

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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Owner Operations Standards		Title/Subject Complaints Procedures		
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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Whilst we hope that a customer never has cause to complain, this document will give guidance so Unite Students employees are clear on what steps to take to manage a complaint and at what point within our processes the complaint should be escalated.

The process has been designed to demonstrate; our commitment to operating in line with ANUK benchmark standards set within the National Code of Standards for Larger Developments http://nationalcode.org/Upload/File/NationalCode_Private.pdf, that we aim to treat all our customers fairly and equitably and that Unite Students are transparent around processes, upfront with our students, universities and employees.

This will allow for all team members to gain an understanding of the full process of the complaint, improves awareness amongst the national contact centre and city team as to how a complaint is progressing and provides a tool for proactive management of a complaint.

This enables all employees to communicate to the customer the status of the complaint at any time.

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1.2 Scope

These procedures are to be followed in the event of a customer complaint being received. Although, due to the nature of their work, city teams are most likely to receive complaints directly, these procedures apply to all employees in all areas of the business.

1.3 Definitions

UBS – Unite Booking System

1.4 References

[Unite Students Complaints Process \(flow chart\)](#)

[Managing Noise Complaints Guidelines](#)

[Managing Complaints about External Noise](#)

[Anti-social Behaviour Prevention and Investigation Procedure](#)

[Room Move Procedure](#)

[Drugs Procedure](#)

[Goodwill Procedure](#)

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2. Procedures

2.1 Complaints Process

At Unite Students we're committed to operating in line with www.anuk.org.uk benchmark standards, ensuring that all customers are treated fairly and equitably and delivering a programme of on-going customer care training for all Unite Students customer facing staff. If we do not meet these standards, we may lose our status as members of the national code – so it's really important we understand and follow the guidelines.

By listening carefully to our customers, responding to their comments and treating all comments in the strictest confidence Unite Students aim to ensure that customers never need to complain.

We must ensure that every effort is made to understand who is raising the complaint and why. If a guarantor, parent, guardian or friend wishes to raise a complaint on a tenant's behalf, we must seek permission from the tenant to pursue the complaint and share information with the complainant about their stay. This permission must be given in a recorded phone call (through the national contact centre) email or letter.

If a guarantor wishes to raise a complaint about an aspect of the account that directly affects them, this is acceptable.

If a 3rd party such as a person representing the university/student union, local authority, company secretary of Unipol, or vice president of the NUS complains about an aspect of our service, we must respond to their recommendations and consider the points raised – ensuring the tenant is aware of the action that will be taken. Again, we will need to seek permission

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from the tenant and must ensure the tenant is told about the actions following recommendations.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to offer a customer a goodwill payment to resolve a complaint. Please see the goodwill procedure here [New goodwill matrix/online form procedure for requesting goodwill.](#)

2.1.1 Initial Response: City Team

A complaint may be directed to City Team staff, or to our National Contact Centre. It is important that whoever receives the complaint acknowledges receipt and explains what the next steps will be. If a complaint is received at the National Contact Centre by phone, the advisor will need to note the time of the call and update notes on UBS with all relevant detail.

If a complaint is dealt with at site, the City Team member will need to make sure that the complaint is captured in writing (email or letter is okay).

An explanation must be offered to the complainant of how we may proceed with the complaint, whether we need to seek permission from the tenant before proceeding and the steps that will be taken to investigate. The first person to receive the complaint must let the complainant know what will happen next by which ever method the complainant has raised the issue (by recorded phone call in the NCC, email or letter), explain our SLA – hoping to resolve the complaint within 10 working days.

A complaint about an aspect of the account or contact centre may be handled by the national contact centre. Any complaint about the tenants stay must be directed to the City Team. At all stages, notes on UBS must be clear about what communication has been given to the complainant and who the issue has been directed to.

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Once an outcome has been decided, the national contact centre or City Team member of staff must reply to the customer by email or letter (depending on the complainant's preference). If we are unable to achieve an outcome within 10 working days, the complainant must be notified and the matter escalated to Team Management. UBS notes must be updated to reflect this. If the complaint is closed this must be clearly noted on UBS notes.

2.1.2 Second Response: Supervisor/Manager

Escalate the complaint, including the response that was initially given to the customer so that all points can be considered by City Team Management. The outcome must be reviewed and the complainant must be notified of the decision by email or letter. UBS notes must be updated to reflect this. If the complaint is closed this must be clearly noted on UBS notes.

2.1.3 Third Response: Manager/Senior Manager

If the customer disputes the outcome from management, the manager must inform the customer that the matter will be escalated to a senior manager and they must receive an outcome within 10 working days. The customer must be informed of the decision and notified by email or letter. UBS notes should be updated to reflect this. If the complaint is closed this must be clearly noted on UBS notes.

2.1.4 Fourth Response: Customer Services Escalation Team

Must the customer be unhappy with the final outcome, all evidence and correspondence regarding the complaint must be sent to the customer

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services escalation team customerservices@unite-students.com making clear that the matter is an escalated complaint in the subject line. If the complaint is closed this must be clearly noted on UBS notes. Copies of any correspondence sent or received by the escalation team will be stored securely, for future reference.

The customer will receive an email or letter from the Customer Service Escalation Team advising that their complaint has been received and is being reviewed. The escalation team must have been provided with all the information and evidence they will need in order to deliver a full and final response to the complaint. The full and final response to the complaint must make clear that if the complainant still feels unhappy with the outcome they may;

- Seek independent advice
- Speak with their student advisor at the university
- Use an independent body such as ANUK to investigate their complaint

2.2 Handling Customer Complaints

Delays in responding to an issue as well as inconsistent responses can lead to frustrations and ultimately, further cause to complain.

Communicating with the complainant at all stages is key to ensuring they are aware of when and how their problem is being investigated. It is essential to make clear any investigation into the matters surrounding their complaint in order to reach a fair outcome. Customer complaints often fall into one of three areas;

- Property: Its condition, issues with another customer, how we've handled a particular problem

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- Account: How we've managed the customer's account, how we've handled a particular problem
- Maintenance: Not being able to repair or replace an item within a reasonable time frame, or how we've communicated a maintenance resolution

Our actions at any time can instigate or compound a complaint. It is important that a consistent and patient approach is taken within the National Contact Centre and City Teams.

We must also ensure we collate the right evidence to manage a complaint;

Property: Recordings of telephone calls with the National Contact Centre refer to previous UBS notes or emails that have been sent by the customer. If a customer says they have not been able to stay on site because of a property issue, we may also check key card use to ascertain how long they felt unable to stay on site if this function is available.

For National Contact Centre call recordings, a request to retrieve these can be made by emailing customerservices@unite-students.com, with the subject heading "call recording request". Any call recording sent will expire after 24 hours. If a customer wishes to access this, or any other information related to their account, they must complete a data subject access request.

Account: Check transaction history, address history and customer contact details, use UBS notes and Netbanx (through Account Support and Collections) to ascertain the activity that has taken place on the account.

Maintenance: Check maintenance request logs, calls to National Contact Centre.

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Guidance for dealing with noise complaints can be found in the [Managing Noise Complaints Procedure](#) and [Managing Complaints about External Noise Guidelines](#). For direction on how to deal with anti-social behaviour and drugs refer to the anti-social behaviour prevention and investigation procedure and the drugs procedure. Unite Students expect customers to assume adult levels of responsibility and where possible to resolve any inter-flat disputes. Where necessary Unite Students may help to facilitate flat meetings or provide welfare information.

If a customer is not satisfied with their current room, they can request a room move. This can be a swift resolution which can be processed by the City Team. Where rooms are not available within the customers property it is suggested that the City Team consider alternative Unite Students properties with availability. Where appropriate, every effort should be made to resolve the complaint before a room move is offered, room moves are subject to availability.

2.3 The National Code

Tenants may also complain directly to the Code's secretariat where they feel a breach of this Code's requirements has occurred and be assured that their complaint will be dealt with professionally and objectively. It is for this reason, that we must always prevent a complaint from occurring and if a complaint is raised, we investigate thoroughly.

Managers will ensure that within four weeks of receipt of any written complaint from a tenant (or their representative) they rectify any breach of the Code of Standards.

In the event that recommendations are not followed, we will be in breach of the Code and this fact will be made public to prospective tenants. If a tribunal takes place, the tribunal will have the authority to exclude Unite Students from the Code.

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2.4 ANUK

Accreditation Network UK
 155/157 Woodhouse Lane
 Leeds
 LS2 3ED
 Telephone 0113 205 3404
 Email info@anuk.org.uk

2.5 Useful Contacts

Service Supervisor Alice Hickey 0300 303 8642
Alice.Hickey@unite-students.com

ECC Supervisor Darren Sparrow 0300 303 1611
Darren.sparrow@unite-students.com

Customer Goodwill 0300 303 8642
customergoodwill@unite.students.com

Head of Operational Communications
 Sophie Joyce 07912038241
Sophie.joyce@unite-students.com

Emergency Control Centre 0300 303 1611

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2.6 Enquiries

All enquiries and suggestions regarding these procedures should be directed to Operations Standards.

Email: operations.standards@unite-students.com

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Appendix A – Document Change Control

This table is to be used to record all revisions made to this document. Changes made should also be recorded on the Procedures Master Document.

Version	Date of Issue	Prepared / Revised by	Brief Description of Additions / Modifications
1.0	15 th March 2013	Jenna Tillman / Jacky Ryan	Revision of Core Process documents
1.0	9 th Jan 2015	Natasha Hockney	Procedure and supporting documents rebranded
2.0	21 st August 2015	Jenna Tillman / Jacky Ryan / Alice Hickey	Revision and update of document

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