

SCONUL Access is a national scheme that allows staff and students from one university to use the facilities at other UK and Ireland university libraries. Not every library is eligible to join the scheme and some libraries choose not to. While we have scheme rules in place, there can be differences in processing times and entry to some libraries can be restricted at certain periods of the year, or in the evenings.

Whilst we make every effort to meet peoples' expectations, circumstances may arise where a member of staff or student at a member institution has a concern, either with SCONUL or with another member library and wishes to bring this to our attention. We will take all reasonable steps to resolve the situation, in everyone's best interests. Please note that the Access scheme does not allow for the use of electronic resources at another university, due to UK licencing restrictions, and only some member categories are able to borrow books. Access granted via the scheme is a privilege, not a right, and member institutions reserve the right to revoke access at any time.

This policy specifically relates to complaints about the operation of the SCONUL Access Scheme. The general SCONUL complaints policy can be found here:

<https://www.sconul.ac.uk/SCONUL-Complaints-Policy>

Informal Complaints to an institution

Anyone who has a concern should initially raise this with the Access contact at the member library in question at the time of the incident, or as soon after as possible, if this is applicable. We expect the vast majority of complaints to be dealt with in this way, as member libraries are responsible for the administration of the scheme. If this is not resolved to their satisfaction, or they have a substantive reason for feeling uncomfortable doing so, then they should contact a member of the SCONUL team, as this enables us to respond and deal with an issue quickly. We will liaise with any other member institution on your behalf.

We expect the institution to:

- The complainant's name and contact details, unless they are unwilling to provide these.
- The nature of their concern and anything that they wish to be done about it.
- The circumstances surrounding the complaint, including when, where any action that was taken and the details of others who were present/involved.

The institution should initially respond to your complaint within 7 working days, which will exclude weekends for the purposes of most contracted staff and aim to address or resolve your complaint as quickly as they are able.

Informal Complaints to SCONUL

We will seek to resolve this and meet any reasonable expectations the individual may have, ideally to their satisfaction. If unable to, make a note of:

- The complainant's name and contact details, unless they are unwilling to provide these.
- The nature of their concern and anything that they wish to be done about it.
- The circumstances surrounding the complaint, including when, where any action that was taken and the details of others who were present/involved.

We will advise the complainant that if their concern warrants investigation by SCONUL, it will be passed to the Deputy Director in the first instance, unless the complaint is about the Deputy Director, in which case the complaint will be passed to either the Executive Director or the nominated SCONUL co-chair.

Formal Complaints to SCONUL

Where an individual wishes to make a formal complaint, they should be provided with the e-mail address of Deputy Director for complaints and/or our registered address, as they wish. Correspondence should be marked private and confidential. They should be provided with a copy of this policy by post or e mail.

To help resolve the complaint as quickly and effectively as possible, the individual making the complaint should do so as soon as possible and should include in it:

- Name, organisation (if relevant), address, telephone number and e mail.
 - If you do not wish to be contacted in a particular way, please let us know and we will of course respect this.
- As much information as possible, such as what happened, where, when (date/time), who was present and any action taken, and by whom.
- What it is you felt to be unsatisfactory.
- What you believe should be done to address your concern.

Receipt will be acknowledged, if possible, within 7 working days. The complaint will then be investigated. If necessary, specialist advice will be sought. Where clarification or further information is felt to be necessary, the Deputy Director will contact the person complaining to request this.

A response will be sent within 14 working days. If this is not possible, a holding reply will be sent after 14 days advising when we estimate the investigation will be completed. The complaint response will explain our findings and what action we will be taking/have taken, subject to the constraints of the Data Protection Act, which will almost certainly not allow us to disclose sensitive personal information, unless there is a safeguarding issue identified.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they may appeal the decision, by writing to the nominated SCONUL co-chair, the contact details of whom will be included in our response. Appeals must be submitted within 28 days of our response to the complaint.

The appeal should be specific about why the individual feels the decision made was wrong and provide the facts and information necessary to demonstrate this.

A decision will be notified within 28 days and will be final.

Wider Action

Irrespective of the outcome of any complaint, we will consider if there is any requirement in respect of wider action and/or statutory reporting to the [Charity Commission](#), [H&SW Executive](#), other regulator, or the [Police](#).

Consideration will also be given to whether any changes should be made to the Access scheme policies, procedures, training etc to see if anything might reasonably be done to prevent a similar issue arising in future.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be recorded and any facts available looked in to. However, in doing so we will be mindful that anonymous complaints can sometimes be malicious. Everyone involved in our work, even incidentally, has a right to complain and we will hold anyone accountable but, equally, individuals have a right to be protected from unsubstantiated and, potentially, malicious allegations.



SCONUL Access Complaints Policy

Consequently, anyone wishing to complain is strongly encouraged to provide the information requested above and their contact details. This will also allow us to advise them of the outcome.

Confidentiality

The complaint will be treated as confidential and any communication on this issue, including responding to the complainant, will be subject to compliance with the Data Protection Act, unless a safeguarding issue is identified.

Availability

This policy is to be made publicly available on our website and given to anyone who advises that they wish to submit a complaint.