

## **1991 Amendment to the Bye-Laws: Alteration to the Complaints Procedure**

passed 3 November 16

**Proposer:** Thomas Howard (Second Year History)

**Secunder:** Tom Etheridge (Non-Portfolio Officer)

### **Union notes:**

- 1) The Complaints Procedure within the Union Bye-Laws does not currently include a set timeframe for uea|su to provide a written response to students, unlike other institutions such as UEA, and thus causes frustration for students.
- 2) Students are often left to wait for long periods of time for a response, with some complaints exceeding several months- with at least one case reaching nine months.
- 3) Responses from uea|su are often terse in their tone, and written in an informal, brief manner.
- 4) Responses from the UUEAS do not always include details concerning students right to appeal, and prohibits students from exercising their right to hold the union to account.
- 5) The 'complaints' webpage on the union's website does not clearly indicate that students have the right to appeal should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint, which is briefly mentioned in the Bye-Laws.
- 6) That the complaints bye-law uses a lot of outdated nomenclature, and is inappropriate for complaints regarding staff.
- 7) That as a member-led organisation the procedure should be easy to understand, transparent, and lead to effective changes.

### **Union believes:**

- 1) That uea|su should reply to formal complaints in a formal, appropriate manner.
- 2) That the union's webpage lacks the relevant information concerning the appeals process, and does not offer contact details for those who could assist students in making a formal complaint.
- 3) That the untimely responses from the UUEAS has a negative impact upon students' wellbeing by causing unnecessary frustration.
- 4) Bye-Laws concerning the right of appeal are too restrictive within their timeframe and do not consider that students will often be busy during 'working days' with academia.

### **Union resolves:**

- 1) That Bye-Law 6 concerning the Complaints Procedure of uea|su be re-written so that it reads:

6.1 1 A member or group of members who are dissatisfied in their dealings with the Union or who claim to be unfairly disadvantaged by reason of their having exercised their right not to be an ordinary member shall submit their complaint in writing to the Campaigns and Democracy Officer [union.info@uea.ac.uk](mailto:union.info@uea.ac.uk).

6.2 The complainant shall receive formal acknowledgement of their complaint within five working days, which would outline the eligibility of the complaint for further investigation. Complainants will receive an update on the investigation within ten working days. The outcome of the complaint shall be sent within fifteen days of the initial receipt of the complaint, which will include details of the right to appeal. If necessary the union can request more time to investigate with just reason.

6.3 If after ~~five~~ ten working days from the receipt of a complaint the complainant is not satisfied with the action taken by the ~~Campaigns and Democracy Officer~~ Union to remedy their complaint they may appeal in writing to the ~~Student Officer~~ ~~Committee~~ Management Committee

6.4 If after ~~five~~ ten working days from the receipt of an appeal to the ~~Student Officer~~ ~~Committee~~ Management Committee the complainant is not satisfied with the action taken by to the ~~Student Officer~~ ~~Committee~~ Management Committee to remedy their complaint they may appeal in writing to the next meeting of the Union Council. In the case of complaints against staff, they may appeal in writing to the Chief Executive, or to the Chair of Trustees

6.5 If the complainant is not satisfied with the action taken by the ~~Union Council~~ following appeal under Bye-Law 6.3 to remedy their complaint, or more than twenty working days have elapsed since the complaint was originally received, they may appeal in writing to the ~~Dean of Students~~ Director of Student Services.

6.6 If after ten working days the complainant or the Union is not satisfied with the action taken by the ~~Dean of Students~~ Director of Student Services they may appeal in writing to the Registrar and Secretary requesting that the complaint be determined by an independent person appointed by the University Council.

6.7 The Registrar and Secretary shall consult the Chair of the University Council who shall, unless the Chair determines the complaint to be frivolous, appoint an independent person to determine the complaint and whose decision shall be final and cannot be overturned by referenda.

6.8 The Union shall action any remedy determined by the ~~Dean of Students~~ Director of Student Services or the person appointed by the University Council. The Union shall action any remedy determined by the Dean of Students or the person appointed by the University Council.

- 2) All correspondence between the union and the complainant will conform to a standardised layout, as decided by management committee, and will be written in a formal, detailed manner.
- 3) That uea|su should attach relevant contact details regarding the process of appeal to every piece of correspondence with the complainant.
- 4) All correspondence will be written and logged whilst a complaint is in progress, in order to avoid potential miscommunication and misunderstanding between the two parties.
- 5) There will be no correspondence outside standard working hours (9-5) from the Union.
- 6) The complaints procedure should be linked to clearly from the home page of the union's website.

- 7) That complaints, once completed, should (other than in cases where byelaw 7: staff protocol would be broken) be published on the union website. This must consist of the complaint (summarised and anonymised), the decision as to whether to uphold any complaint, the response from the union, and any actions taken.