



Christ Church Students' Union

COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Approval bodies and date passed	Board of Trustees - 20th May 2024
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[1. Introduction](#)

[2. Objectives of the Procedure](#)

[3. Scope](#)

[4. Expectations](#)

[5. How to submit a comment or complaint](#)

[6. Comments and feedback](#)

[7. Complaints](#)

[Concluding a complaint](#)

[8. Data Handling](#)

1. Introduction

- a. Christ Church Students' Union ('CCSU' or 'the Union') strives for continuous improvement and is committed to providing members with outstanding services to enhance their university experience. The Union welcomes feedback and suggestions that can help develop these services.

2. Objectives of the Procedure

- a. To clarify the roles and responsibilities of the complainant and the Union;
- b. To ensure transparency so that all involved know what to expect of the process;
- c. To encourage the resolution of issues and complaints informally and at the earliest stage possible;
- d. To adopt best practice in dealing with complaints fairly;
- e. To learn from complaints and make improvements where appropriate;
- f. To provide an objective view at each stage of the process; and
- g. To provide a mechanism for appeal.

3. Scope

- a. This Policy covers all Union services. All complaints relating to any of the Union's democratic structures, elected officers and representatives, constitution, code of conduct, policies, and procedures are outside of the scope of this Policy and will be dealt with separately under the Bye-Laws of Christ Church Students' Union.
- b. Complaints about other students shall usually be considered by the University under the [Student Procedures](#) process.
- c. The Union encourages respect and tolerance and all organisations, clubs, societies and other student groups that we work with commit to these values. We will work

with clubs and societies to resolve complaints, but we will not intervene where individuals, not acting in an official capacity, have disagreements. We will offer guidance and support on managing these situations wherever we can.

- d. If the complainant is unclear whether their complaint is of a political nature or not, or a matter specifically relating to a member of a student group acting in their official capacity, the final interpretation will be the responsibility of the Students' Union President or the Chief Executive. If advice is needed on a complaint, or if any part of this procedure is unclear, the complainant can speak with the Students' Union President or Chief Executive, who can provide any help required.
- e. Any comments received about University services and/or staff will be logged by the Union and passed to the University Student Communications Team. Complaints about the University should follow the [University Complaints Procedure](#).

4. Expectations

- a. The Union will treat anyone who complains with courtesy and respect. The issue will be taken seriously and every effort will be made to try and resolve the complaint. In the first instance we will try to resolve complaints informally. Any complaint will be acknowledged and will be dealt with by an appropriately knowledgeable person. A response will be provided within a reasonable timeframe and we will keep the complainant informed about that timeframe and any delays.
- b. The procedure laid out in this Policy is at all times subject to a requirement of reasonableness. Any person found to abuse the procedure, for example by deliberately making false accusations, may be disciplined through the appropriate procedure.
- c. Confidentiality will be respected and we will seek permission where others need to be involved. If the complaint indicates evidence of potential criminal activity or harm to an individual, the Union reserves the right to break confidentiality upon approval of the Students' Union President or Chief Executive.
- d. As part of a commitment to continuous improvement, the Union's Leadership Team will actively review all comments and complaints received (anonymised, if required) and ensure these are communicated internally to the appropriate people and services to support the future development of the Union's services.

5. How to submit a comment or complaint

- a. Comments can be received:
 - i. in person – come and speak to a staff member or an elected officer in Canterbury or Medway;
 - ii. on the Union's website - www.ccsu.co.uk/feedback;
 - iii. via Facebook - www.facebook.com/ChristChurchSU;
 - iv. via Instagram - www.instagram.com/ChristChurchSU;

- v. via X - www.x.com/ChristChurchSU; or
- vi. via email – hello@ccsu.co.uk.

- b. Formal complaints **must be submitted by this form**. This will ensure complaints are recorded, tracked, and progressed through the Union's procedures and complainants are updated regularly.

6. Comments and feedback

- a. The Union will acknowledge all comments and feedback on Union services wherever contact details have been provided. Comments and feedback may be utilised by the Union in future marketing and publicity material.

7. Complaints

- a. Complaints must be made by named individuals. Anonymous complaints will not be considered.
- b. The Union will deal with complaints in confidence and within the indicated time scale wherever possible. Where this is not possible, the Union will contact the complainant to agree a timescale and a way forward in handling the complaint. Where the Deputy Chief Executive is not available, or is somehow involved in the complaint, they shall be substituted by the Chief Executive.
- c. Initial Handling of Complaints
 - i. All complaints will be acknowledged within three working days of receipt by the Comms Team, if contact details have been provided.
- d. Stage One - Informal
 - i. In the first instance the Union encourages members to seek an informal resolution, where appropriate, and agreed by all parties. Where this is not appropriate, the complaint shall be considered under Stage Two - Formal
 - ii. The Comms Team will also appoint an Investigating Officer, who shall usually be a manager within the Union, to progress the complaint. This may include obtaining further information from the complainant, including a desired resolution.
 - iii. In the informal stage, the Investigating Officer will attempt to resolve the issue informally however, they will make it clear that any formal action will need to result from a formal investigation where evidence is documented in writing.
- e. Stage Two - Formal
 - i. At Stage Two the role of the Investigating Officer will assemble a suitable Complaints Panel consisting of at least one elected student leader.
 - ii. The Investigating Officer will establish the facts of the case promptly, obtain written evidence, interview witnesses, and keep written records. In conducting interviews the Investigating Officer will state the issues as known;

ask for information and explanations, and inform the complainant of the next steps and timelines. They will consult with staff advisers as necessary and prepare a written summary of findings.

- iii. The Complaints Panel will then review the information provided and agree on the outcome of the complaint.

- f. Stage Three - Appeal
 - i. If the original complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of Stage Two, they have the right of appeal, which must be communicated in writing within ten working days of the notification of the outcome of Stage Two.
 - ii. Appeals will only be considered in instances where there is new information or the complainant is dissatisfied with the process followed to investigate the complaint.
 - iii. An Appeals Panel consisting of the Union's Deputy Chief Executive or the Chief Executive and an elected student leader will consider the appeal.
 - iv. Stage Three may include review of any new evidence presented, or an expansion of the evidence-gathering. This will be at the discretion of the Appeals Panel.
 - v. The Appeals Panel will review the entire complaint within five working days and inform the complainant if the original decision has been upheld or overturned. If the latter, the email will include any remedial action that is to occur.
 - vi. The determination of the complaint at appeal stage is final.

- g. Stage Four - University
 - i. Under the [Code of Practice for the Operation of the Students' Union](#) a student does, under certain circumstances, have the right to complain about the Students' Union to the Governing Body of the University via the Clerk.

Concluding a complaint

- h. In the event of a justified complaint against a person or group, the following procedure shall apply:
 - i. If the Complaints Panel or Appeals Panel conducting the investigation considers that there has been a breach of the Union or University disciplinary policies then the matter will be referred to the relevant authority;
 - ii. The complainant shall not have a right to demand that the Disciplinary Procedures are invoked, or that sanctions be imposed; and
 - iii. Once all investigations are concluded, written communication will be sent to the complainant setting out how the complaint was investigated and, where appropriate, details of any actions taken as a result of the findings.

8. Data Handling

- a. Data on comments and complaints will be handled and retained in accordance with the Union's Data Protection Policy.

- b. The Union's Comms Team may choose that actions taken as a result of comments are published in a range of materials. All compliments will be logged centrally, and stored for use in positive marketing materials published and distributed periodically.
- c. Complaints will not be made publicly available; however, a summary of complaints with personal data redacted will be presented to the Union's Board of Trustees and the Governing Body of the University annually.