
Deliverable – Complaints and Reporting Policy

This is what was found by the CREEM URGE Pod at the University of St Andrews on policies for handling complaints, the reporting process, resources, and possible outcomes. All information was either public or available to University staff/students (through SSO).

The link(s) to the reporting policy at our organization are here:

[University Policies](#). The [school EDI website](#) includes a blurb about report and support and a link to the University complaints website. The website does not mention the student wellbeing officer.

Are reporting policies regularly reviewed? What is the process for changing policy?

Based on the [Complaints Handling Procedure](#) shared by the university, the process was last modified in 2014, but it is reviewed annually (as described in the annual complaint handling reports).

The Complaints Handling Procedure is compliant with The Scottish Higher Education Model Complaints Handling Procedure, published by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) on 19 December 2012.

Are the rates of reporting made publicly available (e.g. # of reports each year)?

Yes. The annual complaint handling reports are available online at st-andrews.ac.uk/terms/complaints/. The last available report is from the [2019-2020 academic year](#).

The oldest available on the website report is from the 2014-2015 academic year. The reasons for Appeal/Complaint are categorized in School based service/Unit Based service without any additional information on the nature of complaint. From the academic year 2019-2020 more detailed information is given on the reason for the complaints (none on racism at least as in the way is stated).

There are many “informal” ways that people make complaints, and not all of these are captured in the formal reporting process. For example, a complaint could be made to a line manager, the head of school, or the student wellbeing officer and would not be documented as an official complaint. We see this as a weakness, since it’s hard to know what issues are problems without having data on lots of “minor” incidents. Possible solution: Advertising the complaints procedure at the beginning of each academic year to new students/staff to make it a normal aspect being/studying/working in the University and as a process of change and improvement. Including information about the complaints reporting procedure in the school handbook.

What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism?

reportandsupport.st-andrews.ac.uk/report

Note that the websites don't seem to explicitly address racism.

The closest categories in the online report which may include racism are:

Microaggressions

Brief, everyday interactions that send denigrating messages to people, which are subtle and insidious, often leaving the victim confused, distressed and frustrated and the perpetrator oblivious of the offense they have caused.

Hate crime

A crime which is extended beyond harassment motivated by malice or ill will towards a social group by disability, race (cultural background, ethnicity or nationality), religion or belief, sexual orientation, or transgender identity.)

The Non-Academic Misconduct Policy 2020 includes racist behaviour under the types of non-academic misconduct: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/student-services/documents/non-academic-misconduct-policy-2020.pdf>

Who are the designated individuals/positions for reporting incidents?

Head of Schools, Line Managers, Unit Directors, Human Resources. Complaints@st-andrews.ac.uk, [Report - Report + Support - University of St Andrews \(st-andrews.ac.uk\)](http://Report-Report+Support-UniversityofStAndrews(st-andrews.ac.uk))

For Non-Academic Misconduct: All students, all staff: in particular, Heads of Schools, Unit Directors, Registry, Student Services, Wardens, Residential Services Managers (taken from Non-Academic Misconduct Policy)

Can reports be made online? Yes **Where?** reportandsupport.st-andrews.ac.uk/report
Anonymously? Yes

Complaint Form: Request for Investigation (Stage 2) emailed to complaints@st-andrews.ac.uk.

A stage 2 is occurred when an issue has not been able to be resolved by complain directly with the appropriate unit or department of the University. In this form previous efforts of trying to resolve the issue should be listed. A 300-word description of the complaint should be written. Additional information on the steps that the person took to pursue the complaint up to now and with whom have dealt in the University in this regard (250 words). A description of how the complaint wished to be resolved (200 words). A complain should be made during 6 months of the incident and if not, a reason should be given (200 words).

Who do in-person and online reports go to? Who has access to see reports?

In person complains can be directed directly to the ???

Depending on the nature of the report, it is sent either to Student Services (student wellbeing issue), to the Student Conduct Officer (student conduct issue), or Human Resources (staff conduct or wellbeing issue).

Are police included in the process? When and how? Are individuals accompanied by an advocate or someone from the organization?

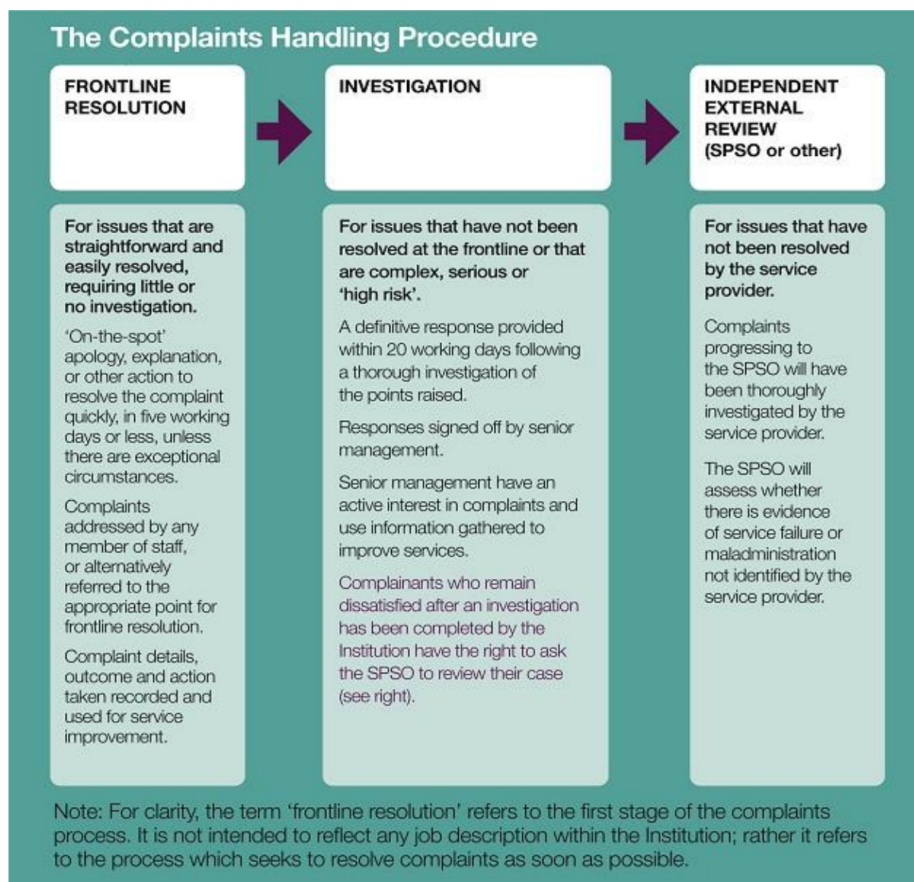
In the complaints policy, police are only mentioned with reference to threatening behavior on the part of the complainant.

Police contact details for reporting criminal matters are included on the Report and Support pages.

It is unclear whether or under what circumstances any member of University services would be required to report an incident to the police. The exception might be instances of child abuse, i.e., if a student were under 18 years of age, or if the complaint concerned an incident at a University-sponsored nursery or after-school program.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman may be asked to perform an external review.

What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?



Are reports tracked? Yes

How are they tracked? Unclear

By who? By the Audit and Risk committee and reported annually to the SPSO

Are repeated complaints escalated to a disciplinary board? What is the process?

(Taken from the complaints-handling procedure)

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after the frontline resolution stage and wishes to escalate their original complaint within the University, they should contact the Office of the Vice-Principal (Governance) (by email: complaints@st-andrews.ac.uk; telephone: 01334 462555; address: College Gate, North Street, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9AJ).

The outcome of the investigation will be communicated to the complainant in writing. The decision, and details of how and when it was communicated to the complainant, will be recorded on the University's system for recording complaints. The decision will also advise the complainant about: 1. their right to ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to review the complaint; 2. the time limit for doing so; 3. how to contact the SPSO.

What resources are available for individuals reporting?

Counselors or advocates, especially those of the same race, ethnicity, and gender.

Students can book an appointment to see an advisor or counselor through [Student Services](#). There is no mention of the race or gender of counselors. The [staff support page](#) does not include information about counseling options for members of staff.

Automatic or requested investigation of potential impact on grades or evaluations.

Students may submit an academic appeal in conjunction with a complaint: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/rules/appeals/policy/>

Protection against retaliation or repercussions, accommodations for continuing work/courses, option for pass/fail or outside assessment.

Unclear

What resources are available to groups raising issues or proposing changes?

Petitions of # signatures trigger a town hall, meeting with organizational leadership, or policy change. What is the follow-up process for town halls and meetings?

Unclear

Working groups or committees with power to change or propose changes to policy.

At the school level, the school EDI committee is most likely to propose changes to policies: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/mathematics-statistics/about/equality-diversity/edi-committee/>

There are many groups at the University level, including the [BAME Students' Network](#), which is part of the Students' Union, and can serve as a link between students and university to address issues linked to racism.

Also from the Staff BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) Network [Staff BAME Network | University of St Andrews \(st-andrews.ac.uk\)](#):

“Call for stories of experiences related to ethnicity, October 2020

The network is seeking examples of experiences of behaviours based on ethnicity from within St Andrews. Please see the [letter from the staff BAME network](#) (PDF, 131 KB) for full information and details of how to submit testimony. The network will report anonymised text from testimonies to the University Court and the Principal's Office. To submit anonymously using the 'Report anonymously' link in the online [Report + Support tool](#). Please use “Stories about ethnicity” as the heading in the 'Lets us know what happened' section to allow your submission to be identified as part of this collection. “

Cultural surveys, regular or only after wide-spread reports or high-profile incidents.

Annual school EDI survey

Leadership proactively asks students and/or staff for input on how to improve.

Annual school EDI survey, lunch and chat with head of school.

Possible policy suggestions:

1. In the online Report+ report create another option: racism
2. On annual reports list the reasons for the complaints based on the categories in the online reporting form: i.e. Bullying, Discrimination and/or hate incidents, Microaggressions, other
3. Include information about complaints procedure in the school handbook