

Byelaw G	Statutory Complaints Procedure
Version: 1	Effective Date: 21/09/2026

Purpose

1. This Byelaw has been established to provide further details of the procedure for how members may complain if they are dissatisfied by their dealings with the Union, or if they feel they have been unfairly disadvantaged by reason of having exercised their right not to be a member of the Union, in accordance with the Education Act 1994. This procedure codifies the Statutory Complaints Procedure detailed in Article 20 of the Constitution.
2. The Board may determine that other complaints procedures are appropriate for specific circumstances, such as in relation to the provision of services, or in connection with elections.
3. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will ensure that any complaints procedures in force are widely published and available.
4. Elections and Referenda complaints will follow an alternative process that is outlined annually by the Deputy Returning Officer who is appointed by the Board of Trustees.

Principles of the Complaints Procedure

5. The Complaints Procedure sets the expectation that all complaints are:
 - 5.1. Taken seriously and proceed in a timely fashion.
 - 5.2. Treated in a confidential manner.
 - 5.3. Consistent with principles of natural justice.
 - 5.4. Raised no later than three months after which the matter causing complaint occurred.
 - 5.5. Made by an aggrieved party; the Union will not usually accept complaints made anonymously or on behalf of others.
6. Complaints raised more than three months after the matter which is cause for complaint will be accepted only in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the CEO.
7. This Complaints Procedure is appropriate for use by all students who are dissatisfied with their dealings with the Union. The Complaints Procedure sets out how:
 - 7.1. Students will submit complaints.
 - 7.2. Complaints will be investigated.
 - 7.3. Complaint outcomes are determined.
 - 7.4. Appeals may be submitted.
 - 7.5. Appeals will be heard.
8. The Complaints Procedure is not appropriate for complaints regarding:
 - 8.1. Political decisions taken by elected representatives, which should be raised through the political accountability framework outlined in Byelaw B.

Submitting a Complaint

9. All complaints should be made via the online Complaints Form available on the Students' Union website. Where this is not possible, complaints may be submitted in writing to the President.
10. Complainants will ordinarily receive confirmation of the receipt of their complaint following submission within 5 working days, and will be informed of any updates, actions, or outcomes of the subsequent investigation in writing.

Informal Resolution Stage

11. In the first instance we will always try to find an informal resolution for complaints, unless it would be inappropriate for the complaint to be raised informally, due to the nature or severity of the incident involved. In this instance, the complaint would be escalated to the formal complaint stage immediately.
12. If the complaint is progressed as informal, it will begin with a discussion between the complainant and a member of the Union team aimed at resolving the concerns raised. An informal complaint can be resolved by an informal discussion, mediation or by any other way that is deemed appropriate with the aim of working with all parties concerned to identify a mutually agreeable outcome.
13. If, after the conclusion of the informal intervention, the complainant is unhappy with the outcome, they can speak with the member of staff managing the informal process to explore escalating the complaint to the formal complaint stage.

Formal Complaint Stage

14. The CEO is accountable for ensuring all formal complaints are handled in line with our principles and organisational values. Upon receiving a formal complaint, an appropriate member of the Senior Management Team will assess the complaint and where necessary, sanction a formal investigation and appoint a Complaint Handler. They will be responsible for investigating the complaint and ruling on the most appropriate outcome.
15. The Senior Management Team may refer more complex cases to an external partner as Complaint Handler.
16. We aim to investigate complaints promptly and fairly. In more complex cases, we aim to conclude investigations within three to six months.
17. Complaints made about RHSU staff or Sabbatical Officers will be referred to the CEO, who will refer to our internal HR policies. If a complaint is made about the CEO, the Chair of RHSU's Board of Trustees will appoint an appropriate external Lay Trustee as Complaint Handler.

Investigation of a Formal Complaint

18. The designated Complaint Handler will ensure the investigation proceeds efficiently and in-line with timeframes outlined below. The Investigation Report will concisely summarise the facts of the complaint and, if the complaint is upheld, a recommendation as to an effective remedy.
19. In any event, the Complaint Handler will write to the complainant with an appropriate summary of the Investigation Report. Dependent on complexity, this may take up to three months and a maximum of six months following formal complaint.
20. The Complaint Handler will, generally, ask the complainant whether they would like a face-to-face meeting during the investigation process. They may also require members, staff, and trustees to support the collection of evidence in the investigation process.
21. The Complaint Handler will be guided by precedent during their investigation and will securely store their Investigation Report for an appropriate time period.

Complaint Outcomes

22. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Complaint Handler will conclude if the complaint is:
 - 22.1. Upheld: whereby the Union will seek to adopt an appropriate solution or remedy and issue an apology where appropriate. It may not always be appropriate for the complainant to be informed of all the details of any decision, for example in matters related to staffing, to comply with our duties of confidentiality as an employer. Where this is the case, the rationale will be made clear in the outcome provided to the complainant.
 - 22.2. Partially upheld: whereby the Union will seek to adopt a mutually agreeable solution or remedy. As before, it may not always be appropriate for the complainant to be informed of all the details of any decision.
 - 22.3. Not upheld: whereby the Union determines that there is no case to answer and will provide a clear rationale for the decision.
23. The Complaint Handler may conclude that an appropriate complaint outcome is the commencement of member disciplinary procedures. A complainant should have no expectation that they will be involved in disciplinary processes, as this may include confidential practices.
24. RHSU reserves the right to assess whether a complaint is unreasonable or vexatious following a preliminary assessment, for which we would advise the complainant.

Appeals

25. The complainant has a right to appeal a complaint outcome based on the following grounds:
 - 25.1. The Complaint Handler conducted the investigation in a way that was procedurally irregular which significantly contributed to the outcome
 - 25.2. Significant new evidence has come to light which could not be made available during the initial investigation
 - 25.3. The complaint outcome is considered flawed or considered wholly unreasonable, outside a range of decisions that might be considered reasonable.
26. The complainant may not appeal because they disagree with a complaint not being upheld, unless they also have one or more of the grounds for appeal.

27. Requests for appeal should be made in writing to the Complaint Handler within seven calendar days of receiving the outcome of the formal complaint. The request will be passed to the appropriate senior leader, who will determine whether grounds for appeal exist.
28. After finding grounds for appeal, the union will make arrangements for a non-conflicted senior manager and/or Trustee to consider the appeal.
29. For more complex complaints and appeals, the union reserves the right to convene a panel, made up of non-conflicted senior managers and/or Trustees.
30. The person or panel considering the appeal will review the original investigation, appeal submission and may determine the outcome without the need for further contact with the complainant. The appeal outcome will be final.

External Review

31. Complainants have the right to request that the University review the complaints process. The University will not reinvestigate the complaint but will report on the confidence that can be placed in the procedure being fair and appropriate. This process can be instigated by contacting the Union's CEO and will be managed by the University Secretary.