

Policy and Procedure

Keele SU is a member organisation which champions the student voice; giving students an opportunity to have their views heard is at the heart of what we do. We pride ourselves on listening to students and being able to respond to the wants and needs of the current student population. Receiving feedback and complaints are a valuable way of understanding how members are receiving the services we deliver. How we respond to complaints and suggestions is key to us being a member-led organisation.

About the Complaints Procedure

Who can complain?

Anyone who is, or was recently, a registered student. You can also use this procedure if the issue relates to you using the advice service because of the reciprocal arrangement with Staffordshire University Students' Union.

What is a complaint?

For the purpose of this complaints process, a complaint can be defined as

“an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about Keele SU’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of KeeleSU.”

This process does **not** deal with complaints about University provided services, please see <https://www.keele.ac.uk/students/academiclife/appeals-complaints-conduct/studentcomplaints> about how to complain about something at the University.

About this complaints procedure

This procedure consists of three internal stages:

1. Early resolution at a local level, e.g., can a manager step in to resolve the problem?
2. Formal stage
3. Review

If after exhausting the internal stages, you can ask the University to investigate. [See Ordinance C1](#)

What do we aim to do with a complaint?

- We aim to resolve the complaint as quickly and fairly as we can, using early resolution wherever possible.
- Deal with the complaint in confidence.
- Keep the student who has complained up to date with how their complaint is being dealt with.
- Always maintain compliance with data protection law.
- Keep to time limits, where possible.

Keele SU aims to resolve any complaints received and ask complainants to be clear about what their expectations are from the process.

It is expected that all parties act reasonably and fairly towards one another and treat the process, and those involved in the process, with respect.

Who deals with the complaint?

The CEO may delegate their authority to deal with a complaint to a member of staff, officer or trustee. The person dealing with the complaint should not do so if they might have, or appear to have, a conflict of interest (where practicable). If the complaint is about the CEO, the Chair of the Trustee Board will deal with the complaint or nominate an alternative trustee.

This complaints procedure can be used to deal with complaints, for example (but not limited to):

- Services delivered by Keele SU
- Student members acting in their capacity as society / club members or committee representatives, officers either full or part-time
- Student voice representatives
- Volunteers
- Student trustees
- External trustees, or
- Any other student rightfully acting in the name of Keele Students' Union
- Policies and Procedures or the implementation of these

What this procedure does not cover:

Where a complaint is about the actions of staff members or officers it will be dealt with through a separate HR procedure, please use the complaint form, and you will be informed about how the complaint will be dealt with.

Complaints would not normally be considered if they are related to student-to-student behaviour, unless it is specifically related to club or society activity). Complaints from students about students, unrelated to SU activities, should be directed to the University complaints procedure.

If you wish to raise a complaint about Keele University, the university complaints procedures are available at [www.https://www.keele.ac.uk/studentcomplaints](https://www.keele.ac.uk/studentcomplaints). You may wish to seek support from ASK about the University complaints process, ASK delivers free, independent, confidential, advice and support. ASK is situated on the ground floor of the Keele SU building and can be accessed via www.keelesu.com. Please note that ASK cannot advise on complaints about Keele SU.

Complaints may be **rejected** at any stage if they are found to be **frivolous, vexatious, or malicious** in nature, and students may find themselves subject to Regulation B1, Student Discipline, if this is the case.

Complaints about *election* procedures or referendums should be dealt with under the election rules and Bye Laws. Complaints relating to Students' Union elections are handled via a dedicated procedure as issued by the Deputy Returning Officer. For information, please email su.returningofficer@keele.ac.uk

Complaints about the *constitution* or about Union policy and the interpretation of these should be raised via a written submission to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. Please contact su.feedback.ac.uk for details.

If you wish to make a complaint, you will be asked to complete a form outlining your complaint, your evidence where possible, and what outcome you are looking for.

Timelines / timeliness

Complaints can be made at any time, however if there is a long gap between the incident and the complaint, it will limit the investigation and possibly the outcome / what can be done. We can only keep personal data for as long as we need it and after that it will be securely destroyed or deleted. For example, CCTV footage is normally destroyed after 31 days.

We aim for formal complaints to be completed within 90 days from the start of the formal process. We will inform you if the investigation will take longer than 90 days and keep you regularly updated about progress.

We aim to deal with any complaint in a timely way. For example, no unnecessary delays, the issues are dealt with as soon as practicable, emails are responded to promptly, and meetings are not unnecessarily delayed.

Certain types of complaint must be dealt with quickly, and we aim to do our best to resolve issues as quickly as possible, therefore, which is the reason the Early Resolution Process has been created. So, if, for example, we can provide more information or a detailed explanation, suggest solutions, or explain how steps have been taken to stop the problem reoccurring, we will. Please see below for more information about Early Resolution. If your complaint needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency, please submit the form and call 01782 73 48 00 to explain or contact the Duty Manager on 01782 733666

A complaint following Early Resolution should be made within 90 days of the outcome being received.

Reasonable Adjustments

There is a section in the complaints form to inform us of how we can support you. Please let us know if there are any reasonable adjustments we can make to help you access the process.

1. Early Resolution

Early resolution is designed to address straightforward concerns swiftly and locally. There are different ways of dealing with concerns, for example:

- Giving you more detailed information.
- Suggesting solutions.
- Being understanding about your situation even if there are no immediate solutions.
- Giving you an apology if it seems appropriate to do so.
- Face-to-face discussion with you, or asking an appropriate member of staff, or mediator or conciliator, to deal with the matter.

You should be able to communicate your concerns in this process and feel that you have been listened to. It may be possible to resolve the situation very quickly on the spot, with an explanation

of why something has happened, an apology where appropriate, and what will be done to avoid the same thing happening to other students in future.

The person who has been appointed as an Early Resolution officer, on behalf of Keele SU, will write to you to explain either the outcome of the process or how they are going to approach early resolution, which should be done in consultation with you. This response should be sent to you within 2 working days, or if they are going to involve anyone else in the process of early resolution, they should let you know and introduce them to you at the earliest opportunity. You should receive a letter / email setting out the outcome of the early resolution process, this should be sent to you within 3 working days. If your complaint needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency, please submit the form and call 01782 734800 to explain or contact the Duty Manager on 01782 733666

What if Early Resolution doesn't work / isn't appropriate or possible?

It will need to proceed to the formal stage.

2. The Formal Stage

The formal stage is used where a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of early resolution, or if the early resolution is not possible/suitable due to the nature, complexity, or seriousness of the case.

The formal stage should normally be dealt with by people who have not been involved previously and may include mediation or conciliation, where appropriate.

A complaint following Early Resolution should be made within 90 days of the outcome being received.

The formal stage would normally be used when:

- Early resolution was attempted but you are still dissatisfied, and you initiate the formal process, or
- The issues are too complex and need a detailed investigation.

You should receive an acknowledgement email / letter from the person conducting the investigation into the complaint, which will also explain what will happen.

At the end of the investigation, you will receive a Final Outcome Letter / email from Keele SU, setting out the outcome and further options if you remain dissatisfied.

What happens if your complaint is upheld?

You should receive a letter / email explaining what the outcome is, that it has been upheld and, if there is an effective remedy, what this is. This letter is called a Final Outcome letter.

3. Review.

What happens if you are not happy with the outcome of the formal investigation.

If, after using this complaints process, you are unhappy with the process or the outcome you can ask for the matter to be reviewed. The review process will involve a Leadership Team member, who will review your complaint. The designated Leadership Team member will write to you to explain the process, how long the process will take and once completed, the outcome. If you are still not happy, you can ask the CEO and / or the Trustee Board to review the whole complaint and process.

If your complaint is about the CEO, then your complaint will be passed to the Chair of the Board.

What happens if you are unhappy with the outcome of the review.

You can complain to the University, who will investigate. They will need to see the Keele SU Final Outcome letter before they can start investigating.

Please see Ordinance C1 [Students' unions - Keele University](https://www.keele.ac.uk/legalgovernancecompliance/governance/studentsunions/)
<https://www.keele.ac.uk/legalgovernancecompliance/governance/studentsunions/>

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator can consider a complaint if it has exhausted all Keele's complaint processes. If the complaint relates to freedom of speech, from 1st August 2024, the final arbiter will be the Office for Students. More information about this will be included in a completion of procedures letter from the University.

Please note:

Complaints which are deemed to be frivolous / vexatious / malicious will not be dealt with under this process. Other circumstances which may result in a complaint not being considered under this process:

- The complainant is violent
- There is a potential of fraud
- There has been a loss of confidence
- The client is not willing or able to divulge enough information for the complaint to be properly investigated
- The complainant has given false and/or misleading information
- The complainant's behaviour is in breach of the Keele SU Equal Opportunities policy