

# COMPLAINTS POLICY

## Complaints Policy for HISA Clubs, Societies and Sports

University life is enriched by social and academic groups, and this document explains the process for filing complaints regarding Student Groups (clubs, societies and sports teams) affiliated with the Highlands and Islands Students Association (HISA).

### Purpose and Scope

It is mandatory for all affiliated Student Groups to abide by the procedures outlined in this document. This policy works in coordination with the HISA Code of Conduct and the HISA Complaints Policy.

1.1. The policy for dealing with a complaint received from any person concerning their interaction with HISA clubs, societies and sports groups is outlined below.

(a) Complaints about elected group leaders, such as presidents or chairs, should be addressed to the HISA Community Engagement Manager. Complaints about group office holders, like secretaries and treasurers, and about other members should be addressed to the group leader in the first instance. If there is a conflict of interest, such as the complaint is regarding the conduct of a group leader, the HISA Community Engagement Manager must be notified.

(b) Complaints about HISA staff or HISA elected officers must be made under the HISA Complaints Policy.

(c) 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.

(d) HISA undertakes to treat all complainants fairly and in line with its Equal Opportunities Policy.

1.2. As a Student Groups member, you have the right to voice your concerns or complain about various aspects of group activities and services. You can approach us if you encounter any of the following issues:

(a) **Problems with a service:** If you experience any difficulties or dissatisfaction with the services we provide, such as event organisation, membership processes, or other related matters.

(b) **Quality of equipment:** If you have concerns regarding the quality of the equipment we offer, such as practice kit, sports gear, or other resources.

(c) **Unfair treatment or inappropriate behaviour:** If you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have witnessed inappropriate behaviour from anyone involved in Student Groups activities or premises. Instances of bullying, exclusion, or mistreatment will be taken seriously and addressed promptly.



- (d) **Safety and Well-being Concerns:** Members may raise complaints regarding safety or well-being issues within the group or team. This could include inadequate supervision, unsafe practices, or failure to address health and safety concerns.
- (e) **Misconduct or Violations:** Complaints may involve instances of misconduct, such as cheating, dishonesty, or violations of group or team rules, policies, or codes of conduct.

## Confidentiality & Privacy

At HSA, we value the trust and confidence of our members. That's why we take all complaints seriously and handle them with utmost respect and discretion. Any information shared during the complaint process will be kept confidential and in compliance with the relevant privacy laws and regulations.

Only authorised individuals involved in the complaint resolution process will have access to the relevant information, and all personal data will be protected and used solely for the purpose of addressing the complaint. We prioritise the privacy of individuals involved and strive to create a safe and supportive environment for addressing their concerns.

## Stage 1 - Initial Investigation

- 3.1. HSA aims to ensure that any complaints are resolved promptly. In the first instance, the complainant should raise any issues with the person in charge of the student.
- 3.2. This must be done in writing via email. Or if the disclosure is made in person, a minuted and signed statement must be taken. All outcomes and decisions will be issued to the complainant in writing via their student email unless the complainant requests an alternative method.
- 3.3. The group leader will review the complaint unless there is a conflict of interest; if so, the Community Engagement Manager will review the front-line complaint and shall respond to the complainant within five working days of receiving the complaint (excluding bank holidays and days the HSA offices are closed). A short extension to this is permitted if there is a real likelihood of the complaint being resolved within that extended 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 2 - Further Investigation

- 3.5. A Stage 2 complaint must be submitted 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 [HISAactivities@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:HISAactivities@uhi.ac.uk).
- 3.6. On receipt of a Stage 2 complaint, the Community Engagement Manager or another HSA senior manager (if there is a conflict of interest) will first determine whether the student association has jurisdiction over the complaint. The manager will then appoint an Investigating Officer, and they will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days.



3.7. 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.

3.8. 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.

3.9. 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.

## Appeal

We understand that not all complaints may be resolved to the parties' satisfaction. Therefore, we have established a fair and transparent appeal process to address any unsatisfied complaints within our organisation.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome or resolution provided in response to their complaint, they have the right to submit an appeal. The appeal process allows for a thorough review of the initial complaint, including any new evidence or information presented.

4.1. An impartial and independent evaluator will be appointed to assess the appeal and provide a fresh perspective on the matter. The evaluator will be appointed by the HISA CEO.

4.2. The evaluator's decision will be communicated to the complainant in a timely manner, and every effort will be made to ensure a fair and equitable resolution. The decision is also final, and there is no further recourse of appeal.

## Policy Review

To ensure that our policies remain up-to-date and relevant, it is essential that the Complaints Policy undergoes an annual review.

