, or Sabbatical Officer responsible for the area in question. This may be in person or in writing, or via the 'Contact Us' section of the Guild website.
- 3.2. The recipients of informal complaints are responsible for responding to them promptly and fairly. This would normally be within ten working days of receiving the complaint.

4. Formal complaint

- 4.1. If the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved, or if the nature of the complaint is serious, the complainant can raise the matter as a formal complaint. Formal complaints may be made about a service, an individual or group within the Guild.

5. Making a complaint

- 5.1. A formal complaint must be made in writing either by letter or via e-mail and addressed to the Chief Executive. If the complaint is concerning the Chief Executive, it should be addressed to the President.
- 5.2. For a complaint to be considered, it should be raised with 28 days of the event occurring and must briefly set out:
 - The full name and contact details of the complainant
 - The details of the complaint
 - The informal steps taken already (if applicable) and why the complainant remains dissatisfied
 - The desired outcome or resolution
- 5.3. The complaint should also enclose copies of any correspondence, evidence or useful additional information that may help the investigation of the complaint.

6. Investigating a Complaint

- 6.1. The Chief Executive Officer (or the President, where applicable) will consider the nature of the complaint and appoint someone to conduct an investigation. This person will usually be a manager or External Trustee of the Guild that has received the appropriate guidance and training and is not otherwise involved in the complaint, e.g. as a witness.
- 6.2. The person conducting the investigation will determine the facts, consider any mitigating circumstances and determine the appropriate outcome. Depending upon the seriousness of the complaint, it may in some circumstances be necessary for a hearing to be held, during which those involved may present their respective cases.
- 6.3. Once a full investigation has been carried out, the complainant will be informed of the outcome in writing within 28 days, where possible. If this is not possible, the investigator will explain that they will keep those involved up to date at agreed intervals.
- 6.4. Any disciplinary action to be taken will be done so according to the relevant Guild procedures which may include:
 - Staff Disciplinary Procedure
 - Member Disciplinary Procedure
 - Articles of Association

7. Appeals

- 7.1. You can appeal against the outcome of your complaint if you feel that:
 - the outcome is unreasonable given all the circumstances and evidence considered;
 - the correct procedure was not followed during the formal stage and this has had a significant effect on the outcome; or,
 - you have new evidence to show which you were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process, and which would have had a significant effect on the outcome.
- 7.2. If you wish to appeal, you should outline the grounds for your appeal in writing to The Guild President within 5 working days of receiving the complaint outcome.

- 7.3. If the Appointments & Appeals Committee decides that there are grounds for appeal, an appeal meeting will take place as soon as possible, and without unreasonable delay. This will usually be within 2 weeks of your appeal being received.
- 7.4. Appeals will be heard by an appropriate Senior Manager or External Trustee who has not previously been involved in the case.
- 7.5. The appeal manager will consider the grounds for appeal. They will decide:
 - if the investigation process followed was fair and thorough;
 - if the decision reached was fair, and
 - whether there are any grounds to uphold the appeal.
- 7.6. Before the meeting finishes you should be told:
 - about any further investigation that is required, and;
 - when you should expect to hear the outcome of your appeal.
- 7.7. Following the meeting, the appeal manager will consider the facts and investigate further if necessary.
- 7.8. Once the appeal manager has carried out a sufficient investigation into the appeal, they will inform you of the outcome of your appeal meeting in writing, usually within 5 working days and without unreasonable delay.
- 7.9. If, after having completed all stages of this procedure, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you may request an independent review by writing to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Liverpool. The Vice Chancellor will appoint an investigating officer to consider whether the complaint has been handled fairly and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. The investigating officer will not consider the merits of the original complaint and will be acting under the Liverpool Guild of Students Complaints Procedure and not on behalf of the University or under the University's Student Complaints Procedure.

8. Being accompanied to a meeting

- 8.1. You may bring a fellow Guild member to any meeting or hearing as part of this procedure. You must inform the person holding the meeting of your chosen companion in good time before the meeting.

9. Non-Attendance to Meetings

- 9.1. If an individual or their companion is unable to attend a meeting or hearing as part of the investigation and requests for it to be postponed, we will do our best to accommodate this. If they still do not attend the meeting after we have made reasonable efforts to rearrange it, the procedure will continue to be followed in their absence, wherever possible.

10. Confidentiality

- 10.1. At all times during investigations, confidentiality and discretion must be maintained by all those involved, regardless of the nature of the incident.

10.2. It may sometimes be necessary to disclose information to others in order to investigate the complaint and reach an outcome. In these circumstances, the complainant should be told if anyone else will be informed about the complaint outcome and the type of information they will be given.

11. Malicious Complaints

11.1. Where a member raises a complaint and there is reason to believe that this was done maliciously, this may be considered to be a disciplinary matter and investigated in line with the Members Disciplinary Policy & Procedure.

12. Further information

- Disciplinary Policy & Procedure (Members)
- Code of Conduct (Members)