University Centre Sparsholt Complaints and Feedback Policy & Procedures

Our Mission

Raising Aspirations, Unlocking Potential, Advancing Futures

Our Values

Excellence, Passion, Teamwork, Integrity, Innovation,

Sustainability, Valuing Others and Supportiveness

Sparsholt College Group

The Sparsholt College Group (the College Group) includes Sparsholt College, Andover College, University Centre Sparsholt, Sparsholt College Services, Westley Enterprises and Andover Town Football Club. College Group policies apply to each part of the group unless specified otherwise.

The University Centre Sparsholt Complaints and Feedback Policy & Procedures were approved by the Board of Governors in 2023.

Originator:	Dean of Higher Education
Located:	College Group Websites
	College Group Intranet
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UNIVERSITY CENTRE SPARSHOLT
COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK POLICY & PROCEDURES

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UNIVERSITY CENTRE SPARSHOLT
COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK POLICY & PROCEDURES

1. What is the complaints procedure about?

This document explains both our informal and formal procedures for dealing with complaints and role of the independent ombudsman's in that process.

2. Who is this procedure for?

2.1. The policy relates to all ***higher education students*** who are studying at the **University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) or Andover College**.

2.2. UCS has drawn up the policy in a way that demonstrates awareness of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA's) Good Practice Framework: https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/

2.3. For all degree programmes that are validated by the University of Portsmouth and UCS adopts the University's Academic Examination & Assessment Regulations,

2.4. For all other programmes (e.g. apprenticeships) the academic regulations of the awarding body are adhered to.

2.5. For the purpose of this complaints procedure, we will consider you as a student for three months after you have finished your studies or graduated from the university. We may decide to consider complaints raised after this period under the procedure in exceptional circumstances if there is a clear rationale for the late submission.

2.6. Under this procedure, you may raise concerns about issues to do with how your course is managed, or about the services and facilities provided by UCS and Sparsholt College Group. We have separate procedures for dealing with academic appeals under the UCS Appeals Policy available at https://www.sparsholt.ac.uk/policies-reports/.

2.7. There may be times when you want to offer feedback or a compliment. We use feedback as part of our continued efforts to better our offer for students, staff and other stakeholders. If you wish to make a comment or offer feedback, then you can email directly to feedback@sparsholt.ac.uk

3. Who can I contact if I have any questions about the complaints procedure?

If you have questions about this procedure, please contact our Student Support Team at degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk

4. Making a complaint

4.1 This procedure can be used for complaints made by either an individual student or by a group of students with the same complaint. If a complaint is made by a group, one student should act as the main contact in communications with us.

4.2 A complaint must always be raised in the first instance by the student(s) concerned. If you then wish to appoint a representative for the duration of the complaint, for example a student representative or family member, you may do so and they will be the single point of contact with UCS for the duration of the complaint.

4.3 This complaints procedure is not a legal process and so it is not necessary or expected for your representative to be a member of the legal profession.

4.4 The person carrying out an investigation into a complaint needs to be able to communicate and discuss the complaint with everyone involved. It is for this reason that we will not investigate anonymous complaints. To fully investigate your complaint, we may need to share your name, and that of others involved, and any associated documents, with the members of staff who are asked to comment on your complaint. However, we will always deal with your complaint in a sensitive manner and only reveal information relevant to the investigation of the complaint.

4.5 If your complaint relates to an individual, then in our conclusions we will only tell you, and anyone else affected, whether we found the person complained about guilty or not guilty of the allegation. If the person is found guilty and the outcome affects you (for example, because they should apologise to you), we will tell you. If the outcome does not specifically relate to you, we will tell you that we have issued an appropriate penalty.

5. Our Shared Experiences

5.1 All parties to the complaint will treat each other with dignity and respect.

5.2 Parties to the complaint are not permitted to make a recording on any recording device of discussions held under the complaints procedure, whether at a meeting or by telephone or otherwise unless with the express permission of all parties to the discussions.

5.3 If the investigating officer observes poor behaviour by any party, then a warning may be appropriate. If the behaviour continues or if it is instigated by a staff member, then it will link into our disciplinary processes. If you or your representative display poor behaviour to others, then we reserve the right to cease the investigation and may refer the matter as part of the student conduct and behaviour policy.

6. Complaints

In line with good practice issues by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator, our complaints policy consists of three stages, these are:

- Stage 1 Early Resolution
- Stage 2 Formal Complaint
- Stage 3 Review

Stage 1 Early Resolution

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of your academic studies or the services and facilities we provide, you may make a complaint. You cannot complain about a mark that you have received, this should be pursued under the **academic appeal procedure**. The complaint

must, in the first instance, be raised informally by either speaking or writing to a member of the university staff in the area in which the complaint has arisen. If it is with regards to how a module or a course is managed, you should talk to your course leader. If you are unable to resolve the matter informally then you may wish to raise your complaint via the **formal complaints process (stage 2**) by either writing to or emailing feedback@sparsholt.ac.uk

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

To allow us the best opportunity to deal with a complaint, we need you to make your complaint as soon as reasonably possible, and no later than 10 working days from when the matter you are complaining about happened, or from when you have completed attempts at informal resolution. We may accept a complaint after this time limit if you provide evidence to show you had a good reason for not making the complaint earlier.

We will acknowledge your complaint upon receipt and normally within one working day. We will then review the case and we will advise you of the next steps including time scales.

We set out to resolve all formal complaints within 20 working days. For complaints that do not need a full investigation, we would aim to resolve the matter much quicker. If for whatever reason this is not possible, then all parties will be written to explaining the reason for the delay and provided with a revised completion date.

We will be able to pursue your complaint if it:

- Relates to your academic studies or the services and facilities we provide
- Enable us to identify you and to contact you
- Identify the informal steps you have taken and why you are not satisfied with the outcomes of stage one (early resolution)
- What resolution you are seeking
- Evidence to support your complaint
- The complaint is within the timescales outlines in this procedure.

Valid complaints will be sent to the Assistant Principal for HE for action. If they, or their nominated representative can deal with the matter quickly, then we will do so. If you are not satisfied with the decision, then you will have 10 working days from receiving notification of the outcome to request **stage 3 (review).**

As part of the investigation into the complaint, the Assistant Principal or their representative (who should not have been involved in the complaint at any stage) will hold separate meetings with you and any members of staff they believe may have information about the complaint. These meetings will generally be face-to-face but can be held virtually if you are not on campus. All meetings will be formally organised, with the invitation clearly identifying what reason for the meeting and will provide you with a minimum of five working days' notice along with the right to bring a representative. We will take minutes at the meetings and they must be agreed by everyone involved before being used in the investigation. If we cannot agree on the minutes, then areas of disagreement will be noted.

The Assistant Principal or their representative will present their report along with recommendations to resolve the complaint.

Once the investigation has been completed, the Assistant Principal will draft a written report of their findings. The draft report will be sent to everyone involved in the complaint for them to check whether there are any inaccuracies in it. No new evidence can be provided at this

stage. Everyone involved has five working days in which to return any comments to the investigating officer. At the end of the five working days, a final report will be issued, taking into account any relevant comments by either you or the person you are complaining about. Any proposal for resolving the complaint will not take place until after the 10 working days has passed unless you agree to the proposals in writing.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, then you will have 10 working days from receipt of the outcome letter in which to request a review by the Dean of Higher Education by emailing feedback@sparsholt.ac.uk.

Stage 3 Review

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the stage 2 (Formal Compliant), you have 10 working days upon receipt of the outcome of the formal investigation to request a review by the Dean of Higher Education.

Grounds for review include:

- The investigation was not completed within the agreed timescale;
- We did not follow our own procedures;
- The outcome was not supported by the provided evidence.

The Dean of Higher Education l will review the request for stage 3 (review) and respond within 5 working days to inform you if your request meets the criteria. If the review meets the required criteria, then the review will be concluded within 20 working days of its start.

A copy of the review outcomes, and any recommendations for action, will be sent to you, the investigating officer from stage 2 and other relevant parties a report of their findings.

If your complaint is not upheld, or if it is upheld and you request it, you will be issued at that stage with a completion of procedures letter which will inform about your right to refer your complaint to the University of Portsmouth and/or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if you are still not satisfied with the outcome of the Review.

7. All Other Complaints

Once UCS's internal complaints procedure has been exhausted and a Completion of Procedures letter has been issued, you can take your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. You must submit a completed Complaint Form to the OIA within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter from UCS. https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/

8. Withdrawal of a Formal Complaint

A complainant may withdraw a Formal Complaint at any time by giving notice in writing to the UCS or University of Portsmouth complaints administrator or the person leading the investigation into the complaint. On receipt of this, either the investigating officer or the complaints administrator shall send a written acknowledgement to the complainant. Once a Formal Complaint has been withdrawn, the matter is closed.