



SRUC Complaints Handling Procedure – Guide for the Public

At Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), we are committed to providing excellence in all our services delivered through our endeavours in education, research, consultancy and professional services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with what we are providing, please tell us. We value complaints and use information learnt from them to help us improve the services we offer. This leaflet describes our complaint procedure and how to make a complaint. Full information on our complaint procedure is available at [insert link to complaints page].

What is a complaint?

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?

You can complain about things like:

- the quality and standard of any service we provide
- failure to provide a service
- the quality of our facilities and learning resources
- unfair treatment or inappropriate behaviour by a student or staff member
- the failure of SRUC to follow an appropriate administrative process

Your complaint may involve more than one of our services or be about someone working on our behalf.

What can't I complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure.

These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- a request under Freedom of Information or Data Protection legislation
- requests for compensation only

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- an appeal about an academic decision on assessment or admission
- an appeal against a student financial support award either awarded by SRUC or awarded by SRUC on behalf of SFC or SAAS
- an issue which is being, or has been, considered by a court or tribunal
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision following an investigation.

We will not normally treat information received through routine feedback mechanisms, such as responses to questionnaires, as complaints.

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?

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. We encourage anyone with a complaint to approach us directly but can accept a complaint made on your behalf (e.g. through an SRUCSA representative, a friend, relative or an advocate) provided you give us your clear written authority to liaise with your representative, and provided you also give them clear authority to act on your behalf.

How do I complain?

You can complain in person, by phone, in writing or by email. It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you raise them as soon as you become aware of the issue, and directly to the service concerned. Please talk to a member of staff within the department you are complaining about so they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name, address and matriculation number
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

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.

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?

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage one – frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem. Where possible, your concerns should be raised with the relevant staff member. This can be done face-to-face, by phone, in writing or by email.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 within five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

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 of the complaints procedure. You may choose to do this immediately or shortly after you get our initial decision.

Stage two – investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation. We have a complaint form, which will help you to state your complaint clearly to us. Although we will also accept complaints that are made in person or on the phone, we encourage you to complete the complaint form in the interests of clarity and in order to best assist the investigation process. The complaint form and any supporting documents will be seen by the person investigating your complaint, by anyone named in the complaint and by relevant staff in the department(s) being complained about.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days and tell you who is dealing with your complaint
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, 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. Our letter advising you of our decision on your complaint will give you information on how to contact the SPSO; their website is www.spsso.org.uk.

Getting help to make your complaint

You can contact the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance, Citizens Advice Bureau or your local councillor, MP or MSP for help or support with your complaint at any stage.

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Telephone: 0131 260 5380

Website: www.siaa.org.uk

Citizens Advice Scotland

Website: www.cas.org.uk

Names of elected representatives can be found by visiting Glasgow City Council's website www.glasgow.gov.uk or by phoning 0141 287 2000 (Council switchboard).

We are committed to making our service easy to use. 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 in person, please let us know. You can contact us by e-mailing complaints@sruc.ac.uk or by writing to:

The Investigations Manager

SRUC

Edinburgh Campus

King's Buildings

West Mains Road

Edinburgh

EH9 3JG

We can also give you this leaflet in other languages and formats (such as large print, audio and Braille).

Quick guide to our complaints procedure

Complaints procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by e-mail or in writing.

We have a **two-stage complaints procedure**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage 1: frontline resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within **five working days** if we can.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2.

Stage 2: investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **three working days**. We will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than **20 working days** *unless* there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.