

# Liverpool Guild of Students Complaints Procedure

## 1. General Principles

1.1. Liverpool Guild of Students is committed to ensuring that we deliver high quality services, facilities and activities. We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when students will feel that they have cause for complaint. Complaints may be made by individuals or by groups. This Complaints Procedure sets out how complaints will be addressed.

1.2. This Complaints Procedure has been ratified by the LGoS Board of Trustees, the governing body of the Guild of Students. It will be available on the LGoS web site and periodically will be brought to the attention of all staff and students.

1.3. If a person believes that they have a legitimate complaint in one of the following areas:

- The services and facilities provided by LGoS or
- An individual or group within LGoS.

then s/he may use the Complaints Procedure set out in this document.

1.4. This procedure does not apply to the conduct of Guild elections. If a person wishes to complain about Guild elections they should follow the process outlined in Bye-Law 6 of Liverpool Guild of Students.

1.5. This procedure aims to ensure that;

- Where possible, matters are resolved at a local level
- Complaints are treated seriously, positively and constructively
- Complainants will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as the result of making a complaint in good faith.
- Matters are dealt with promptly and appropriately
- Complaints are investigated fully and fairly with due regard to the LGoS' Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Feedback is used to improve Liverpool Guild of Students' services, facilities and activities

1.6. If a complaint is found to be justified, LGoS will take such action or provide such remedy as may be appropriate and will do so promptly. The complainant will be advised of this in writing. If a complaint is not upheld, the reasons for the decision will be communicated to the complainant in writing.

1.7. Complainants and any individual against whom complaints are made may expect complaints to be dealt with confidentially and that his/her privacy will be respected. However, it may be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint. In these circumstances the parties concerned will be informed of such disclosure.

1.8. Whenever, in the course of a complaint being dealt with, a complainant or any person against whom a complaint is made is invited to discuss the complaint orally or to attend a hearing, s/he shall be entitled to be accompanied. The companion may be either a friend or colleague. He/she must tell the person who is conducting the complaint hearing who the chosen companion is in good time before the hearing.

1.9. In normal circumstances any hearing which a complainant is invited to attend in connection with the investigation of a complaint will be held during semester time. If, in exceptional circumstances, the investigation of a complaint requires a complainant's attendance outside of semester time, reasonable travel and subsistence expenses incurred by the complainant in attending the complaint or appeal will be reimbursed by LGoS.

- 1.10. Where time limits for action are defined, they are to be considered as maximum limits; all complaints and appeals will be dealt with as promptly as possible. Where there is good reason to extend these limits, the complainant(s) will be informed immediately.
- 1.11. Anonymous or third party complaints will not be dealt with under this procedure. If a member of staff receives an anonymous complaint, s/he will be expected to seek advice from his/her line manager as to how the complaint should be dealt with.

## 2. Stage One- Local Resolution

2.1. The majority of complaints can be resolved satisfactorily at a local level:

2.1.1. If the complaint is against an individual, the complainant should, if possible, first raise their complaint either orally or in writing with that individual, or the appropriate departmental manager, stating the remedy they are seeking.

2.1.2. If the complaint is about facilities or services provided by LGoS, the complainant should raise the complaint with the appropriate departmental manager again stating the remedy being sought.

The complaint must normally be made within 28 days of the actions (or lack of actions) which prompted the complaint. The person to whom the complaint has been made shall respond to the complaint, normally within ten working days of the complaint being made. If it proves impossible to respond fully within ten working days, the complainant shall be informed of the timescale for the receipt of a full response.

2.2. If the person to whom a complaint has been made rejects the complaint, s/he must state his/her reasons for doing so.

2.3. If a complaint is of a general rather than specific nature, it may be more appropriate to ask the Chief Executive or LGoS President to raise it at an appropriate committee or group.

## 3. Stage Two- Central Resolution

3.1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the written response, or if s/he feels unable to attempt a local resolution, s/he should refer the matter formally in writing to the Chief Executive. Where the complaint is against the Chief Executive Officer the complaint should be address to the President.

3.2. The written complaint should set out briefly

- 3.2.1.1. the name, address, contact telephone number and email address of the complainant
- 3.2.1.2. the nature of the complaint
- 3.2.1.3. the informal steps already taken (if any)
- 3.2.1.4. details of the response received
- 3.2.1.5. a statement as to why the complainant remains dissatisfied
- 3.2.1.6. the remedy sought

The complaint should enclose copies of any correspondence exchanged during Stage One and any other relevant papers.

3.3. The Chief Executive Officer (or the President if the complaint is directed against the Chief Executive Officer) shall acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing within five working days. S/he shall appoint a person or persons within LGoS, having no material interest in the complaint, to carry out an investigation. This person would in most instances be a senior manager or an External Trustee of LGoS.

3.4. The investigator(s) may seek to resolve the issue on the basis of documentation, after having sought further information from the members of staff involved in the informal investigation of the complaint, or may call a hearing at which the complainant and any other persons involved may submit their respective

cases. In the unavoidable absence of any parties in the hearing, the hearing may be postponed, but the voluntary absence of one of the parties shall not prevent the hearing proceeding.

3.5. After investigation of the complaint the investigator(s) shall decide whether the complaint is justified or not and shall submit a report in writing to the Chief Executive Officer (or President), containing such recommendations as may be appropriate. The Chief Executive Officer shall determine what action, if any, shall be taken and shall communicate this in writing to the complainant and all other relevant parties within 28 working days of the date of acknowledging receipt of the formal complaint.

### 3.6. Appeals

3.6.1. If the complainant wishes to appeal against a decision he/she must do so in writing to The Chair of the Appointments & Appeals Committee within 5 working days of being notified of that decision, stating the grounds of appeal. Failure to state the grounds of the appeal will render the appeal invalid.

3.6.2. The appeal meeting will take place as soon as practicable, normally within 10 working days of the appeal being lodged.

3.6.3. Appeals will be considered by a senior manager or external trustee who has not previously been directly involved in the case. The appeal officer will normally be accompanied by an HR adviser and a note taker if appropriate at the appeal meeting.

3.6.4. The appellant and any person who is the subject of a complaint may each be accompanied at any such meeting by a friend or colleague or other agreed person, who may speak on his/her behalf, at the appeal meeting.

3.6.5. The outcome of the appeal will normally be confirmed at the end of the meeting and will be in writing within 5 working days or the decision may be deferred for notification in writing within 5 working days.

### 3.7. University

3.7.1. If, having completed all stages of this process, the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint they may request an independent review of the complaint by writing to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Liverpool. The Vice Chancellor will appoint an investigating officer to consider whether the complaint has been handled fairly and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. The investigating officer will not consider the merits of the original complaint and will be acting under the Liverpool Guild of Students Complaints Procedure and not on behalf of the University or under the University's Student Complaints Procedure.

## 4. Monitoring

The Chief Executive Officer of LGoS will monitor, on an annual basis, complaints which have been submitted to the Guild and will be responsible for implementing, or recommending changes to systems or procedures. The LGoS Board of Trustees and the Guild Liaison Sub-Committee (GLSC) shall receive on an annual basis a report on the outcome of the monitoring processes and from time to time shall consider whether changes to the Complaints