

STUDENT COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Introduction

- 1 In this document, "we", "our" and "us" refer to Sheffield Hallam University. "You" and "your" refer to students at Sheffield Hallam University.
- 2 We are committed to providing high quality education and services to all students. We aim to provide a supportive environment and to be responsive to concerns when they are raised.
- 3 We are a large and complex organisation and we know that problems may arise from time to time about teaching-related or service-related provision. You are encouraged and expected to raise any problems or issues with us immediately so we have an opportunity to discuss these with you at an early stage. This prevents things becoming more complex and difficult to resolve. We take seriously all problems and issues raised with us and aim to deal with them in a timely, fair and consistent way. We will ensure that you are not disadvantaged as a result of raising an issue with us.

Early Resolution

- 4 Most problems and issues are straightforward can be resolved very quickly (usually within 10 working days). You should raise issues at the time they arise and to try and resolve them with the member of staff most directly involved with the concern you have. Early Resolution is the opportunity to address matters with appropriate University staff without needing to complete and submit a Student Complaint Form.
- 5 You should speak to or email the member of staff most directly involved with the problem or issue that you have. This is likely to be one of the following:-
 - module tutor or module leader
 - course or programme leader
 - student support officer
 - Library Helpdesk
 - Disability or Wellbeing support officer
 - Hallam Help

If you are not sure who to speak to, or you do not feel able to approach the person most directly involved, you can seek advice regarding this from your Faculty Helpdesk, your course of departmental representative, the Student Union Advice Service or any of the people listed above.

- 6 Your concern will be dealt with promptly, sympathetically and with respect for privacy and confidentiality. You will receive a response through personal contact, usually via email. Where appropriate, particularly where we have a complex group complaint, you will be advised to move directly to the Faculty Resolution stage to enable us to undertake a full investigation of the issues you are raising with us.

- 7 Sometimes the resolution you want might not be feasible or appropriate, or we may not be able to make changes straight away. Where you feel your concern has not been resolved, you may wish to move to Faculty Resolution stage.

Faculty Resolution

- 8 You can take your problem to the Faculty Resolution stage if you feel that the outcome of raising your concern through Early Resolution is not reasonable or fair, or is taking too long.
- 9 To submit a stage one complaint you must complete the Stage 1 Complaint Form (SC1) which is available on [MyHallam](#). This form and any supporting evidence should be sent via email to your Faculty specific complaints inbox to be considered by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor.

Health and Wellbeing - HWBstage1complaints@shu.ac.uk

Sheffield Business School - SBSstage1complaints@shu.ac.uk

Social Sciences and Humanities - SSHstage1complaints@shu.ac.uk

Science, Technology and Arts - STAstage1complaints@shu.ac.uk

- 10 The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) will determine whether:
- (i) the complaints procedure is appropriate, or whether the issue should be dealt with by some other university procedure, for example, the disciplinary procedure or the appeals procedure;
 - (ii) your concerns could still be resolved under the Early Resolution process, and decide how to progress towards resolution;
 - (iii) your complaint is considered to be trivial or malicious and should be dismissed.
- 11 Within 3 working days of receipt of your SC1 form, you will receive an acknowledgement from the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee).
- 12 Within 10 working days of receipt of the SC1 form, the investigator appointed to investigate your case will contact you to discuss in further detail the issues raised. Your concerns will be investigated as quickly as possible while recognising the need for a thorough investigation. We aim to complete the investigation and come to a conclusion within 40 working days of receiving your SC1 form. You will be contacted every 15 working days to keep you informed of progress.
- 13 You can have a meeting with the investigator who may then decide that further meetings with you are necessary. You should make attendance at such meetings a priority. If you choose not to attend meetings which have been convened within a reasonable period of time, the investigator will continue the investigation and come to a conclusion. If you are unable to attend a meeting in person, we will offer a suitable alternative such as a telephone call or, where feasible, a video link.
- 14 You can bring someone with you to any meetings held to support you. You are not permitted to have someone from the legal profession employed to work on your behalf at the meeting. We do not imitate the legal justice system and we believe that legal representation is unnecessary for both you and the University.
- 15 Once a conclusion has been reached the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) will let you know the outcome and what action we will take, if any.

University Resolution

- 16 You can take your concerns to the University Resolution stage if you feel that the outcome of your concern raised at Faculty level is not reasonable or fair. You cannot raise new concerns at this point.

- 17 To submit a stage two complaint you must complete the Stage 2 Complaint Form (SC2) which is available on [MyHallam](#). This form and any supporting evidence should be sent via email to appealsandcomplaints@shu.ac.uk to be considered by the Vice-Chancellor. You should do this within 10 working days of receiving the written outcome of the Faculty Resolution stage. Forms received beyond the 10 working day period will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where you have provided a valid reason, with evidence, for the delay.
- 18 The SC2 form requires a statement from you stating how your concerns have not been satisfactorily resolved at Faculty Resolution stage. Your SC1 form and accompanying evidence will also form part of the material which will be considered at the University Resolution stage. You do not need to resubmit these to us. However, you can comment on any evidence collected by the Investigator during the Faculty Resolution stage and submit any new evidence.
- 19 Your case will be considered on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor by a nominee from a list of trained senior members of staff.
- 20 The nature and extent of the review will be at the professional judgement of the person considering your case. It may include one or more of:
- a review of the consideration of the complaint at Faculty Resolution stage to see if this was conducted fairly and in accordance with normal procedures;
 - a review of the information available at Faculty Resolution stage to see if more information is required;
 - a review of the reasonableness of the outcome of the Faculty Resolution stage
 - further investigation;
 - consideration of further evidence and related points, but not new complaints, submitted by you;
 - any other action considered by the person considering the case to be appropriate.
- 21 Within 3 working days of receipt of SC2 form, you will receive an acknowledgement from the Vice-Chancellor or nominee.
- 22 Your concerns will be considered as quickly as possible while recognising the need for a thorough review. We aim to consider your case and come to a conclusion within 20 working days of receiving your SC2 form. You will be contacted every 10 working days to keep you informed of progress.
- 23 You can have a meeting with the investigator appointed to investigate your case who may then decide that further meetings with you are necessary. You should make attendance at such meetings a priority. If you choose not to attend meetings which have been convened within a reasonable period of time, the investigator will continue the investigation and come to a conclusion. If you are unable to attend a meeting in person, we will offer a suitable alternative such as a telephone call or, where feasible, a video link.
- 24 You can bring someone with you to any meetings held to support you. You are not permitted to have someone from the legal profession employed to work on your behalf at the meeting. We do not imitate the legal justice system and we believe that legal representation is unnecessary for both you and the University.
- 25 Once a conclusion has been reached we will let you know the outcome and what action we will take, if any. At this point, we have completed our internal procedures and you will be issued a Completion of Procedures statement.

- 26 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may be able to apply for a review of your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) providing that the complaint you take to them is eligible under its rules. You should check out the OIA rules and timescales for contacting the OIA on their website - [Office of the Independent Adjudicator - OIA Homepage](#)

General Points

- 27 You should raise problems and issues with us in a reasonable way in line with the Student Charter and the Student Code of Conduct. You need to be clear and concise and to think carefully about what you want to achieve as an outcome.
- 28 If you are studying for a Sheffield Hallam award at one of our collaborative partners, we would expect you to raise any concerns with this partner in the first instance. As such, the Early Resolution and the Faculty Resolution stages would be undertaken by the collaborative partner, and we would undertake the University Resolution stage.
- 29 Where you are a member of a group of students raising a common issue with us, we will discuss with you how best to resolve the issue, e.g. depending on the number of students involved, it may be appropriate for you to nominate someone as the group representative to communicate on behalf of the group.
- 30 Where a complaint concerns the conduct of a member of staff, a complaint investigator may be required to notify Human Resources of the details of complaint. A decision will then be taken as to whether and when a separate procedure is needed. Due to the confidential nature of any such proceedings you may not be entitled to know the details of any subsequent action taken or the final outcome of any such proceedings.
- 31 If you are unsure how to pursue a complaint or have queries about this procedure, you should contact your Student Support Officer. If you wish to seek independent advice about your concerns, we recommend the Student Union Advice Service as being the appropriate source of informed and independent support.
- 32 Only in exceptional circumstances can a third party raise issues or submit a complaint form on your behalf. You must request permission in writing stating reasons why you are unable to raise issues yourself. The person considering the case will decide if your reasons are acceptable.
- 33 You cannot move directly to the University Resolution stage of the process unless your concern is about a Dean of Faculty or Head of Directorate. If you escalate your concern directly to the Vice-Chancellor, your issue will be directed to the Faculty to deal with under this procedure.
- 34 If you raise issues that are trivial or malicious or if you do not behave in line with the Student Code of Conduct, we may take action under the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#). Where permission has been granted to a third party to raise an issue or submit a complaint form, we may, at any time, refuse to accept that representation any further if the third party pursues the case in a way which can be construed as being rude, aggressive, disruptive or otherwise improper. In such situations you will be able to take over pursuit of the case and engage an alternative third party should you wish to do so.
- 35 If your concerns are related to harassment, then you should access the information provided in the [Student Anti-Harassment Policy and Support for Students](#).
- 36 You should not use this process if you believe you have suitable grounds for requesting a review of an assessment decision made by a Departmental Assessment Board, Extenuating Circumstances or Academic Conduct Panel. You should use the [Appeals Policy and Procedure](#). The outcome of an appeal cannot be made the subject of a complaint. If you do submit an

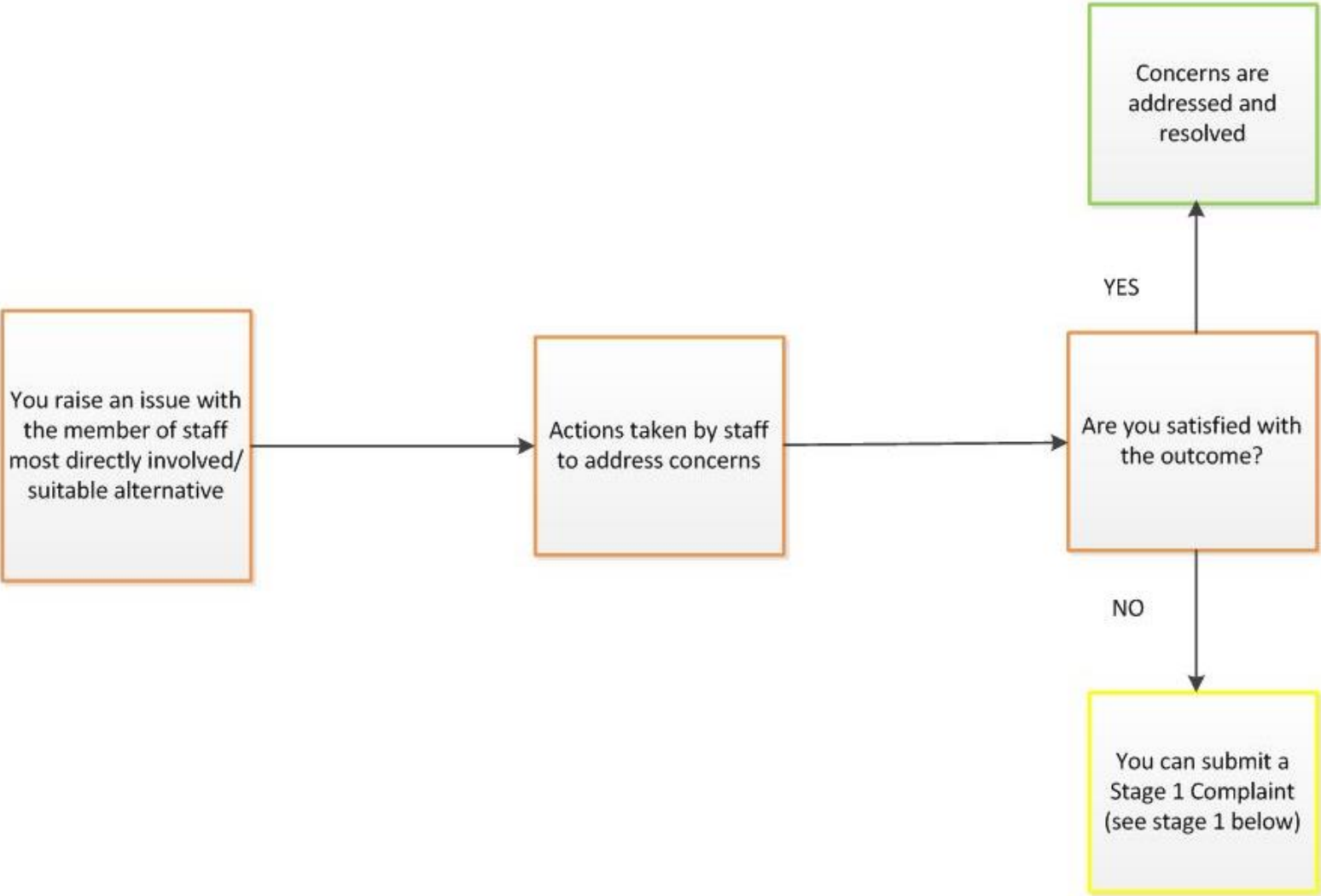
appeal form and a complaint form, we will make a decision about the most appropriate process to use and inform you of that decision.

- 37 We will consider problems or issues raised with us from former students providing they relate to matters which arose when they were students and providing the case is initiated within 3 months of the former student ceasing to be enrolled at the University. Whether and how we respond to any issues raised outside of this timescale is at our discretion.
- 38 Some complaints may concern matters which are criminal offences, and should be dealt with through law enforcement processes. In such cases you are strongly advised to report them immediately to the police. Where criminal investigations are under way, we may delay the progression of any complaint relating to the same matters until after the outcome of the investigation is known.
- 39 All information submitted in relation to complaints will be dealt with confidentially and will only be disclosed to those parties involved in the investigation and judgement of the complaint, or as is necessary to progress the complaint, or as required by law. In accordance with the Student Privacy Notice, data from complaints is retained for a period of six years.
- 40 At all stages of the investigation we will be transparent and give you access to the information relevant to the case, subject to considerations of privacy and confidentiality, and the reasonable interests of any third parties.
- 41 We regularly review student complaints in order to better understand and respond to student dissatisfaction and to learn from cases.

Version:	1.4		
Original Version Approved by and date:	Board of Governors, 19 March 2013 (minute reference 13/42)		
Date for Review:	October 2019		
Owner :	Assessment, Awards and Regulations, Registry Services		
Amendments since Approval:	Detail of Revision:	Date of Revision:	Revision Approved by:
	Clarifications to points 3, 4, 5 and 36	Reissued for 2015/16	
	Clarifications to points 14 and 25	Reissued for 2016/17	
	Clarifications: point 28 in relation to how students at collaborative partners raise complaints; point 30 in relation to the management of staff complaints; revised annexes - flow charts for the three stages of the complaints process	Reissued for 2017/18	Assistant Registrar (Assessment, Awards and Regulations)
	Clarifications: point 4 - indicative timeframe added point 6 - group complaint process clarified point 39 - retention periods for complaint data clarified	Reissued for 2018/19	Head of Student Policy and Compliance

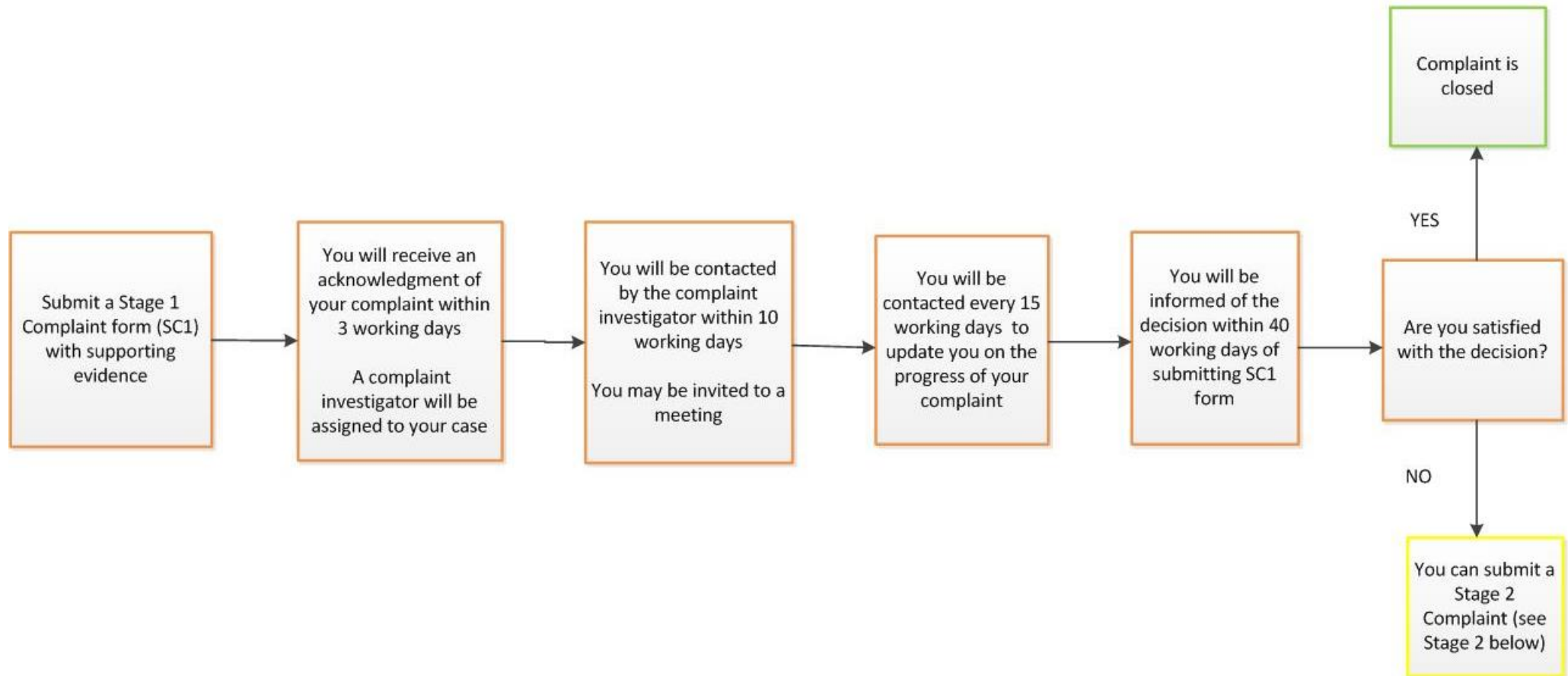
ANNEX 1a: EARLY RESOLUTION

You are encouraged to raise any concerns as soon as possible so these can be resolved quickly and efficiently without the need to submit a complaint form.



ANNEX 1b: STAGE 1 - FACULTY RESOLUTION

If you are not satisfied with the early resolution response or it is taking too long, you can submit a Stage 1 complaint.



ANNEX 1c: STAGE 2 - UNIVERSITY RESOLUTION

If you are not satisfied with the Faculty resolution you can submit a Stage 2 complaint.

