

Swansea University  
Residential Services

# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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### 1. Complaints Process – Quick Guide

We're committed to resolving issues quickly, fairly, and respectfully. Most concerns can be sorted informally, so we encourage you to speak to us as soon as possible.

#### How the process works

Stage	What this means
<b>Stage 1: Informal Resolution</b>	Raise your concern with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residence Reception</li> <li>• Your Residence Manager</li> <li>• accommodation@swansea.ac.uk</li> </ul> Most issues are resolved at this stage
<b>Stage 2: Formal Complaint</b>	Submit a formal complaint using the Complaint Form: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What happened</li> <li>• What's already done</li> <li>• Why you're dissatisfied</li> <li>• What outcome you're seeking</li> <li>• Supporting evidence</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3: Final Review</b>	Request a final review if you remain dissatisfied. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent review of how your complaint was handled</li> <li>• Does not normally re-investigate the issue</li> </ul>
<b>External Review (OIA)</b>	Refer your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) after completing all stages

#### Key time limits

Requirement	Timescale
Raise concerns	As soon as possible
Informal complaints	Normally within <b>3 months</b>
Formal complaints	Within <b>20 working days</b> of outcome (or within <b>3 months</b> of issue)
Final Review request	Within <b>14 working days</b>

#### Important to know

- Raising a complaint does not pause your contract or rent payments
- The complaints procedure cannot be used to request release from, or to vary the terms of, an accommodation agreement
- Requests to leave accommodation must be made through the Release from Accommodation Contract Request process, which is separate from this procedure

#### Support available

You don't have to do this alone — support is available from:

- Students' Union Advice Centre
- Friends or family (with your consent)
- University support teams

If you need adjustments (e.g. different formats or extra support), let us know.

#### Our commitment to you

We will:

- Treat your complaint seriously and fairly
- Respond within clear timescales
- Keep you informed throughout

We'll also use feedback to improve our services.

## 2. Purpose of Procedure

Residential Services (RS) is committed to resolving concerns promptly, fairly, and proportionately. Wherever possible, concerns will be addressed informally in the first instance.

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a clear, fair, and transparent process for students to raise concerns or complaints about services or facilities provided by RS.

The procedure aims to ensure that complaints are considered carefully, investigated where appropriate, and resolved in a timely and consistent manner. It also provides RS with the opportunity to identify areas for improvement and enhance the quality of accommodation services provided to residents.

The University is committed to handling complaints respectfully, impartially, and in accordance with its policies, legal obligations, and recognised sector guidance.

Students are encouraged to raise concerns promptly so that issues can be addressed at the earliest opportunity and, where possible, resolved informally before progressing to a formal complaint.

## 3. Scope and Exclusions

This procedure applies to complaints about the services or facilities provided by, or on behalf of, RS.

This procedure relates only to concerns about the standard of service, facilities, or actions taken by RS in the delivery and management of university accommodation. It does not replace or override other University policies, procedures, or statutory processes.

This procedure applies to accommodation services delivered directly by the University and to accommodation provided through the University's approved accommodation partners.

Residents are expected to familiarise themselves with the University's Residence Regulations, accommodation terms, and any guidance provided. Where this information has been made available, a lack of awareness will not normally be accepted as grounds for complaint.

This procedure is intended to consider whether RS has acted reasonably, fairly, and in accordance with its policies and legal obligations. It does not normally substitute the University's academic, contractual, or operational judgment with that of the complainant.

The University may apply this procedure flexibly where necessary to ensure a fair, proportionate, and timely investigation. Any variation to the procedure will be applied in a way that does not disadvantage the student.

The submission of a complaint under this procedure does not normally suspend or delay any contractual, disciplinary, tenancy management, or operational action being taken by the University. The University may continue to progress other relevant processes where appropriate.

Where a complaint falls outside the scope of this procedure, the University will advise the student of the appropriate alternative process to follow.

### **Requests to be released from an accommodation agreement (Occupation Contract)**

These are not considered under this Complaints Procedure.

Accommodation agreements are legally binding contracts, and requests for release are considered under the **Release from Accommodation Contract Request process**, in line with the terms of the agreement and relevant housing legislation.

This process is separate from the complaints procedure and includes its own review and decision-making framework.

Where a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of a release request, this does not constitute a complaint about service. However, a complaint may be considered where the student believes that:

- Incorrect or misleading information was provided; or
- The process was not followed correctly.

In such cases, the complaint will consider whether the **process was followed appropriately**, not the contractual decision itself.

**This procedure does not normally cover the following matters:**

Matter	How it is handled
Anonymous complaints	Normally not investigated unless there is a compelling reason
Matters already considered under another University procedure	Handled under the relevant University procedure
Academic appeals, assessment outcomes, or admissions decisions	Considered under the University's Academic Appeals or Admissions procedures
Complaints about staff conduct	Managed through the University's staff conduct procedures
Requests to end or be released from an accommodation agreement	Considered under the terms of the accommodation agreement and relevant housing legislation (see Occupation Contracts section)
Matters subject to legal proceedings or insurance claims	Normally handled through the relevant legal or insurance process

#### 4. Occupation Contracts:

Requests to end or be released from an accommodation agreement are **not considered under the Complaints Procedure**.

An accommodation agreement (Occupation Contract) is a legally binding contract, separate from a student's academic status. Decisions relating to release from contract are made in accordance with the terms of the agreement and relevant housing legislation, including the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.

Students wishing to request release from their contract must follow the **Release from Accommodation Contract Request process**, which operates separately from this procedure.

Verbal advice or informal discussions do not override the terms of the accommodation agreement. Only formal written confirmation issued by Residential Services will be considered binding.

Nothing in this procedure affects a resident's statutory rights under housing law, including rights under the [Renting Homes \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) relating to property condition, repairs, fitness for human habitation, or occupation contract rights.

#### 5. Interaction with Other University Processes

Submitting a complaint does not normally affect ongoing contractual, disciplinary, or operational processes.

Where issues raised within a complaint overlap with other University procedures, the University may determine the most appropriate process for considering the matter and may pause or redirect elements of the complaint where necessary.

Students are expected to provide all relevant information and evidence at the earliest opportunity so that their complaint can be investigated fairly and efficiently.

## 6. What is a student complaint?

A student complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about action or inaction by RS or the quality of services provided by or on behalf of the University. This includes concerns related to buildings and services managed by RS. This procedure does not normally cover the behaviour of other students; however, complaints about how RS has responded to such issues may be considered.

The University will normally only consider complaints submitted by the student directly affected unless written consent has been provided for a third party to act on their behalf.

Complaints about fellow students should be directed to the University's **Dignity at Work and Study** (Combating Harassment) Policy. Harassment, bullying, or discrimination complaints should be addressed to a trained Harassment Adviser. Complaints regarding admissions should be referred to the **Admissions Complaints and Appeal Procedures**.

## 7. Submitting a complaint and support

Students may seek advice or support when submitting a complaint and may be accompanied or represented by a third party (for example, the Students' Union Advice Centre, a friend, or a family member), provided the student gives written consent for RS to correspond with that person.

Students who require reasonable adjustments to access this procedure, including alternative formats or additional support, are encouraged to contact RS as early as possible so appropriate arrangements can be made. Reasonable adjustments may include extended timescales, alternative formats, or support from a third party.

- 1) Complaints must be submitted via the Complaint Form.
- 2) Complaints should normally be submitted by the resident. Where a student is supported or represented by a third party, the complaint must be made with the student's knowledge and written consent.
- 3) Complaints should be made as early as possible. Students should be aware that any lengthy delay may limit the way in which the University can investigate the complaint or the University's ability to put things right.

Complaints submitted outside the stated time limits will not normally be considered unless there is a compelling reason for delay.

This procedure will also apply to former students at Swansea University who have left residences if the complaint is made within **3 months** of leaving university residences or within **3 months** of the date of the event(s) giving rise to the complaint, whichever is the earlier date.

## 8. Timeliness of Complaints

Complaints should be raised as soon as reasonably practicable after the event(s) giving rise to the concern. The University may decline to investigate complaints where there has been an unreasonable delay in raising the matter and where the delay may affect the University's ability to investigate the issue fairly or effectively.

The complaints procedure is intended to review concerns about service delivery or procedural fairness. It is not normally used to challenge contractual obligations or other University processes unless there is evidence that those processes have not been followed correctly.

The complaints procedure is **not an alternative route for appealing contractual decisions**, including decisions relating to release from an accommodation agreement.

The relevant process relating to your accommodation contract will therefore continue in accordance with the terms of the contract and the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 while your complaint is considered.

### 9. How to raise a concern

STAGE	WHAT THIS MEANS	UUK ALIGNMENT
<b>Stage 1: Informal Resolution</b>	Raise your concern with your Residence Reception or our Residence Manager. You can also Email: accommodation@swansea.ac.uk Most issues are resolved at this stage.	Pre-Formal Stage (Local Resolution) Early, local resolution encouraged before entering the formal complaints process.
<b>Stage 2: Formal Complaint</b>	Submit a formal complaint using the Complaint Form, including: What happened What's already been done and any supporting evidence Why you're dissatisfied & what outcome you're seeking Your complaint will be formally investigated and a written outcome provided.	Stage 1 (Formal Complaint)
<b>Stage 3: Final Review</b>	Request a final review if you remain dissatisfied. Independent review of how your complaint was handled Does not normally re-investigate the issue Focuses on whether the process and outcome were reasonable You will receive a <b>Completion of Procedures letter</b> at this stage.	Stage 2 (Review Stage)
<b>External Review (OIA)</b>	Once all internal stages are complete, you may refer your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). This is an independent external review of your complaint.	Stage 3 (External Review)

### 10. Complaints Process

We are committed to providing high-quality services and facilities that meet your needs. However, if we fall short of your expectations or if you have concerns about the quality of our services or facilities, we encourage you to let us know. We are dedicated to resolving any issues and ensuring your satisfaction.

Stage	Purpose	What this means	Who reviews it	Outcome	Timescale
<b>Stage 1: Informal Resolution</b>	Resolve issues quickly where possible	Raise your concern with Residence Reception or Residential Services so it can be addressed early.	Residence Manager or Residential Services staff	Issue resolved or moved to Stage 2	Usually within 20 working days
<b>Stage 2: Formal Complaint</b>	Investigate unresolved concerns	If not resolved informally, submit a formal complaint. This will be formally investigated.	Head of Residential Services or appropriate senior officer	Written outcome provided	Usually within 20 working days
<b>Stage 3: Final Review</b>	Review how the complaint was handled	If you remain dissatisfied, request a final review to assess whether the process and outcome were fair.	Independent senior officer (no prior involvement)	Completion of Procedures letter issued	Usually within 20 working days
<b>External Review (OIA)</b>	Independent review outside the University	After completing all stages, you may refer your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.	Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)	Independent decision	Within 12 months of Completion of Procedures

All complaints are reviewed at an appropriate level of seniority and, at the Final Review stage, by a decision-maker independent of the original investigation

### 11. Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Complaints raising concerns about student safety, safeguarding, or serious health and safety risks may be prioritised and managed outside the standard timescales set out in this procedure and may be referred to other University processes where appropriate.

Students are encouraged to raise concerns directly with Residence Reception or Residential Services so issues can be addressed as early as possible.

Informal concerns will normally be reviewed and addressed by the relevant Residence Manager or an appropriate member of Residential Services staff, depending on the nature of the issue.

Most complaints can be resolved at this stage with the individuals involved.

Where appropriate, Residential Services may offer an early resolution meeting or mediation to help resolve the issue.

Students are encouraged to engage with this stage, as it is often the most effective way to resolve concerns. Students will not be disadvantaged or treated less favourably for raising a complaint in good faith.

### 12. Before submitting a formal complaint

Before submitting a formal complaint, students are encouraged to ensure that:

- The concern has first been raised informally, where possible.
- All relevant information and supporting evidence have been gathered.
- The outcome being sought has been clearly explained.

Providing clear information at the outset helps the University investigate the matter efficiently and effectively.

### 13. Stage 2: Formal Written Complaint

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, the student may submit a formal complaint using the Complaint Form.

#### Formal Complaint – Submission Requirements and Review Process

Requirement	Detail
<b>When to submit</b>	Formal complaints should normally be submitted within <b>20 working days</b> of the response to the informal complaint, or within three months of the event giving rise to the complaint, where no informal complaint was raised
<b>Late submissions</b>	Complaints submitted outside these time limits will <b>not normally be considered</b> , unless the complainant can demonstrate a <b>compelling reason</b> for the delay (for example, illness, disability, or significant personal circumstances).
<b>How to submit</b>	Formal complaints must be submitted via the <b>Complaint Form</b> .
<b>Who reviews the complaint?</b>	Stage 2 complaints are reviewed by the Head of RS, or by an appropriate senior officer, where it would be inappropriate for the Head of RS to consider the complaint. RS will normally aim to provide a written response to a formal complaint within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

The written complaint should set out the following:

Required information	What this means
<b>Summary of the complaint</b>	A brief, clear description of the issue, including relevant events, dates, and times.
<b>Informal steps taken</b>	Details of any informal action already taken to resolve the matter, including the names of staff involved and the outcome(s).
<b>Reason for dissatisfaction</b>	An explanation of why you remain dissatisfied with the outcome to date.
<b>Outcome sought</b>	A statement of the resolution or outcome you would like to see. This helps the University understand your expectations, although the University will determine the appropriate outcome following investigation.
<b>Supporting evidence</b>	Copies of any relevant documents or correspondence that support your complaint (for example, emails, photographs, or records).

The University may determine an alternative or proportionate outcome following investigation, even where this differs from the resolution initially requested.

The University will normally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within 5 working days

The University will normally aim to complete Stages 2 and 3 within **90 working days** of the start of Stage 2.

Where relevant, the student may be provided with a summary of evidence considered in reaching a decision, subject to data protection and confidentiality obligations.

Evidence may include relevant records, correspondence, reports, or information obtained from staff or contractors.

Where a complaint relates directly to the Head of RS, or where it would otherwise be inappropriate for them to review the complaint, the University will appoint an alternative senior officer to consider the matter at Stage 2.

#### 14. Stage 3: Final Review

Requirement	Detail
<b>How to request a final review</b>	Requests must be submitted <b>in writing</b> to the <b>Director of Education Services</b> (the "Director") by completing the <a href="#">Final Review Form</a> .
<b>Submission deadline</b>	Requests must be made <b>within 14 working days</b> of the date of the decision being reviewed.
<b>Late submissions</b>	Requests received outside this time limit will <b>not normally be considered</b> unless the student demonstrates a <b>compelling reason</b> for the delay.
<b>Eligibility decision</b>	Where a request is deemed not eligible for consideration, the student will be notified of this outcome <b>in writing</b> .
<b>Completion of procedures</b>	Once the Final Review stage has concluded, the student will be issued with a <b>Completion of Procedures letter</b> , confirming that the University's internal complaints process has been exhausted.
<b>External review (OIA)</b>	If the student remains dissatisfied, they may refer the matter to the <b>Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)</b> in accordance with the OIA's rules and time limits.

Any complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator must be submitted within **12 months** of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

### When a review can be requested

The Final Review will not normally re-investigate the complaint but will consider whether the procedure was followed correctly, whether the decision was reasonable based on the evidence available, and whether the outcome was proportionate. No new evidence will normally be considered at this stage unless there is a compelling reason why it could not have been provided earlier. The Final Review will be conducted by a senior officer who has had no prior involvement in the handling or decision-making of the complaint.

The Final Review stage applies only to complaints made under this procedure. It cannot be used to review or overturn decisions made under separate contractual processes, including decisions relating to release from an accommodation agreement.

## 15. Outcomes

Outcomes will be determined based on the evidence available and the University's policies, contractual obligations, and legal duties.

### Where a complaint is upheld, outcomes may include one or more of the following:

Outcome type	Examples
Explanation or apology	Clarification of decision, acknowledgement of error
Corrective action	Repairs, service adjustments, process correction
Service improvement	Review or amendment of procedures
Financial remedy	Refund or compensation, where appropriate, in line with the University's Compensation Policy.

Not all complaints will result in a specific remedy, and the outcome will depend on the circumstances of each case.

Any financial remedy will be considered in line with the University's Compensation Policy and will not normally exceed the financial loss or impact experienced.

Complaints may be upheld, partly upheld, or not upheld, depending on the findings. Where a complaint relates to the conduct of a member of university staff, the outcome will focus on the service provided to the student. Any action relating to staff conduct or performance will be managed separately under the University's internal procedures and will not normally be disclosed to the complainant.

At the conclusion of the Final Review stage, the University will issue a Completion of Procedures letter, confirming that the internal complaints process has been exhausted. This letter explains how the student may refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

## 16. Service Disruption and Inconvenience

The University recognises that from time to time, residents may experience temporary disruption arising from maintenance works, repairs, inspections, or operational activities necessary for the safe and effective management of accommodation.

Minor inconvenience or short-term disruption will not normally constitute a service failure and will not normally result in financial compensation.

Where a complaint is upheld, any financial remedy will be considered only where a significant service failure has materially affected the reasonable use of the accommodation.

## 17. Relationship with Accommodation Agreements

The submission of a complaint under this procedure does not suspend or delay the operation of any obligations or

actions arising under a resident's accommodation agreement, Occupation Contract, or the University's Residence Regulations.

This applies to circumstances where disciplinary, contractual, or tenancy management actions are being considered or progressed.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Payment of accommodation fees.
- Compliance with residence regulations.
- Contractual notice periods.
- Disciplinary processes.
- Termination or recovery of accommodation.

Complaints relating to such matters will normally be considered alongside the relevant contractual or disciplinary processes, but will not prevent the University from taking action where appropriate.

### 18. Financial Matters

Students are required to continue to pay their accommodation fees during a complaint investigation, in line with their agreed tenancy dates. Failure to do so may result in the account being passed to debt collection, which could lead to additional charges.

Where a complaint is upheld, and a financial remedy is considered appropriate, compensation or a refund will be assessed in accordance with the University's Compensation Policy.

Financial remedies may be considered only where a significant service failure has materially affected the reasonable use of the accommodation and will apply only to the affected period.

Any financial remedy awarded will be proportionate, based on the net rent paid, and will reflect the nature, duration, and impact of the service failure. Where compensation is approved, it will normally be applied as a rent rebate or account credit, unless otherwise agreed.

Compensation is not a substitute for the University's obligation to remedy service failures and restore accommodation to an appropriate standard.

### 19. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially, in line with the [University's Data Protection Policy](#) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). Information will be shared only with those who need to be involved in investigating and resolving the complaint.

### 20. Managing Repetitive, Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaints

The University will consider all complaints fairly and in good faith. However, the University may decline to consider a complaint, or may place reasonable limits on communication, where the complaint is:

- frivolous, vexatious, or malicious
- repetitious or substantially similar to matters already considered and concluded.
- where this impacts the University's ability to respond effectively
- submitted in a manner that is abusive, threatening, or unreasonable toward staff.
- 

Where a complaint raises issues that have already been fully considered through this procedure, the University

may decline to re-investigate the matter and may issue a Completion of Procedures letter.

The University may also take proportionate steps to manage unreasonable levels of contact or repeated submissions relating to the same matter, in accordance with the University's Managing Unreasonable Behaviour policy.

### 21. Completion of Procedures

Once the University's internal complaints procedure has concluded, the student will be issued with a Completion of Procedures letter. This confirms that the University's internal process has been exhausted and explains how the student may refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

The written response will include the reasons for the decision, any remedy offered, and information about the student's right to request a Final Review.

Students are encouraged to engage fully with the University's complaints process and to provide all relevant information at the earliest opportunity so that concerns can be considered and resolved as effectively as possible.

Students may refer their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator within **12 months** of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

### 22. Paying your Accommodation Fees

Submitting a complaint does not normally affect contractual obligations, including payment of accommodation fees, unless confirmed otherwise in writing.

If you experience financial problems while you are dealing with a complaint, have trouble paying your accommodation fees or:

Have a query relating to your invoice.

- Have not received your Student Loan.
- Are experiencing genuine financial hardship.

For students who have not received their Student Loan or are experiencing financial hardship, advice and assistance is available from [Moneyadvice@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:Moneyadvice@swansea.ac.uk)

- The Money Advice Team is open for general drop-in sessions: for exact times, contact them directly on Tel No: +44 (0) 1792 606699 or contact them [via email](#)
- If you need more information on student funding, visit our information on [fees and funding](#)

### 23. Unreasonable or Abusive Behaviour

The University is committed to handling complaints fairly and respectfully. However, where a complainant's behaviour is considered unreasonable, abusive, or excessive, the University may apply restrictions in line with its Managing Unreasonable Behaviour policy, while ensuring that the complaint itself is still considered appropriately.