

Commercial Services (Accommodation Office) Complaints Procedure

Your opinion matters

We'd love to hear your thoughts about our services, whether they're positive or negative.

Why should you share your opinion with us?

We value your feedback as it helps us ensure that our services always align with our customers' needs. If you have any ideas or suggestions that could help us improve, we encourage you to share them with us. Our goal is to promptly investigate and address any issues and prevent reoccurrence.

Although we may not always be able to make changes exactly as you wish, we will provide you with an explanation. We are committed to handling complaints professionally and courteously, and we will respond promptly.

Who can make a complaint?

- Current students
- Residents and former residents
- Parents/guardians of students, with written permission from the student (to be provided when making the complaint)
- Visitors attending conferences or from outside the University
- Neighbours of University of Kent students living off-campus in rented accommodation

The complaints procedure cannot be used in the following circumstances:

- When matters are already before the courts
- When police action is pending or a criminal charge has been laid
- Generally, a complaint will not be considered if submitted more than three months after the substantive event(s) complained about.

Complaints process

1. Speak with one of our staff members who will make every effort to address and resolve your concerns promptly.
2. If you are dissatisfied with the response you receive, please email your complaint to accomm@kent.ac.uk. It will then be forwarded to the relevant manager, who will investigate and respond to you directly.

Your complaint should contain a clear statement of your concerns, including any supporting documentation and how you feel your complaint might be resolved.

We aim to respond to your complaint within 14 days of receipt. However, in complex cases, this may take longer. We will keep you notified of progress and inform you of the reasons for any delay.

3. If you'd like to take your appeal further, feel free to get in touch with the Student Conduct and Complaints Office at sccoffice@kent.ac.uk. Further information about their services can be found at <https://www.kent.ac.uk/student-services/student-conduct-complaints-office>

After going through the University's internal complaints procedure (which consists of the three steps above) and receiving a 'Completion of Procedures Letter', students in certain cases may escalate their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The OIA is an independent body that reviews complaints about Higher Education Institutions in England and Wales. It offers this service free of charge to students.

If you have a complaint specifically about the Student Accommodation Manager, please reach out to the Head of Accommodation and Customer Services.

How we handle complaints and the compensation process:

We understand that dealing with complaints and the compensation process can be challenging. Our university accommodation service is committed to making things right whenever possible, and we may offer alternative accommodation when necessary.

The University will consider all cases on an individual basis and where the University considers it has not acted in a reasonable manner either to offer alternative accommodation or to remedy service failures and/or provide sufficient maintenance, the University will offer an appropriate apology.

We want to emphasise that monetary compensation is only provided in exceptional circumstances. We also recognise that any compensation offered is typically a modest amount, so it's important for students to have realistic expectations. However, we do take student concerns seriously, and in cases of proven financial loss, negligence, or significant inconvenience, we are committed to providing higher levels of compensation.

If a maintenance issue is not resolved within the advertised response time, we encourage students to reach out to the Accommodation Office so that we can expedite the process and, if appropriate, offer a room change. We want to empower students to take a proactive approach to managing the impact of any potentially prolonged service outages.

In certain instances, students have received one fifth of their nightly accommodation rate, multiplied by the number of days without that service, providing:

- the defect was reported via the Home at Halls app
- if the defect is passed the advertised response time, student(s) were proactively trying to mitigate any potentially prolonged outages of service by contacting the Accommodation Office

The level of compensation is calculated from the date the defect was reported via the Home at Halls app until it is resolved, or a room move is offered. If the same defect re-occurs, this will have to be reported again via the Home at Halls app.

If we are waiting for spare parts or external contractors to complete the repairs, or if students have been offered alternative accommodation which has been rejected, no compensation will be offered.

Compensation may be appropriate in the following situations:

When students have issues or defects in their accommodation that are not resolved within the appropriate response time. Examples of such issues may include a lack of heating, hot water, cooking or snack preparation facilities, electricity/lighting, or other essential accommodation amenities.

In certain instances, students have received one fifth of their nightly accommodation rate, multiplied by the number of days without that service, providing:

- The defect was reported via the Home at Halls app
- If the defect exceeds the advertised response time, the student(s) made proactive efforts to mitigate any potentially prolonged outages by contacting the Accommodation Office

The level of compensation is calculated from the date the defect was reported via the Home at Halls app until it is resolved, or a room move is offered. If the same defect re-occurs, this will have to be reported again via the Home at Halls app.

If we are waiting for spare parts and students have been offered alternative accommodation which has been rejected, no compensation will be offered.

If students are unable to use kitchens in self-catered accommodation, they may be offered a replacement Flex Meal package on their KentOne Card, which can be used to purchase meals in the campus shop or catering outlets.

In situations where certain issues cannot be addressed while the student remains in their current accommodation, it may be necessary for students to relocate to alternative housing at short notice. In recognition of any inconvenience caused, students may receive a goodwill payment of £50. If the temporary accommodation is priced differently than their permanent room, the student would be charged the lower rate until they can move back to their original room or relocate to a room at a similar price point.

In the event that a student needs to make an insurance claim as a result of a defective piece of equipment, such as food loss due to a faulty fridge/freezer, they may be eligible to receive the insurance excess if their claim is approved.

Complaints from students:

Here is the document 'Complaints Procedures for Students' provided by the University of Kent. It mainly deals with academic complaints but also covers complaints students may have with professional services, including those provided by Commercial Services.

<https://media.www.kent.ac.uk/se/41164/StudentComplaintsProcedureJanuary2024.pdf>

The University proudly upholds The Universities UK Code of Practice for Student Accommodation. For more details, please visit <http://www.thesac.org.uk/>.