



# **Complaints Handling Procedure**

**A guide for students**

**August 2013**

## **Glasgow Caledonian University Complaints Handling Procedure – a guide for students**

Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) is committed to providing an excellent education and high quality services to our students from enrolment to graduation. We value complaints and use information learnt from them to help us improve and enhance the student experience. If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our service, please tell us.

This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. Full information on the University's Complaints Handling Procedure is available at <http://www.gcu.ac.uk/gag>.

### **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 service we provide
- failure to provide a service
- the quality of facilities or learning resources
- treatment by or attitude of a staff member, student or contractor
- inappropriate behaviour by a staff member, student or contractor
- the failure of the University to follow an appropriate administrative process
- dissatisfaction with the University's policies (although it should be recognised that policy is set at the discretion of the University).

Your complaint may involve more than one aspect of the above, more than one department 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 from the University
- an insurance claim
- things that are covered by academic appeals (such as the decision of an Assessment Board) and decisions about admission
- 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. If you are still not satisfied, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for an independent review of the complaint.

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 the services of the University 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 (eg through a Glasgow Caledonian University Students' Association representative, friend or family member) provided you give us your clear written 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 that they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

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

### **Is there a time limit for making a complaint?**

Normally you must make your complaint within six months of:-

- the issue arising, 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 will happen if I complain?**

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

#### Stage 1 – 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, you should raise your concerns 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 after you make us aware of the problem, unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent us from doing so.

If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this time, 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 decision.

#### Stage 2 – Complaint 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 'Request for Formal Investigation' proforma, which will help you to state your complaint clearly to us and which should be submitted to the Department of Governance and Quality Enhancement (contact details are provided later). Although we will also accept complaints that are made in person, on the phone or by email, we encourage you to complete the proforma in the interests of clarity and in order to assist the investigation process. The completed proforma 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 we receive a Stage 2 Complaint we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 3 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 and,

- 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 and will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

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

After we have fully investigated your complaint, 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 cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

The SPSO's contact details are:

### **The SPSO's contact details are:**

#### **By Post:**

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, Freepost SPSO

(this is all you need to write on the envelope, and you don't need to use a stamp)

#### **In Person:**

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Bridgeside House

99 McDonald Road

Edinburgh

EH7 4NS

(Open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 9am-5pm; Tuesday 10am-5pm)

**Freephone** 0800 377 7330 or call 0131 225 5300

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

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

**Mobile site** <http://m.spsso.org.uk>

### **Getting help to make your complaint**

We strongly encourage any student considering making a complaint to consult the Advice Centre which is an independent service run by Glasgow Caledonian University's Students'

Association (GCUSA) and staffed by professional advisers with experience of supporting students with complaints.

An Adviser at the Advice Centre can:

- help you decide whether making a complaint is the best course of action or whether another procedure may be more appropriate
- explain how the complaints procedure works and what the potential outcomes may be
- read drafts of any correspondence you write to the University (including complaint forms) to help you make your case as clearly as possible
- if requested, support you at any meetings you attend with University staff in relation to your complaint.

You can contact the Advice Centre in person, by phone or via email. Contact details are:

Glasgow Caledonian University Students' Association  
North Hanover Street Building  
70 Cowcaddens Road  
Glasgow  
G4 0BA

**Telephone:** 0141 273 1650

**Email:** [studentadvice@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:studentadvice@gcu.ac.uk)

**Website:** <http://www.caledonianstudent.com/>

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all students. 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 format, such as large font or Braille, please let us know. Our contact details are:-

Department of Governance  
Britannia Building  
Glasgow Caledonian University  
Cowcaddens Road  
Glasgow  
G4 0BA

**Telephone:** 0141 331 8226

**Email:** [complaints@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@gcu.ac.uk)

**Website:** <http://www.gcu.ac.uk/gag>

For a quick guide to our complaints procedure, please see the diagram overleaf.

## 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.