

A photograph of a modern, multi-story university building with a grey stone facade and large glass windows. A green sign with the INTO logo and University of Stirling crest is mounted on the building. Several students are walking on a paved path in front of the building. The sky is overcast.

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# STUDENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

## 2024-25

Last updated: June 2025

# INTO University of Stirling Complaints Handling Procedure

**We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve on our services**

- 1 If something goes wrong, or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This guidance document describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about how we will handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.

## **What is a complaint?**

- 2 We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

## **What can I complain about?**

3. You can complain about things like:
  - failure or refusal to provide a service
  - inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
  - the quality of facilities or learning resources
  - dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual (although it is recognised that policy is set at the discretion of the institution)
  - failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
  - failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
  - conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (**except** where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves); or
  - disagreement with a decision, (**except** where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).

## **What can't I complain about?**

4. There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:
  - a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice

- a response to an invitation to provide feedback through a formal mechanism such as a questionnaire or committee membership
- a concern about student conduct
- a routine first-time request for a service
- a request for compensation only
- an insurance claim
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (if you decide to take legal action, you should let us know as the complaint cannot then be considered under this process)
- disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector (such as an appeal about an academic decision on assessment or admission)
- a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts, or the Environmental Information Regulations
- a grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment
- a concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern)
- concerns about services out with the Institution's delegated responsibilities (e.g. conference and accommodation services to commercial clients)
- a concern about a child or an adult's safety
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- a concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (**except** where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf).
  - Please note, Academic appeals will be dealt with as detailed in Chapter 10 of the INTO UoS Quality Handbook, Academic Appeals and Student Complaints.

5. If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

### Who can complain?

6. Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service (for example, a relative, friend, advocate or adviser). If you are making a

complaint on someone else's behalf, you will normally need their written consent. Please also read the section on **Getting help to make your complaint** below.

### How do I complain?

7. You can complain
  - a. In person, to ISC Stirling reception, or Room 1.3
  - b. By telephone +44 178 646 6255
  - c. By email to [intostudentcomplaints@stir.ac.uk](mailto:intostudentcomplaints@stir.ac.uk)
8. It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service involved. Where possible, your concerns should be raised with the relevant Centre staff member. Then they can try to address the issue.
9. When complaining, please tell us:
  - i. Your full name and contact details
  - ii. As much as you can about the complaint
  - iii. What has gone wrong, and
  - iv. What outcome you are seeking

### Our contact details

10. You can contact us at any time at [isc@stir.ac.uk](mailto:isc@stir.ac.uk)
11. You can contact the INTO Complaints Team at: [intostudentcomplaints@stir.ac.uk](mailto:intostudentcomplaints@stir.ac.uk)
12. Further information on INTO University of Stirling's Complaints Handling Procedure can be found at [www.stir.ac.uk/complaints](http://www.stir.ac.uk/complaints)
13. You can contact the University of Stirling Complaints Team at: [complaints@stir.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@stir.ac.uk)

### How long do I have to make a complaint?

14. Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:
  - the event you want to complain about; or
  - finding out that you have a reason to complain.
15. In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

## **What happens when I have complained?**

16. We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages.

### **Stage 1: Frontline Response**

17. We aim to respond to complaints quickly (where possible, when you first tell us about the issue). This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the problem.

18. We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If we are unable to respond on this timeframe, we will inform you of this via email.

19. If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next. If you choose to, you can take your complaint to Stage 2. You must normally ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2 either:

- i. within three months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain; or
- ii. within two months of receiving your Stage 1 response (if this is later).

20. In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a Stage 2 complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

### **Stage 2: Investigation**

21. Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint:

- a. those where the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 1
- b. those that clearly require investigation, and so are handled directly at this stage.

22. When using Stage 2:

- we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- we will confirm our understanding of the complaint we will investigate and what outcome you are looking for

- We will try to resolve your complaint within 20 working days
- Where we cannot resolve your complaint within this timeframe, we will contact you to advise of an alternative timeframe (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation)
- we will try to resolve your complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation); and
- where we cannot resolve your complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days.

### **Stage 3: Escalation**

If you are still dissatisfied with how your complaint has been handled at the conclusion of Stage 2 as described above, you can make a further request for your complaint to be escalated to Stage 3. At this stage, the circumstances of your complaint will be reviewed by a Senior Manager within the INTO University Partnerships network, external to ISC Stirling.

If you wish to escalate your complaint to Stage 3, you should email Tuukka Hinttula, SVP UK Partnerships at [tuukka.hinttula@intoglobal.com](mailto:tuukka.hinttula@intoglobal.com), within 5 working days of receipt of your Stage 2 complaint resolution. INTO aims to complete the Stage 3 review of your complaint within 20 working days of receipt. We will let you know via email if we require any additional time beyond this timeframe to review your complaint.

### **What if I'm still dissatisfied?**

23. After we have given you our final decision, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO is an independent organisation that investigates complaints. They are not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).

You can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint if:

- you have gone all the way through the International Study Centre's Complaints Procedure
- it is less than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; and

- the matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.

The SPSO will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of our final response to your complaint. You can do this online at

[www.spsso.org.uk/complain/form](http://www.spsso.org.uk/complain/form) or call them on Freephone 0800 377 7330.

You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint. See the section on **Getting help to make your complaint** below.

The SPSO's contact details are:

SPSO

Bridgeside House

99 McDonald Road

Edinburgh

EH7 4NS

(if you would like to visit in person, you must make an appointment first)

Their freepost address is:

FREEPOST SPSO

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact [www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)

Website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)

## Getting help to make your complaint

### 24. Useful contact details:

- INTO UoS Student Support Services: [isc@stir.ac.uk](mailto:isc@stir.ac.uk)
- UoS Student Support Services: [ask@stir.ac.uk](mailto:ask@stir.ac.uk) / [www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/](http://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/)
- Students' Union: [theunion@stir.ac.uk](mailto:theunion@stir.ac.uk) / [www.stirlingstudentsunion.com](http://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com)

25. We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, please tell us via [intostudentcomplaints@stir.ac.uk](mailto:intostudentcomplaints@stir.ac.uk)

## For your information

### Representation

26. You have the right to be accompanied and represented by another registered student, member of staff at UoS International Study Centre, or member of staff at the UoS Student's Union. If the complaint concerns a member of staff, (s)he has the right to see a copy of the complaint and also to be accompanied and represented. However, normally a student or staff member cannot have legal representation and cannot be represented by another person in their absence.

### Victimisation

27. No student should be victimised as a result of making a complaint, whether the complaint is upheld or not. Victimisation will be grounds for a further, separate complaint using this Student Complaints Procedure.

### Malicious complaints

28. A student who makes a complaint which, following investigation, is found to be mischievous or malicious may be deemed to be in breach of the Code of Conduct.

**CENTRE DIRECTOR**

**DATE: 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eleanor Maly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Eleanor Maly**