

Procedure for addressing complaints at University owned Residences

1. Purpose / Objective

This procedure applies ONLY to University owned Residences:

- Badock Hall
- Churchill Hall
- Clifton Hill House
- Hiatt Baker
- Wills Hall
- Durdham Hall
- Goldney Hall
- Manor Hall
- University Hall
- Student Houses

For all other Residences please see Procedure for addressing complaints in partnership residences

The procedure aims to provide a consistent approach to dealing with student tenants should they be unhappy with their accommodation or experience, up to and including the provision of a financial gesture of goodwill.

The procedure seeks to ensure that:

- Concerns are resolved at a local level without recourse to the formal complaints procedure wherever possible.
- Lines of communication are clarified.
- A clear escalation process is in place.
- Any complaints that are made come to a single central point for the purposes of monitoring and the quality agenda.
- Complaints are dealt with fairly and transparently.
- The University can demonstrate a consistent response to complaints, particularly with regard to goodwill payments
- Residents' satisfaction is restored and enhanced by the way we deal with complaints.

2. Scope / Reason for Issue

A concern generally falls into one of five categories:

1. Fees & Charges
2. Damage or Loss of Belongings
3. Repairs and Maintenance or Services

4. The Accommodation Experience
5. Pastoral Care

This procedure is to be followed by all University Residences staff

3. General Principles

3.1 The University will only respond to complaints received from residential students, any third parties including parents should be advised of the complaints procedure and how the student can access them, this will ensure that:

- The University is responding to the holder of the tenancy agreement under which any liability is created
- The facts provided are accurate and first hand
- The student is offered the opportunity to develop skills in effective complaints which will be essential for their successful transition into the private sector

3.2 The University will only respond to complaints received via the established online form, this will ensure that all the necessary information can be gathered at the outset of a complaint

3.3 The University will only recognise the Students union as representing students or groups of students, this will ensure that representative are taken from a properly elected and accountable student body.

4. Procedure

1. Accommodation Fees – not charges for damage, cleaning etc

Any student who is unhappy with the level of their accommodation fees should see their SSA, if the SSA is unable to explain or reconcile the figures the student should be advised to complete the [online report form](#).

Accommodation office staff will check that the student is being charged the correct fee in accordance with the accommodation fees published annually:

- Where an error has occurred the Head of Accommodation Services (HAS) will authorize an adjustment and inform the student in writing.
- Where the rent is correct the HAS will liaise with the Warden and accommodation manager (AM) to identify any underlying problems that are giving rise to the complaint and consult with the Director of Residences and Students Union (SU) representative as to an appropriate response.

At the time of making the online complaint the student will be informed of the assistance

offered by the Students Union's Just Ask service

1.1 Escalation

SSA → HAS → D of RHS → UoB formal complaints procedure

Details of the UoB formal complaints procedure can be found at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/secretary/documents/student-rules-and-regs/student-complaints.pdf>

If the issue cannot be resolved at this level the complaint can be pursued via the Universities UK Accommodation Code of Practice (subject to code provisions)

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/aboutus/AssociatedOrganisations/Partnerships/ACOP/Pages/Students.aspx>

Or via the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (subject to conditions)

<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>

1.2 Communications

Communications within the residence should be through the SSA, any staff member who is aware of a complaint about fees and charges should refer the student initially to the SSA.

Once a complaint has been reported all communications will be managed by the HAS who may delegate this to other staff within the division as appropriate. At the time of making the online complaint the student will be informed of the assistance offered by the Students Union's Just ask service

2. Damage and loss of belongings

2.1 Avoiding claims for damage or loss of belongings

Students should only be permitted to store belongings at residences over the summer vacation if they have signed the waiver forms provided. Students should not to leave food in fridges or freezers over the winter or spring vacations if they are absent from the residence.

2.2 Dealing with complaints about damage or loss of belongings

These complaints will be dealt with by the AM. All students living in UoB residences have their possessions covered by a [block insurance](#). If they suffer loss or damage to their belongings, which is not a result of their own actions or negligence, they should claim on this insurance. Where appropriate, help with reporting the loss or completing the forms and negotiating with the insurance company should be provided by the pastoral team.

If the loss cannot be recovered through the insurance then the matter should be referred to the accommodation office via the [online report form](#).

The HAS will investigate the incident with the assistance of residences staff and authorize any appropriate payments only where:

- Suitable evidence of the value of the goods lost has been received.
- On the balance of probabilities the damage or loss has occurred because of some action or inaction on the part of the University.

Payments

A payment will be made based on replacement value of the goods lost or damage not on a new for old basis.

Payments will be made by cheque and there will be no offset against any accommodation fees or other payment owed by the student.

Students will be informed of any payment in writing with an explanation of how the payment has been calculated.

2.3 Escalation

AM ➡ HAS ➡ D of RHS ➡ UoB formal complaints procedure

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2.4 Communications

Communications within the residence should be through the AM, any staff member who is aware of a complaint about loss or damage should refer the student initially to the AM.

Once a complaint has been reported via the online report form all communications will be managed by the HAS who may delegate this to residences staff as appropriate. At the time of making the online complaint the student will be informed of the assistance offered by the Students Union's Just Ask service

3. Repairs, Maintenance or Services

3.1 Avoiding complaints about repairs, maintenance or services

This is primarily the responsibility of the AM. AMs are familiar with the response times agreed with Building Services (SLA). They will therefore be able to monitor the progress of repairs, in particular with regard to level 1 and 2 repairs. Where delays or poor service are discovered the AM will be proactive in pursuing the repair and in ensuring the resident is kept informed. The AM may need to involve other staff such as the residence SSA or the Facilities Manager in this.

The role of the AM within the residence in resolving repair and maintenance problems will be well publicised and any member of staff who is aware of a problem will report it to the AM. Any student who has a complaint or concern about the quality of their accommodation or repairs or maintenance will be referred direct to the AM in the first instance.

3.2 Responding to complaints about repairs and maintenance or services

When a student approaches the AM with a problem it will be important for AMs to check the first report date and the date of completion so they can see if this is carried out within the correct Service Level Agreement (SLA) and to note any overrun.

3.2.1 If the job was fixed within the SLA:

- This information should be given to the student. Please explain the SLA ensuring a positive end to the discussion.
- Please note that the student cannot pursue a complaint if they have unreasonably refused entry to the flat or room to do the works required.

3.2.2 If the maintenance request has exceeded the SLA:

If the RM is still outstanding the AM should use all their best efforts to ensure speedy completion and offer alternative accommodation/facilities as appropriate. The AM may need to offer alternative facilities or accommodation, should the student experience severe disruption, such as total loss of water, loss of hot water, no heating or no electricity.

At the same time the student should be advised to report the problem using the [online report form](#).

At the time of making the online complaint the student will be informed of the assistance offered by

the Students Union's Just Ask service

On receipt of a report the HAS will investigate with the assistance of residences staff.

4.3 Assessing Goodwill

Goodwill will only be paid from the date that the SLA was exceeded.

Goodwill will only be considered where:

- The student has experienced a loss of facility or service, quantifiable damages or significant distress or inconvenience due to an action or inaction on the part of the University in relation to an issue that the University is responsible for and that is within its control.
- All other mediations have been exhausted

Column D of the Goodwill Matrix will show the suggested goodwill payment should a maintenance job not be fixed within the SLA., however this may be varied depending on the circumstances of the case.

3.4 Payments

Payments will be made by cheque and there will be no offset against any accommodation fees or other payment owed by the student.

Students will be informed of any payment in writing with an explanation of how the payment has been calculated.

3.5 Escalation

AM → HAS → D of RHS → UoB formal complaints procedure

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Or via the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (subject to conditions)

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3.6 Communications

Communications within the residence should be through the AM, any staff member who is aware of a complaint about repairs, maintenance or services should refer the student initially to the AM.

Once a complaint has been reported online all communications will be managed by the HAS who may delegate this to residences staff as appropriate.

Where the potential for a pastoral issue to arise from the lack of repair such as an interruption of studies, or where the student(s) concerned are vulnerable the HAS will also inform the SSA. At the time of making the online complaint the student will be informed of the assistance offered by the Students Union's Just ask service

4. Accommodation Experience

There may be occasions where students have general concerns about their accommodation experience and this may include environmental factors such as noise or pollution

4.1 Avoiding complaints about the accommodation experience

Complaints can be avoided by:

- Ensuring that information about the accommodation is accurate and includes any adverse factors, this is primarily the responsibility of the Accommodation Office.
- SLAs for accommodation maintenance, cleaning and room preparation must be observed. This is primarily the responsibility of the AM.
- Where it is possible to anticipate a problem, for example in new builds, buildings with systemic faults, new build remedies should be sought in advance and communicated to students at an early date. This is primarily the responsibility of the HAS.

4.2 Responding to complaints about the accommodation experience

Any member of staff who is made or becomes aware that the accommodation experience for a number of students is being adversely affected should first raise their concerns with the Warden of that residence. Where, upon investigation, the Warden is of the opinion that there is a genuine issue the Warden should report it by email to the Head of Accommodation Services

The HAS in consultation with residences senior managers and the SU will work closely with the Warden to resolve the issue and this may include making goodwill payments to the students.

At the time of making the complaint the student will be informed of the assistance offered by the Students Union's Just Ask service

4.3 Payments

Payments will be made by cheque. Finance will offset any rent arrears or other accommodation charges outstanding prior to issuing the goodwill payment. Students will be informed of any payment in writing with an explanation of how the payment has been calculated.

4.4 Escalation

Warden → HAS → D of RHS → UoB formal complaints procedure

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4.5 Communications

Communications with students or their parents about issues regarding the accommodation experience will remain with the Warden who may delegate this to the SSA or Deputy Warden as appropriate. The Warden will also be responsible for informing the student(s) of the assistance offered by the Students Union's Just Ask service

4 Pastoral Services

The pastoral team aim to provide support and guidance on a range of pastoral issues, in order to ensure our students have a positive living experience in Halls. However, there may be occasions where a student is unsatisfied with the pastoral care they have/have not received from a member of the pastoral team (this includes Senior Residents, SSA's, Deputy Wardens and Wardens).

5.1 Communications

In the first instance, students are encouraged to discuss their complaint with the member of staff concerned in order that we may fully understand their complaint and remedy the issue as quickly and informally as possible.

The student should:

- be specific about the problem
- describe the problem succinctly
- provide supporting documentary evidence where available and appropriate
- state the outcome requested – be clear and realistic

Where the student feels this is not possible or practicable, then the student should contact their Hall Warden, providing details of the complaint as listed above.

The Warden will either appoint a member of the pastoral team, who is not already involved in the complaint, or if appropriate, arrange for themselves to meet with the student to discuss their concern, and undertake any required investigation, suggest an appropriate solution or determine a suitable course of further action. The Warden will also be responsible for informing the student(s) of the assistance offered by the Students Union's Just Ask service

In the event that the complaint made is in relation to the Warden, the student should refer their complaint to the Head of Student Residential Life directly via email.

At the time of making the online complaint the student will be informed of the assistance offered by the Students Union's Just Ask service

5.2 Escalation

Member of staff concerned → Warden → HRL → D of RHS
 → UoB formal complaints procedure

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Recording

A written record of all communications with the complainant and the outcome of any investigations will be made by the member of staff dealing with the complaint

and, in the case of escalation, passed to staff member who takes over the complaint.

4 Responsibility

Head of Accommodation Services

5 Applicable to:

UoB owned residences

6 Definitions / Descriptions

Goodwill - A financial gesture without prejudice offered to a student by The University in response to a complaint or as a student relations initiative.

AM – Accommodation Manager

CO – Conference Officer

D of RHS – Director of Residential and Hospitality Services

DD of RHS – Deputy Director of Residential and Hospitality Services

GM – Goodwill Matrix: The University uses this tool to make a clear decision on the amount due to a student. Different levels of goodwill can be offered.

GRF- Goodwill Request Form: To put a request for a goodwill payment this form should be submitted by a student or member of staff.

HAS – Head of Accommodation Services

HRL – Head of Residential Life

SLA – the agreed timescale for repair responses

SSA – Student Support Administrator

SU Students Union

7 Related Documentation

Online report form

8 Distribution