

STUDENT AWARDS AGENCY SCOTLAND

A GUIDE TO COMPLAINTS

Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) is committed to providing a high-quality customer service. We want to know if something goes wrong or if you are dissatisfied with our service. We want to use the information received on complaints to help us improve.

We are committed to making our service easy to use and in line with our statutory equalities duties. We will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services. This guide can be printed in other languages and formats (such as large print, audio and Braille).

This guide describes our Complaints Handling Procedures and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

| WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action or about the standard of service provided by us.

| WHAT YOU CAN COMPLAIN ABOUT

The definition of a complaint is very broad and the list is not exhaustive. A complaint may involve more than one service and can be made about things like:

- a delay in responding to an enquiry or request
- our failure to provide a service
- a request for a service or information that we have not actioned
- the quality and standard of service
- treatment by or attitude of a staff member
- our failure to follow proper administrative process
- our policy

| WHAT IS NOT A COMPLAINT

There are some things we cannot deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include

- a disagreement about a student funding decision (see appeals guide)
- a routine first-time request for a service
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- Freedom of Information or Data Protection request decisions
- legal proceedings or judgements

| WHO CAN COMPLAIN?

Anyone can make a complaint. We understand that there may be reasons why a student is unable or reluctant to make a complaint therefore, we accept complaints from representatives, friends or relatives.

IMPORTANT: If you are acting as a representative, we will not provide you with information we hold about a student until you provide us with written consent from the student agreeing to you acting on their behalf. Please see the [attached form](#).

| HOW DO I COMPLAIN?

By completing the [attached form](#). Tell us:

- your full name, address and student reference number
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter

You can send this to us by email: SAASComplaints_Appeals@gov.uk

In writing: Student Awards Agency Scotland, Complaints and Appeals Team,
Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3UT
Please clearly mark your letter 'Complaint'.

You can also complain by telephone: 0300 555 0505 and we will ask you for further information.

You can also visit us at the above address.

| HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO MAKE A COMPLAINT?

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly. Please talk to a member of our staff so that they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain but no longer than 12 months after the event itself

We may consider a complaint after the time limit in exceptional circumstances. Please tell us why the time limit should not apply to your complaint.

OUR TWO STAGE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

| STAGE ONE - FRONTLINE RESOLUTION

We aim to resolve complaints quickly, this could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong and immediate action taken to resolve the issue. Our decision at stage one is normally made within five working days and it will be reviewed independently from the area where the complaint occurred. We will contact you if we cannot make a decision in that time and agree an extension of time.

If we cannot resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to stage two.

| STAGE TWO - INVESTIGATION

Stage two deals with two types of complaint - those that have not been resolved at stage one and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using stage two we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- give you a full response to the complaint within 20 working days

We will agree revised time limits and keep you updated on progress if our investigation will take longer than 20 working days

| WHAT IF I AM STILL NOT SATISFIED?

If you are still not satisfied with our decision after we have investigated your case, or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not gone through our two stage complaints procedure (please make sure it has done so before contacting SPSO)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than 12 months ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court

You can contact SPSO:

In person: By post:
SPSO Freepost SPSO
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS

Freephone: 0800 377 7330
Online contact www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us
Website: www.spsso.org.uk

RECORDING, MONITORING AND REVIEWING COMPLAINTS

We have a system for recording complaints, their outcomes and any resulting action, which allows us to identify opportunities to improve our services. Our Management Board and Executive Team are provided with information on complaints received and about patterns or trends that suggest we should change our procedures. We publish details in our annual reports.