



Comments and complaints Procedure 2020

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| Marketing | Marketing & Communications Manager |
| Officers | Medway Lead Officer for Kent Union Medway Lead Officer for Greenwich Students' Union |
| GK Strategy Board | CEO Kent Union CEO Greenwich Students' Union Managing Director, GKSU Medway Lead Officers |
| Governance | Head of Governance |
| Signed Off | 30 January 2020 |
| Date for Review | September 2022 |

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Scope
3. Comments
4. Complaints
5. Political Complaints
6. Non-Political Complaints
7. Abuse of the complaints policy
8. Further Information

Introduction & Policy

The ability to feedback, to criticise, and to complain is a vital part of ensuring that our members feel empowered. Greenwich and Kent Students' Unions ("GKSU") is a partnership between Greenwich Students' Union and Kent Union ("Home Unions", providing a dedicated and tailored students' union service for students studying at the Medway Campus. GKSU is not a separate legal entity, it is effectively managed by Kent Union on behalf of both Universities and both Students' Unions. As such, there are some services which are provided by Kent Union for the benefit of both partners. 'Governance' is one such service, and this policy sets out how comments and complaints are received, processed and managed, within the local frameworks at GKSU and utilising the support of the Governance department ("Governance Department") at Kent Union. Centrally, GKSU is Governed by a Strategic Board, and the Officer teams of both Home Unions nominate a Medway "Lead Officer" to Chair this Board and have special responsibility for driving change at the Medway Campus.

Our comments and complaints form will be located centrally on the GKSU website. Irrespective of how the comment/complaint is received, the student will be asked to submit their comments via the online form to ensure we have the information required to deal with the comments appropriately and efficiently.

1.1. Submissions on the comments and complaints form will be automatically emailed to the relevant department. The Governance Department will collect, monitor and log all complaints throughout the term and will be notified each time a form is submitted. It is their responsibility to ensure the relevant manager has responded and logged the action.

2. Scope

2.1. This Procedure covers all GKSU services, and elected roles at the Home Unions. It also covers the political side of the Unions including our representation work and structures.

2.2. If the complainant is unclear whether their complaint is of a political nature or not, the final interpretation will be the responsibility of the Medway Lead Officers. If advice is needed on a complaint, or if any part of this procedure is unclear, the complainant can speak with the Head of Governance, who can provide any help required.

2.3. Any comments received about University services will be logged through the complaints form and the relevant R&D department will liaise with the relevant Reps or Officers to determine whether further work will be carried out. Complaints about the Universities should follow the University Complaints Procedures: Kent or Greenwich (insert links) [University Complaints Procedure](#).

2.4. All comments and complaints are stored separately and the original complaint, the response and subsequent action taken (including any improvements) are reviewed on a termly basis by GK Strategy Board

3. Oversight & GDPR

3.1. On a termly basis, the comments and complaints register will be submitted to GK Strategy Board with an action plan developed by relevant staff. This will be in done in **December, June & March**, tbc Strat Board cycle. Managers will be empowered by the Board to suggest and carry out actions they deem appropriate

- 3.2.** Information will be kept for the purposes of dealing with complaints and any personal information will only be retained for one academic year.

Sensitive and personal information will not be shared without explicit permission to do so, with any external parties, except the relevant university where relevant. If your feedback is about University services we may also send it to the relevant Rep. If the nature of your complaint requires us to share information we will obtain consent. Individuals have the right to be informed and request access to personal information. You can find the GKSU Data Sharing Agreement here, to see how the Partnership handles your personal data.

4. Comments, Complaints & Feedback

- 4.1.** All comments will be centrally collated by the Governance Department, who have responsibility for logging all comments on a central register and then communicating them with relevant managers. A centralised [GKSU comments and complaints form](#) is used and this can be submitted anonymously.

- 4.2.** Complaints, comments and feedback can include the behaviour and decisions of Home Union members in their capacity as elected representatives and decision-makers. These include matters concerning the Home Union's Constitution, rules, democratic procedures and policies. Political complaints include, but are not restricted to:

- Complaints regarding the behaviour of a sabbatical officer or Network Chair
- Complaints regarding the rules set out in the Home Unions' Constitution
- Complaints regarding the application of Home Union policies

We also encourage feedback on matters not relating to any of the Unions' democratic structures, elected officers and representatives, constitution, rules, policies and procedures. These include, but are not limited to:

- Complaints regarding the price, quality or service provision within any Union commercial outlet
- Complaints regarding services offered by non-commercial departments supported by GKSU (such as JobShop, the Advice Centre, or Student Activities)
- Complaints regarding the behaviour and attitude of a staff member.

- 4.3.** In the first instance, we encourage people to take a complaint informally to a Sabbatical Officer or member of staff. If a student or customer wishes to make a formal complaint they should use the formal complaints [form](#). Any student member, who wishes to complain about another member or a member of GKSU staff, can do so confidentially within the same form.

A student staff member who wishes to make a formal complaint about another member of GKSU staff, should in the first instance talk to their manager or Kent Union HR, if still not satisfied then they should refer to the [Grievance Procedure. HR is another central service provided by Kent Union for all GKSU staff, who are also employed by Kent Union.](#)

- 4.4.** At all times a complainant's name and contact details will be kept confidential within the parameters of the investigation. After the final outcome the complainant's contact details will be retained in the complaints form for one academic year. In some circumstances it may be necessary to reveal certain information to the person about

whom they are complaining, but this will not be done without receiving consent from the complainant first.

- 4.5.** If the complaint is about a Network Chair and involves action within their elected remit, the complaint will be dealt with via the appropriate democratic forum. If, however, the complaint refers to the actions of an elected officer as an ordinary student, then the complaint will be dealt with under the remit of the Kent or Greenwich Student Disciplinary Policy.
- 4.6.** Managers are expected to acknowledge or respond within three working days of receipt of a complaint. This is separate to the social media protocols that require acknowledgment within 1 hour.
- 4.7.** The complainant should receive a decision on whether the complaint or feedback has been upheld or actioned, with details of any action taken, within 5 working days. If for any reason a decision could not be reached within 5 days, notice will be given within 5 working days of receipt, and further notice every 5 working days thereafter, until a decision has been made.
- 4.8.** On finalising investigations regarding a complaint, depending on the outcome, the complainant may receive an apology or some other remedial action and an explanation for certain actions taken by GKSU or the Home Unions', including staff or members and be logged as GKSU's formal response.
- 4.9.** If the complainant is not satisfied with how their situation has been resolved they can contact the Head of Governance V.K.King@kent.ac.uk who can follow up any of the following stages they deem fit:
 - Involve the GK Strategy Board or Home Union Board of Trustees for an open conversation on the matter to decide a suitable way forward
 - Escalate the issue to either University for advice and guidance and or to resolve the matter
 - Appoint an independent person to investigate and report on the issue.

5. Abuse of the Complaints Policy

- 5.1.** The procedure laid out in this document is at all times subject to a requirement of reasonableness. Any person found to abuse the Complaints Policy, for example by deliberately making clearly false accusations, may be disciplined by GKSU through the appropriate Disciplinary Procedure.

6. Whistleblowing process

- 6.1.** This policy applies to all officers and career and student staff of GKSU and also temporary employees. It also applies to external consultants, contractors and agency employees while they are working at GKSU. You are not required to have worked at the Union for a minimum amount of time before you can use this policy.
- 6.2.** Whistleblowing is specific and means a disclosure of information made by an officer, staff member or an external person or body where they reasonably believe that one or more of

the matters detailed in section 6.4 below is happening now, took place in the past or is likely to happen in the future.

6.3. This policy covers concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. It is not intended as recourse against financial or organisational decisions made by GKSU or the Home Unions', Committees, or under procedures set out in the Constitutions. Nor is it an alternative to well-established disciplinary or grievance procedures.

6.4 Concerns that can be raised under this Whistleblowing Policy should be about something that does not fall into the Comments & Complaints procedure. These may be something that is or may be:-

- unlawful or a criminal offence or a failure to comply with a legal or regulatory obligation or duty
- a miscarriage of justice
- mistreatment or abuse of a member of the Union or a member of the public for whom the Union has a responsibility
- in disregard of legislation governing health and safety at work including endangering the health and safety of any person
- in breach of the Home Union Constitutions or Kent Union Financial Procedures
- fraud or financial irregularity, corruption, bribery or blackmail
- seeking undue favour over a contractual matter or a job application leading to or having the potential to lead to damage to the environment
- other unethical conduct including deliberate concealment of any of the above

6.5 You can view the Whistleblowing policy [here](#) including how to raise a concern within the Whistleblowing Policy.