



Reciprocal Advice Arrangement: Keele University Students' Union and Staffordshire University Students' Union

Introduction

The following document outlines a reciprocal arrangement between Keele SU and Staffs SU to provide an independent advice service to students who can't be supported by their home SU due to a conflict of interest.

Conflict of interest

The advice services provided by Staffs SU and Keele SU should always be impartial and independent. However, there are times when a conflict of interest can arise. A conflict of interest arises if it is not possible to give independent and impartial advice to a student for a particular reason. For advice to be impartial there must be no factors influencing the advice given to an individual student other than that of the student's best interest.

In addition, we must do our best to avoid a perception of there being other factors influencing the advice given to an individual student. To ensure we remain impartial and non-judgemental we provide a service to the first party who approaches for advice.

Examples of Conflict of Interest

- Acting for both sides in a dispute e.g., providing advice, support or representation to the accused and reporting students in a sexual misconduct case.
- The student's case involves a member of staff or Board of Trustees e.g., providing advice in a complaint against a member of staff.
- The student is presenting a case that staff knows is based on false information e.g., supporting a student to provide false information to the University.
- The student's case involves or potentially involves undertaking action against the organisation or a funder e.g., taking legal action against KeeleSU or Staffs SU as an organisation.

Service offer

In most cases of a conflict of interest there is another quality assured provider that a student can use. For example, in a housing case the other student can be helped by Shelter or, National Debtline in a money advice case. It is not envisaged that general social welfare law cases will need to be the subject of this agreement.

The following cases are the most likely to be the subject of a conflict of interest (not an exhaustive list):

- University discipline cases (including sexual misconduct);
- Emergency risk assessment processes;
- Fitness to practise procedures;
- Academic Misconduct (including contract cheating, plagiarism, and collusion).

It is these cases where the student does not have an alternative advice provider to use when a conflict of interest is declared.

Referral process

A conflict of interest will be identified by either service and respective policies and procedures followed to communicate this to the student.

The student will then be presented with the option of a referral to the other SU service and provided with enough information to allow them to make an informed decision on the way forward.

If a student consents to be referred, then a referral form should be completed, and consent obtained in writing. The referral form should contain only basic information to support the referring service to maintain independence from the conflict case.

The referring service will process the referral and contact the receiving service. The receiving service will contact the student directly and offer a service.

Supervision

The supervision structures in the respective services will be followed as appropriate.

University contacts for regulation and policies support

Keele University

Student Appeals, Complaints and
Conduct Manager

Lynn Knight

Tel: 01782 734004

Email: l.b.knight@keele.ac.uk

Staffordshire University

Regulations and Compliance Manager

Ashley Steadman

Tel: 01782 294288

Email: ashley.steadman@staffs.ac.uk

Cost

Staffs SU and Keele SU provide a free advice service and so it is not anticipated that there will be any cost difference for students.

Students may incur costs in travelling to face-to-face appointments or in making telephone calls and this should be considered in the referral process.

Confidentiality

Staffs SU and Keele SU would operate under their own confidentiality policies and procedures, with no information sharing agreement required.

Data Protection

Staffs SU and Keele SU will not have access to the other institutions university records systems.

If any information is required, then a process should be used for a student to give written permission for the respective university to share relevant information. In most cases, the student will have access to the information that an adviser would require and can share it with the relevant service.

Both services operate secure case management systems and internal policies and procedures to keep data secure.

Complaints

Student complaints will be dealt with by the service that the complaint relates to under their own policies and procedures.

For example, a Staffs student who is unhappy with the service provided by Keele SU would use the Keele SU complaints process.

A Staffs student who is unhappy with a conflict-of-interest decision by Staffs SU would use the Staffs SU complaints process.

Students should be encouraged to feedback to the referring service on their experiences.

Insurance

Staffs SU and Keele SU will be responsible for maintaining their own insurance cover, including to cover student cases under this reciprocal arrangement.

Contact

Further information on this reciprocal arrangement can be obtained through the contacts below.

Keele University Students' Union
Matt Steele
Membership Services Manager
(Advice & Advocacy)
m.steele@keele.ac.uk

Staffordshire University Students' Union
Danny Walker
Advice Manager
danny.walker@staffs.ac.uk

This agreement is signed by:



Sarah Ellis
Chief Executive
Keele University Students' Union
Date: 28/09/2021



Ken Sankson
Chief Executive
Staffordshire University Students' Union
Date: 04/11/2021