



Student Living.

Standard Operating Procedure

Resident Complaints Process

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1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure is:

- To investigate and resolve external complaints as quickly and satisfactorily as possible.
- To ensure the complaint(s) are provided with a fair and transparent process to lodge complaints.
- To improve customer service.
- To provide clear standard Operating Procedures for Managers on the complaints process.
- To provide a better monitoring system of complaints for Atira Student Living (Atira) reporting and follow-up.

2 SCOPE

This Standard Operating Procedure applies to;

- All corporate & Atira sites which are not regulated by specific Codes, Acts or other regulatory requirements (Regulatory Requirements) with regards to managing the external complaints process.

Where there are Regulatory Requirements applicable, the Regulatory Requirements take precedence to the extent of any inconsistency with this Standard Operating Procedure.

3 REFERENCES

N/A

4 DEFINITIONS

Complaint	an expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response
Complainant	the individual(s) making the complaint
Owner	a staff member who has been assigned to deal with a complaint, and who will ensure the correct complaints process is followed, as per the SOP

5 RESPONSIBILITIES

National Operations Manager

The National Operations Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all direct reports are fully trained on the complaints process and understand this Standard Operating Procedure.
- Making Judgements about Appeals based on knowledge, experience and evidence.
- Communicating throughout system the importance of meeting customer needs and all relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Monitoring performance and implementing improvements when appropriate.

Residence Manager / Assistant Residence Manager / Team Leader

The Residence Manager / Assistant Residence Manager / Team Leader is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff are fully trained on the complaints process and understand this Standard Operating Procedure.
- Ensuring that all staff provide a positive customer service experience by ensuring that complaints are handled with sensitivity, professionalism and care.
- Making Judgements based on knowledge, experience and evidence and investigating root causes, and resolving complaints in a timely and effective manner.
- Knowing how complaints are dealt with, the required timeframes for managing complaints at each stage, and the levels of responsibility of staff.

Employees

All Employees are responsible for:

- Following the Standard Operating Procedure.
Ensuring that they are understanding, respectful, empathetic and calm at all times when dealing with complaints.

6 STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

- All complaints, verbal or written, and no matter how seemingly unimportant, should be taken seriously.
- All complaints should be dealt with professionally, sensitively, and in a timely manner.
- If the complaint is being made on behalf of the student by a representative, it must be verified that the person has permission to speak for the student especially if confidential information is involved. It is very easy to assume that the representative has the right or power to act for the student when they may not. If in doubt it should be assumed that the student's explicit written permission is needed prior to discussing the complaint with the representative.

Types of Complaints:

- Complaints about individuals (e.g. housemate dispute, noise complaints, discrimination, bullying or harassment e.t.c) Note – complaints against any staff members will need to proceed through the Company's Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure.
- Complaints about living conditions (e.g. Unclean living space, damaged property, uninhabitable property, recurring unfixed maintenance issues or repairs).
- Complaints about administration or process (e.g. mismanagement, unreasonable process, failure to provide rights).

Resident Complaint Process

A three-stage model for handling resident complaints.

- Stage1: Informal Review (minor complaints)
- Stage 2: Formal Review (moderate – serious complaints)
- Stage 3: Appeal

STAGE 1

INFORMAL REVIEW (MINOR COMPLAINTS)

An informal process which aims to resolve minor complaints as quickly and adequately as possible.

Procedure

Initial complaints can be lodged verbally or in writing.

- **All written complaints, however, must be followed up with an acknowledgement email by a staff member within 24 hours of receiving complaint.**
- **Front line staff who receive a minor complaint should seek to solve the problem themselves immediately, if appropriate.**
- **If the complaint is more complex, or requires more time to resolve, front line staff should refer the matter to their supervisor or manager for review.**
- **Upon receiving a minor complaint, the team leader/manager identify an appropriate member of staff as the 'owner' (if not themselves), who will be responsible for the complaint and who will ensure the correct process is followed.**
- **A meeting or phone call with the complaint and owner should be arranged within 72 hours of the complaint being received to discuss the issue.**
- **Within the discussion, the owner must obtain as much information as possible about the complaint to determine the issue, root cause and the intended corrective action, with the aim of resolving the complaint as quickly and adequately as possible (within 14 days).**

For example, arranging an apartment meeting to resolve a flatmate dispute.

- **The owner should then take corrective action to resolve the complaint.**
- **If an investigation is likely to take longer than 14 days, the complainant must be notified as soon as possible and a timeframe for a follow-up meeting or phone call confirmed.**
- **When the complaint has been resolved, the owner is to notify the complainant(s) by email or phone call to confirm that the complaint has been resolved and that the outcome is satisfactory.**
- **If the complainant(s) is satisfied, the case can be closed, and the complainant(s) record updated in PEX.**

STAGE 2 FORMAL REVIEW (MODERATE – SERIOUS COMPLAINTS)

To be used to moderate to serious complaints which warrant further investigation. Stage 2 Formal Reviews must be completed by a General Residence Manager (the 'owner').

Procedure

- If a complaint is moderate-serious in nature, details of the complaint must be formally documented by all complainant(s) in writing. If necessary, further details should be obtained from the complainant and attached as a separate document.
- The 'owner' who is assigned to the case must be a General / Residence Manager.
- Upon receiving notification of the complaint, the owner must contact the complainant within 48 hours (immediately if serious) to arrange a meeting at an agreeable time.
- The complainant is to be advised that they may, if they wish, bring a relative or a representative to the meeting.
- Within the meeting, the owner should obtain as much information as possible about the complaint to determine the severity of the issue and the intended Action Plan.

The Action Plan, which aims to resolve or mitigate the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant(s), should be discussed in the meeting, agreed upon by the complainant(s), and forwarded to the complainant(s) in writing as soon as practical.

The written Action Plan should include:

- Detail of the complaint and complainant(s)
- Details of the problem, root cause and corrective action to resolve the complaint
- Owners of the action(s) and
- Timescales of any action(s)
- After the preliminary meeting, the owner must take corrective action to resolve the complaint within 14 days of the complaint being initiated. Note – serious complaints should be followed up immediately.
- If the issue is too complex to complete the investigation within 14 days of the complaint being initiated, the complainant should be informed of any delays.
- If the complaint raises potentially serious or legal matters, advice should be sought from National Operations Managers or Legal Counsel. If legal action is taken at this stage any investigation under the complaints procedure should cease immediately.
- A follow-up meeting should be arranged with the complainant as soon as possible after the investigation has been executed. At the meeting a detailed verbal explanation and written account ('Final Written Account') of the results of the investigation should be given.
- Such a meeting gives General / Residence Manager the opportunity to show the complainant that the matter has been taken seriously as has been thoroughly investigated.
- If the outcome is satisfactory to the complainant(s), the complaint can be closed, and the complainant(s) record updated in PEX. The Final Written Account, Action Plan and Resident written complaint should also be scanned and uploaded to the PEX.

STAGE 3

APPEAL

To be used as a final measure if a complainant wishes to appeal a decision made in Stage 2 Formal Review.

Stage 3 Appeal must be presided by at least two employees (e.g. General / Residence Manager and the National Operations Manager).

Procedure

Any appeal must be completed by the complainant(s), in writing including supporting evidence, if relevant.

- The Notice of Appeal must be sent directly to the National Operations Manager within 28 days of the date of the Final Written Account from Stage 2 Formal Review.
- Following due consideration with the relevant Head Office representative(s) – including Legal Counsel – the General / Residence Manager is to notify the complainant in writing (email and printed letter) within five working days of receiving the Notice of Appeal to advise whether they have a right for Appeal.

Note – a complainant can only appeal on the grounds that their residence failed to follow due process during investigation.

- If the resident has a right for Appeal, then an Appeal Meeting must be arranged within a reasonable time, as agreed upon by the complainant(s) and a legal representative.
- The complaint(s) must be advised that it is their right to seek and bring legal representation to the appeal meeting if they wish.
- At least two employees must preside over the meeting(i.e., a General/Residence Manager and Head Office representative)
- The Appeal Meeting must be minuted, saved on Dropbox and the Complaint(s) PEX record, and the transcript of the meeting made available to the complaint if requested.
- The decision at the Appeal Meeting is final and not open to further appeals.
- A written Final Appeal, which includes a summary of the Appeal and outcome, must be forwarded to the complainant(s) within 3 working days of the Appeal Meeting.
- The Final Appeal and any supporting documentation should be scanned and uploaded to PEX.

7 RECORD KEEPING

- Detailed and accurate notes must be kept at all stages of the complaints process.
- Supporting documentation, such as Resident written complaint, Action Plan and Notice of Appeal must be uploaded to the complainant(s) PEX Record.
- All complaints must also be entered on the Complaints Register (specific to each property location).
- All records and supporting documentation should be stored in accordance with local legislative requirements.

8 CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

- All parties involved, including the complainant and any accompanying representatives, must maintain confidentiality at all times throughout the complaints process.
- Records kept in relation to a complaint must be kept confidential, held for period as determined by any Data Protection legislation, and will only be divulged to other parties:
- Where legal advice is required from legal counsel.
- Where there is a risk of harm to any person or persons.
- Where the law or company policy requires to produce the records.