



Highlands & Islands Students' Association  
Comann Oileanaich na Gàidhealtachd agus nan Eilean

# Complaints Procedure

Highlands and Islands Students' Association

## Purpose

- 1.1 The procedure for dealing with a complaint received from any person or organisation concerning their interaction with HISA is outlined below.
  - (a) Complaints about elected HISA representatives should be addressed to a HISA sabbatical officer; complaints about sabbatical officers should be addressed to the HISA Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
  - (b) We draw particular attention to HISA's Code of Conduct which lays out what we expect of all student participants, volunteers, Executive Officers, and staff members in their behaviours when representing HISA in any capacity.
  - (c) HISA undertakes to treat all complainants fairly and in line with its Equal Opportunities Policy.

## Objectives

- 2.1 This procedure outlines the steps HISA will take to address complaints raised by any party in relation to any services, venues, or activities.
- 2.2 Any person who has encountered any of HISA's services can make a complaint using this procedure.
- 2.3 Complainants may make a complaint about any of the following:
  - (a) a problem with a service;
  - (b) the quality of our facilities or equipment provided;
  - (c) unfair treatment or inappropriate behaviour by a HISA staff member, volunteer, or another person engaged in a HISA activity or premises.
- 2.4 There exist separate procedures to address complaints about student elections.

## Stage One Frontline Complaints - Informal Process

- 3.1 HISA aims to ensure that any complaints are resolved promptly. In the first instance, the complainant should raise any issues with the person/department with whom they are dealing directly.
- 3.2 This can be done in person, by phone, or in writing via email or letter. All outcomes and decisions will be issued to the complainant in writing via email, unless the complainant requests an alternative method.
- 3.3 The staff head of the department or manager receiving the front-line complaint shall respond to the complainant within five working days of receiving the complaint. A short extension to this is permitted if there is a real likelihood of the complaint being resolved within that time. The complainant should be kept informed of any delay in the process.
- 3.4 If the complaint is more complex and requires fuller investigation, it shall be deemed a Stage 2 complaint and investigated under the Stage 2 procedure outlined below. Likewise, if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, they may proceed to Stage 2.

## Stage Two Investigations

- 4.1 A Stage 2 complaint should be set out in writing, concisely giving the grounds for the complaint, any evidence in support of the complaint, and any requested remedy. Complaints should be addressed to [hisa@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:hisa@uhi.ac.uk).
- 4.2 Complaints about members of staff will be investigated by the staff member's line manager. Complaints about any activities or operations will be investigated by the relevant Head of the Department.
- 4.3 On receipt of a Stage 2 complaint, the line manager/head of department will first determine whether the student association has jurisdiction over the complaint. Complaints relating to an alleged breach of the University's/Academic Partner's rules or criminal law will generally be referred to the appropriate authorities. The Investigating Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days.
- 4.4 The Investigating Officer will issue a written response to the complaint within 20 working days. If, for any reason, the Investigating Officer is unable to respond to the complaint within 20 working days, they will contact the complainant to explain this, and to inform the complainant as to when a response to the complaint will be issued.
- 4.5 In some cases, the Investigating Officer may refer a complaint for investigation under HISA's disciplinary procedures for the staff or student members. Where this occurs, the complainant will be informed of this, but may not be informed of the outcome of any disciplinary procedures.
- 4.6 Where the Investigating Officer considers themselves to be subject to a conflict of interest or wishes to recuse themselves for any other reason, they shall notify the

complainant and refer the complaint to the CEO. In any event, the CEO may nominate another manager, who has not already been involved in an issue at an earlier stage to investigate a complaint on their behalf.

- 4.7 All complaints and the responses issued to these complaints, will be reported to the CEO, the Student Regional President, and the Board of Trustees.
- 4.8 The decision at Stage 2 is the final stage within the internal procedure. If someone wishes to raise the matter further as they believe that the Union has not properly investigated or responded to their complaint, they shall be directed to the University of Highlands and Islands' Complaints Handling Procedure.

## Record Keeping

- 5.1 Confidential records of all complaints will be stored for six years. We will seek to use complaints as organisational learning tools.

## Anonymous Complaints

- 6.1 Anonymous complaints will be dealt with, but only if sufficient information is given so that a reasonable and fair investigation of the complaint may be carried out. Any complaints considered malicious will not be reviewed. The decision on whether to act on an anonymous complaint is at the discretion of the investigating manager.

## HISA Advice Service – Conflict of Interest

- 7.1 Please note that the Advice Service cannot offer advice or support with complaints being raised against HISA or any member of HISA staff as this would be a clear conflict of interest. If you require support with raising a complaint, you are advised to seek advice from your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

<b>Policy Title</b>	Complaints Procedure
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