

SOAS SU Complaints procedure

The Students' Union and the school have separate complaints procedures. The Students' Union procedure is available to any member of the union or opted-out student or other person such as visitor or member of school staff wishing to make a complaint or lodge a grievance against the Union, the Union Trustees (including the co-presidents), students' union staff, against any organisation within the Union (such as a club or society), or against any member of the union. This shall include any complaint arising from the Union election procedure, subject to the election rules as laid out in the Constitution and Schedules. Complaints brought shall be within the limits of the Membership Section.

The procedure allows any student, group of students or other member of SOAS Students' Union or an individual or group within SOAS students' union, relating to their treatment by SOAS students' union, relating their treatment by anyone acting on behalf of SOAS students' union or if they feel they have been unfairly disadvantaged by having exercised the right to opt of membership of SOAS students' union

The Governance and Communications Officer will be monitoring the whole complaints process. If a member of the students' union wishes to bring a complaint against the General Manager, the member shall invoke the school's complaints procedure.

Should the Governance and communications officer be under investigation, their role will be replaced by a staff member of the students' union who is not involved with the case.

Complaints against all SOAS SU staff (full time, part time and voluntary) shall be investigated under the SOAS SU Staff complaints procedure.

This complaints system will also not cover the following issues:

- Requests for new or different services
- Harassment and bullying
- Academic decisions
- Disciplinary or misconduct procedures
- Financial matters
- Staff grievance procedures
- Complaints by students on franchised programmes at other institutions

Direct resolution

It will be advised students should attempt to resolve their concerns with direct resolution through either speaking or writing to the individual(s) that's caused the grievance. The individual(s) who have allegedly caused the grievance should be given the opportunity to respond.

Should the student continue to be dissatisfied with the outcome from the direct resolution, or, if this approval is to be inappropriate or impractical, the student can attempt to resolve the complaint through the informal stage.

Direct resolution should take no longer than 10 working days from when the concern was initially raised. Should the situation take longer to be resolved the student will be advised to make an informal complaint.

Should a complaint arise against all Co-Presidents, a part time officer will be elected to investigate. Should the complainant feel uncomfortable with those elected to investigate the complaint, they must provide valid grounds for this.

The complainant can also contact either the general manager and or the academic and welfare adviser as an alternative option should they not want the co-presidents and or the part time officers to be involved.

If the decision is made that the co-presidents and part time officers should not investigate the case, then the general manager will pass the case over to the school that would elect an impartial member to investigate the case.

Informal Stage

If a student or group wishes to make a complaint, they shall initiate the informal stage by taking all reasonable steps first to resolve the matter informally and locally. Elected Co-Presidents shall, depending on the nature of the complaint, investigate the complaint at an informal level. The outcome can take up to 10 working days.

Should a complaint be made against a Co- President, an elected part time officer shall be called to investigate the case informally. Where there is a complaint made against all full time or part time staff, the elected co-president shall also investigate the case informally.

If the case rises of an informal complaint against all co-presidents and all part time officers, a member or staff of the students' union who has not been involved with the case shall be nominated to investigate the complaint.

The elected Co-President or relevant investigator will send the outcome of their investigation to the relevant people involved in the investigation in writing.

Formal Stage

Where the procedures set out so far fail to satisfy the complainant or where the matter is in any case deemed sufficiently serious by the elected co president to meet more formal consideration, the written complaint shall be taken forward as a formal complaint. The investigating co-president shall call upon the students' union to convene and chair a panel to formally investigate the complaint.

The complaint may also be taken up under formal investigation should the issue not be resolved locally and informally. The elected co-president or part time officer is responsible for the formal investigation of complaints in the student union. The formal stage should be concluded within 2 weeks. Additional time of 2 weeks can be permitted for the appeal procedure. The elected co-president or part time officer will inform in writing all parties about the complaint detailing any actions proposed at earlier stages and any outcomes from those actions. The report should include a proposed resolution such as offering an apology to the student. The report could also state the grounds of why the complaint has been rejected. An example of this could be that the complaint was identified as being vexatious e.g.

- A complaint which has already been dealt with by either the Students Union or the school and the case has been closed.
- A complaint that has been identified as solely having the intention of harassing or subduing others involved.

Formal complaints should be in writing and include the following:

- Name and student email address
- Their programme and year of study
- Details about the complaint
- Details and evidence of their attempts to resolve the complaint through direct resolution and what the outcome was.

- What they would like as an outcome of the complaint.

Appeal Procedure

If the complainant/s remains dissatisfied after all informal and formal students' union procedures, the complainant/s may appeal the decision to an appeals panel which will consist of external sabbatical officers from a university independent of SOAS should the individual or group feel that they have a cause for appeal against the panel's decisions. Any appeal must be made in writing within 5 working days of the union panel's notification of its decision and must give specific grounds for appeal. No new evidence will be accepted at this point. The appeal should detail the procedures followed to date, enclosing the necessary papers, and must give the precise grounds for appeal.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the result of the appeal procedure, the matter may be referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).