



SAAS

Guide to postgraduate student support 2011-2012

This guide is for all full time and part-time postgraduate students except those taking a Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), Postgraduate Diploma in Community Education (PGDipCE), Postgraduate Diploma in Community Learning and Development (PGDipCLD) or a Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture leading to exemption from RIBA part II exams.

PGDE, PGDipCE, PGDipCLD and Architecture students should use guide SAS 4.

If you prefer, we can provide alternative versions of these notes, as well as the postgraduate application form, in the following formats:

- Braille
- Large Print
- Audio

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Important points

- **You should apply to us as soon as possible.**
- **If your application is late, payment of tuition fees may be delayed.**
- **You must tell us if there is any change in your circumstances which may affect any award due to you.**
- **If we receive your application after the final closing date, you may not receive any support. The final closing dates for receiving postgraduate applications for session 2011-2012 are:**
 - **30 June 2011 for students on courses outside Scotland**
 - **31 March 2012 for students on courses in Scotland that start between 1 August 2011 and 31 March 2012**
- **We aim to process correctly filled-in applications within 21 days of us receiving your application. Please contact us if you do not receive an award notice within 28 days.**
- **Your application for payment of tuition fees is only valid for one academic session, you must apply for support for every year of your course.**
- **If there are any mistakes in your application or you do not fill in all the sections that apply to you, we will return your form to you. This will delay your application.**
- **Remember to include all the documents we ask for.**

Introduction

This guide is for full and part-time students applying for financial support for postgraduate study who are on a course that starts in session 2011-2012. If you are studying on a postgraduate course that started in session 2009-2010, your entitlement to support may be different. You should contact us on 0300 300 3135 for more advice.

Under the terms of the Postgraduate Students' Allowances Scheme (PSAS), you may receive support for certain vocational courses, at diploma level. We do not support all postgraduate courses. This guide describes which courses qualify and what support may be available to you. This guide gives general advice only and is not a full statement of the PSAS. If there is anything that you do not understand, or if you feel that we have not covered your circumstances, contact us for advice.

Under PSAS, we will pay your tuition fees and Disabled Students Allowance if this applies. There is no support available under the PSAS for living costs.

Eligibility - general

To be eligible for postgraduate support you must:

- meet our residence conditions as set out on pages 6 to 8
- be undertaking one of the eligible courses set out on pages 4 to 6
- be nominated by your institution for an award (if you are studying in Scotland)

If you are eligible for support at the start of your course, you will stay eligible for the minimum length of your course. If you are not eligible at the start of your course, you cannot become eligible for support part-way through. We will decide whether you meet our residence eligibility conditions. If you are not sure if you are eligible to receive support contact us for advice, giving us full details of your circumstances.

Eligibility – course eligibility

We fund certain 1 year Postgraduate diploma courses, including the 9 month taught element of some Postgraduate Masters (MSc) courses, providing they are at Scottish Qualification Framework (SCQF) level 11 or above.

Support is limited and we do not fund every course. Where we offer funding, we restrict the number of students that we fund.

The courses that we fund can vary from year to year. You can view the full list of Scottish courses that we are funding in session 2011-12, as well as the number of funded places at each institution, on our website at http://www.saas.gov.uk/student_support/special_circumstances/postgrad_courses.htm.

For information about the courses that we fund outside Scotland please see pages 5 and 6 of this guide.

The types of postgraduate courses the Postgraduate Students' Allowances Scheme cover are shown in the list below:

- 1 year postgraduate diplomas
- The 9 month taught element of postgraduate masters (MSc) courses

If you are on one of the following postgraduate courses you will not be eligible for support under the PSAS, however, you may be eligible for support under the Students Allowances Scheme. Please see our Guide to Student Support 2011-2012 or visit our website at www.saas.gov.uk for more information:

- Postgraduate Diplomas in Education (PDGEs)
- Postgraduate Diplomas in Community Education or Community Learning (PGDipCE/PGDipCLD)
- Post graduate diploma in Architecture leading to exemption from the RIBA part II exams
- If you are on one of the courses below, you will not be eligible for support under the PSAS.

- Postgraduate courses below the Scottish Qualification Framework (SCQF) level 11
- Postgraduate courses at intuitions outside the UK (except those specifically mentioned on pages 5)
- Full postgraduate masters courses
- PhDs
- 2 year postgraduate diploma courses
- Distance learning, including the Open University, courses
- Postgraduate diploma courses outwith Scotland where a similar course exists in Scotland (see page 5)
- Intercalated postgraduate courses undertaken as part of a medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine course.

However if you are on one of these courses and you have a disability you may still be entitled to claim Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). Please see our *Notes to Help Students Apply for DSA* or visit our website at www.saas.gov.uk for more information.

For help with tuition fees and living cost support for one of these courses see the other sources of funding section on pages 10 to 13 of this guide for information.

Courses at Scottish institutions

We allocate a set number of places for eligible courses to each institution and they will choose students they want us to consider for support. This means there is competition between courses for the number of places available and between students for support for these courses.

If your institution nominates you for an allocated place, you must still apply to us on our application form SAS7 for support. You will be able to get a copy of this application form from your institution. Even if your institution nominates you for a funded place, this does not guarantee we will give you support as you must still meet our residency and previous study eligibility conditions (see pages 6 - 8).

Courses at Institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

We limit the number of places we fund and there will be competition between students if the number of applications we receive is more than the number of awards available. If this happens, we will consider each application individually, taking account of the priority the Government places on the subject and the undergraduate degree that each student holds.

Support is not available if you want to study for a course and there is a similar funded course at an institution in Scotland.

You must apply to us before 30 June 2011 if you want us to consider you for an award. You should check with us that you proposed course qualifies for support under the PSAS before you send us your application form.

Do not delay applying for an award if you do not have a firm offer of a place on the course or for any other reason as you may miss our closing date.

If you think you are eligible, you should fill in the application form SAS7. Please contact us for a copy of this form.

Courses outside the UK

We do not fund any courses at institutions outside the UK apart from a few specific courses undertaken at the following institutions:

- The European University Institute (EUI), Florence.
- The Bologna Centre
- The College of Europe (Bruges)
- Jacques Le Coq Theatre School, Paris

If you are intending on studying at one of the institutions outside the UK that we offer support to you must apply to us by 30 June 2011. Your institution must nominate you for a funded place and places are limited. Contact us on 0300 300 3135 for more information.

Eligibility – studying part-time

If you are studying part-time in Scotland you can apply for support under the PSAS providing:

- you meet all of our other eligibility criteria
- your course is one that we fund
- you do not take more than 2 years to complete your course

Your institution must nominate you in each year of your course and you must apply to us for funding at the start of each year. If we fund you in the first year of your course but your institution does not select you for an award in year 2 you will have to pay your own fees in your second year.

If you do not meet the above eligibility criteria or if you are undertaking your course over more than 2 years, you may be eligible for our part time fee grant instead. Please visit our website www.saas.gov.uk or read our “Notes to help you apply for the part-time fee grant” (PT2) for more information.

If you are studying part-time on a postgraduate course outside Scotland, you will not be eligible for tuition fees support from us but you may still be eligible for DSA.

Eligibility - residency

General residence conditions

To meet the residence conditions, you must have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for the three years immediately before the relevant date (the first day of the first academic year of the course). If you are not a UK or other EU national, you must also have been settled in the UK (as set out in the Immigration Act 1971) on the relevant date. To find out about getting settled status, you can visit the Home Office website at www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk or phone their helpline on 0870 6067 766.

You must also be ordinarily resident in Scotland on the relevant date.

We will not normally treat you as being ordinarily resident in the UK and Scotland if your main purpose in coming here has been to receive full-time education and that you would have otherwise been living elsewhere.

Eligibility at the beginning of a course of education determines your eligibility for the duration of that course of education. This means, if you start a course while ineligible to receive support on residence grounds, you will continue to be ineligible to receive support on residence grounds for the rest of that course of education. There are exceptions to this rule for those who have a form of leave to remain in the UK which is given as the result of an asylum application.

For all others, you should contact us for advice before starting your course to see what support may be available.

The relevant date

The relevant date depends on when your course starts. The dates for session 2011-2012 are:

- **1 August 2011** for courses that start between 1 August 2011 and 31 December 2011
- **1 January 2012** for courses that start between 1 January 2012 and 31 March 2012
- **1 April 2012** for courses that start between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012
- **1 July 2012** for courses that start between 1 July 2012 and 31 July 2012

Students who do not meet the general residence conditions

If you do not meet the general residence conditions set out above, you may still be eligible for support in certain circumstances. Support may be available to:

- UK nationals and family members of such nationals returning from other member states of the European Union (EU) or from elsewhere in the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland
- UK nationals who were born in and have spent the greater part of their life in the UK
- UK nationals returning from employment or study outside the EEA or Switzerland
- Nationals of EEA countries, who have been granted **permanent residence** in the UK, and their husbands, wives or civil partners and children or stepchildren
- Nationals and family members of nationals of other EU member states, and Iceland Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, who have **migrant worker** or **self-employed person** status or whose family members have been migrant workers or self-employed in the UK
- Nationals and family members of nationals of other EU member states, and Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein and Switzerland, who have **frontier worker** or **frontier self-employed** status in the UK or whose family members are a frontier worker or frontier self-employed person in the UK
- People recognised as **refugees** by the British Government, and their husbands, wives or civil partners and children or stepchildren
- People who have been granted **exceptional leave to enter or remain, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave** in the UK, and their husbands, wives and civil partners or children or stepchildren
- Iraqi nationals who have been given leave to enter the UK under the Iraqi Direct Entry Scheme (also know as the Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme (LESAS))
- Anyone who is under 18 and has been granted **temporary protection** in the UK
- Anyone who is the dependant child of a Swiss national
- Anyone who is the dependant child of a Turkish worker

EU and EU overseas territories' students and family members of such

You may qualify for support with your tuition fees if you meet all of the following conditions.

- You are an EU national (other than a person who is a United Kingdom national who has not exercised a right of residence) or an EU overseas territories national, or a family member of either.
- You have been ordinarily resident in a member state of the EEA and Switzerland or the EU overseas territories for the three years immediately before the relevant date.
- You are taking a course of full-time study in Scotland and plan to graduate in Scotland

We will not pay your tuition fees if you are studying in Scotland for one year as part of your course in your home institution to which you will return to and graduate.

If your country has recently joined the EU or you have recently become an EU or EU overseas territories national, we will consider you for support from the date your home country joins or when you become such a national.

Asylum Seekers

You may qualify for support with your tuition fees if you meet all of the following conditions.

- You are the child of an asylum seeker or young asylum seeker.
- You are resident in Scotland on the relevant date.
- You have been resident in Scotland throughout the period of three years immediately before the relevant date.
- You were under 18 years old on the date when you made your application for asylum.
- You are under 25 years old on the relevant date.
- You are taking a course of full-time study in Scotland.

The residence eligibility conditions are complicated and we may have to ask you for more information. If you are in any doubt about your residence status, you should contact us for advice by phoning 0300 300 3135 or e-mail us at www.saas.gov.uk/contact.htm.

Applying to the correct award making organisation

We can only support you if you meet the course and residence condition for postgraduate support. We cannot act as an alternative source of support if the proper award making organisation will not support you. If you are studying on a postgraduate course immediately after completing a first course of higher education, you should apply to the organisation that financed you for the first course.

For example:

- If you are an English student who was funded by Student Finance England for a degree at a Scottish institution and now want to study on a postgraduate course there, you must apply to Student Finance England for support. As you were only living in Scotland to study, this does not count as ordinary residence.

If you are a Scottish student who was funded by us for a degree course at a university in England and now want to study on a postgraduate course anywhere in the UK, you should apply to us for support.

Your funding body may change if you do not start your postgraduate course immediately after completing your first course.

For example, if you were funded by us for your first course, then moved to England, Wales or Northern Ireland to work and were still employed there on the first day of the first academic year of your course, you will normally be considered to be ordinarily resident there. You should therefore apply to Student Finance England, Student Finance Wales or the appropriate Northern Ireland Library for support. Returning at weekends or for holidays in Scotland does not count towards residence.

Previous study

If you have previously undertaken a postgraduate course this may effect your entitlement to support.

You will not be eligible for support under the PSAS if:

- you have previously taken a short vocational postgraduate course, including teacher training, with support from UK public funds

You may still be eligible for support if you have previously taken:

- a short vocational postgraduate course, including teacher training, **without** support from UK public funds
- an advanced research level postgraduate course of two years or more such as a Doctorate.

Financial support

Fees

We will pay your tuition fees of up to £3,400 straight to your institution. Tuition fees are not income assessed.

If the amount that you are charged is higher than £3,400 you will have to pay the difference in cost yourself.

If we turn your application down or you fail to apply by the closing dates (**30 June 2011 for courses outside Scotland** and **31 March 2012 for courses in Scotland**), you will have to pay your own fees.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

If you have a disability, you may claim for certain extra expenses which arise because you are on the course. This allowance is not income-assessed.

We will consider paying the following amounts:

- Up to £1,725 a year for any small items of equipment or consumables
- Up to £20,520 a year for non-medical personal help
- Up to £5,160 for major items of specialist equipment (**this is a total amount for the course, not for each year of the course**)

You may also claim travelling expenses if you have a mobility problem and are unable to use public transport because of it.

If you need advice about equipment or other support, the disability advisor at your institution will be able to help you. If you are still not sure about the equipment and help you need, we can refer you to an access centre. We will pay for you to have a full needs assessment done by a recognised access centre, organisation or institution that has the necessary qualified staff to carry out the needs assessments.

If you are applying for tuition fees for a PSAS funded course, we will not be able to process your DSA application until we receive your application for tuition fees.

If you will not be applying to us for tuition fees, you might still be eligible to apply to us for the DSA providing you meet all of the eligible criteria as described in pages 4 to 8.

If you are studying part-time you can apply for DSA providing you are studying for at least 50% of the length of the full time course in each year of study and you do not take more than twice the normal length of time to complete it.

You can get more information about the DSA in our *Notes to Help Students apply for the Disabled Students Allowance* which you can download from our website or you can contact us for more advice.

Change of course

If we offer you an award and you later want to change course, you will only be able to apply for another award if you did not take up your original place. That is, you did not start the course, and we were able to recover any fees we had paid for you, and your institution was able to give the allocated place to another student. Your institution must also have nominated you for a place on your new course.

We will also consider support for a change of course if you did not successfully complete the course because of **medical** or **strong compassionate** reasons such as the death or serious illness of a close relative. You should contact us for advice if you feel that this applies to you.

Repeating a period of study

We will not give you tuition fee support if you have to repeat or extend your studies on academic grounds. However, you may be eligible for support if you have to repeat or extend your studies on medical or strong compassionate grounds, for example, the death of a close relative. In these cases you must write to us outlining the circumstances.

Even if you are not eligible for help with your tuition fees, you may still be able claim DSA support, if applicable.

Other sources of financial help

The website www.prospects.ac.uk provides comprehensive information and advice about postgraduate support in Scotland. You may also find the following helpful:

Discretionary funds

The Scottish Ministers provide discretionary funds to students studying at Scottish Institutions. They distribute these funds to publicly-funded institutions for students who, for whatever reasons, have financial difficulties or who may not be able to enter higher or further education for financial reasons. In the rest of the UK these are sometimes know as Access Funds.

We ask institutions to give priority to cases where there is difficulty in meeting living costs. Institutions can decide whether to provide scholarships or bursaries to help with the living costs of students who otherwise may not enter education because of their financial circumstances.

Full-time, part-time and sandwich-course students in further or higher education at a publicly-funded institution are eligible to apply for a payment from these funds. You must meet our residence conditions to be eligible to apply to the discretionary funds. There is no age limit for higher education students to receive payments from these funds.

Your institution is responsible for deciding which students should receive payments and how much each payment should be. It is also responsible for all other matters relating to these funds including handling appeals.

If you want more details about discretionary funds or access to learning funds, ask the institution you are studying at or have applied to study at. Usually, the student support or student services office of the institution will deal with enquiries about these funds.

Childcare Fund

The Scottish Ministers provide childcare funds to Scottish publicly-funded institutions for students to help towards the cost of registered or formal childcare costs. Formal childcare includes childminders, after school clubs, day care, sitter services and providers of pre-school and education. Your institution is responsible for deciding which students should receive payments and how much each payment should be. You will only be eligible to apply if you are receiving PSAS support for payment of your tuition fees. You should apply straight to them for support. Not all eligible students will receive help, as the fund is limited.

Awards for Social Work courses

Awards for postgraduate Social Work courses in Scotland are the responsibility of:

Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

Compass House

Discovery Quay

11 Riverside Drive

Dundee

DD1 4NY

Phone: 0845 6030891

Email: enquiries@ssc.uk.com

Website: www.sssc.uk.com

Awards for Nursing Courses

You can get more information about funding for postgraduate nursing and midwifery courses from:

National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Scotland

22 Queen Street

Edinburgh

EH2 1NT

Phone: 0131 220 8660

Website: www.nes.scot.nhs.uk

Awards for Open University Courses

The Open University will tell you about the support available for its courses. Please contact:

The Open University

Central Enquiry Service

PO Box 200

Milton Keynes

MK7 6YZ

Phone: 01908 653231

Website: www.open.ac.uk

Career Development Loans

If you cannot get student support or any other funding to help pay for the course you want to do, you may be able to apply for a Career Development Loan (CDL).

The Government manages CDLs through a partnership with a number of high-street banks. They can support courses in a wide range of vocational areas. If you are 18 or over and plan to train in the UK, you may be able to apply for a CDL.

You make no repayments while you are training and for up to one month afterwards, or for up to 17 months if you are unemployed when the repayments are due to start. During this time, the Government will pay the interest on the loan for you. At the end of this period you become responsible for the loan repayments and any extra interest.

If you are claiming, or want to claim, social security benefit, you should check with your local DWP office to find out how a Career Development Loan may affect your benefits.

Phone 0800 585505 (calls are free).

Educational trusts and endowments

You may find it useful to check the Directory of Grant-Making Trusts published by the Charities Aid Foundation, the Grants Register published by Palgrave Macmillan, or the Charities Digest published by the Education Grants Advisory Service. You can usually find these in public reference libraries.

We also maintain a Register of Educational Endowments containing information on Scottish trusts that we know about. You can only get help from a trust if you meet the eligibility conditions of that trust. The conditions vary from trust to trust, and only the trustees can decide if you are eligible. For example, conditions can relate to:

- where you live or were born
- what schools you went to
- your age
- the course you are taking
- the institution you go to

Only the trustees can decide whether to accept or refuse your application. Most trusts say that the people applying must be Scottish, or be planning to study at an institution in Scotland.

We will search the register for you if you fill in and send us an enquiry form. After we have searched the register for you, we will send you the names and addresses of any trusts to which you may be able to apply to for help. You should then apply straight to the trusts. You can get a form from our website.

Sponsorship and scholarships

Many industrial organisations and some government departments have schemes (usually competitive) for supporting students. You may be able to get details of these from your local Jobcentre or from your institution.

You may also want to visit the website at www.scholarship-search.org.uk to look at the database of undergraduate and postgraduate scholarship awards that academic institutions, commercial organisations and charitable trusts offer.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

The DWP assesses students' entitlements to income-related benefits. Full time students are generally not eligible to claim benefits. But full time students with dependants and students with disabilities may be eligible in certain circumstances. It is important to discuss this with your institution student advisor as well as with your local Benefit Office or JobCentre Plus.

The DWP will generally treat payments to students from the discretionary funds as voluntary or charitable payments and will fully disregard (ignore) them. However, when working out benefits, they will take account of payments that are for everyday living costs.

You can find more details about your benefit entitlements from your local Benefit Office or JobCentre Plus.

Tax credits

Students and their families could receive more money through the tax credits. Students with children are entitled to claim the Child Tax Credit which HM Revenue and Customs will pay to those who are responsible for at least one child, whether or not they are in paid work.

Students who work more than 16 hours a week could also be eligible for Working Tax Credit. Extra help is also available to those who have a disability or who are caring for children with a disability.

You can find out more information by calling the helpline on 0845 300 3900.

Our commitment to customer service

Below sets out the standards of service you can expect from us and tells you what to do if things go wrong.

Who we are and what we do

We are a Government Agency. We pay grants and bursaries to Scottish students in higher education. We have 190 staff and handle over 150,000 applications every year.

What we do:

- assess and pay financial support for living costs and tuition fees
- deal with the Students' Allowances Scheme, the Postgraduate Students' Allowances Scheme (PSAS), the Nursing and Midwifery Students Bursary Scheme (NMSB) and applications for student loans
- provide resources and data to the Student Loans Company for the payment of student loans
- distribute Discretionary Funds and Childcare Funds to Scottish universities and colleges
- maintain a register of charities that offer educational endowments
- help learners through the Individual Learning Accounts Scotland (ILAS) scheme, which we run with Skills Development Scotland
- work with the Health Directorate to develop and deliver NHS Bursaries targeted at specific groups (for example Dentistry students)

Our Standards of Service

Our main service targets, which are currently under review, are available on our website at www.saas.gov.uk.

Helping us to help you

There are some things you can do to help us give you a better service:

- Apply for your support as early in the year as possible. Do not wait for exam results or a firm offer. If you don't apply by the closing date you will have to pay your own fees
- Use our website at www.saas.gov.uk. It contains all the information you need about what support is available.
- Send clear photocopies of any documents we ask to see. We destroy all documents that we receive after 30 days
- If you contact us always tell us your SAAS reference number (it is on your award notice).
- Let us know straight away if any details you gave us on your application change, for example, if you change your name, address or phone number or you leave or change your course of study

Our website and guidance documents

Every year, we put out guides and other booklets with information about the support that is available. Copies of all of our guides and booklets are available from our website.

If you are not able to read our information because of, for example, a sight problem, we can provide the information in an alternative format. Please contact us 0300 300 3135 and we will arrange for you to have a copy in a format that meets your needs.

Contacting us

Our staff will tell you their name on the phone, in all correspondence or when you meet them.

Our office is open between 8.30am and 5pm (4.30pm on Fridays). We close on public holidays, weekends and over the Christmas and New Year period. You can contact us by e-mail at www.saas.gov/contact.htm or by writing to the following address:

Student Awards Agency for Scotland
Gyleview House
3 Redheughs Rigg
Edinburgh
EH12 9HH

Personal callers

You can come to our office during the hours shown above. If you want to discuss your case in detail you should make an appointment in advance to ensure that appropriate member of staff you want or need to see will be available. If you are happy to speak to any member of staff about your case, you do not need to make an appointment. You may have to wait during busy periods to see someone, however, we will aim to see you within 15 minutes.

Phone calls

You can use our automated phone-answering service on 0300 300 3135 if you know your SAAS reference number. You can call this 24 hours a day seven days a week if, for example, you want to find out when we will pay you the money you are due or you need a copy of your award notice.

During our busiest period (May to October) our General Enquiry Unit is open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Thursday, and from 8am to 4.30pm on Fridays, except public holidays. At other times of the year, it is open for calls from 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Thursday, and from 8.30am to 4.30pm on Fridays.

We print a phone number on all the award notices and letters we send to you. This is the number to use if you have specific questions to ask about your own case. It gives you a direct line to the team or person dealing with your application.

We try to answer all calls as soon as we can. However, calls to the Agency increase significantly when the Scottish school exam results come out in early August and again in October when most university courses start. At these times, we may have to place your call in a queue and it may take longer than 3 minutes for you to get through to the person you need to speak to.

We record all calls to the Agency for training purposes.

Our approach to quality and customer service

We aim to give an excellent level of service to all our customers and we always try to improve the quality of our service and make our systems easier to use. When things do go wrong we try to put them right as soon as we can.

SAAS Appeals and Complaints Procedures

How to make an appeal

An appeal is a formal request to review a decision we have made on your entitlement to financial support and/or our assessment of how much you should get. An appeal must allege an error on our part and we will only consider if it shows that we have made an incorrect assessment of your factual circumstances and/or an erroneous interpretation of the law. You can make a formal appeal by writing to tell us why you think our decision or assessment is wrong.

Address your envelope to 'SAAS Appeals' at the address below and clearly mark your letter 'Formal Appeal'. Please put your SAAS reference number on any correspondence.

How to make a complaint

We would like to hear from you if you feel dissatisfied with any aspect of our service, for example if you think we have:

- treated you unfairly
- failed to explain things properly
- given you wrong or misleading information
- have taken too long to deal with your case

We want to know if things go wrong so that we can put them right and make sure that they do not happen again.

You can make a formal complaint by writing to tell us what has gone wrong. Address the envelope to 'SAAS Complaints' and clearly mark your letter 'Formal Complaint'. Please put your SAAS reference number on any correspondence.

What we will do

A senior member of staff will consider your appeal or complaint and will aim to reply to you within 10 working days of receipt. If we cannot do so, we will write to explain why and to tell you when you can expect a full response. If we do not class your correspondence as an appeal or a complaint we will treat it as general correspondence and aim to reply within 15 working days.

If you are unhappy with the reply you receive, you may write to our Chief Executive asking her to review your case (please write to the Chief Executive, SAAS at the address below). You will normally receive a reply within 10 working days. The Chief Executive's decision is final in terms of the Agency's procedures.

If you are not satisfied with the reply from the Chief Executive, you (or your representative) have the right to refer your case to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for consideration.

The Ombudsman can investigate claims of maladministration but will normally only do so once you have exhausted the Agency's procedures as detailed above. You should contact the Ombudsman, preferably in writing, within 12 months after the day you first became aware of your grounds for complaint. The office of the SPSO is located at 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS.

The SPSO's contact details are:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Freepost EH641
Edinburgh EH3 0BR
E-Mail: ask@spsso.org.uk
www.spsso.org.uk
Phone: 0800 377 7330
Fax: 0800 377 7331
Text: 0790 049 4372

Recording, monitoring and reviewing appeals and complaints

If appeals or complaints reveal shortcomings on our part, we use this information to review and improve our procedures.

Our Management Board review the complaints we have dealt with every 3 months to assess whether there are any patterns or trends that suggest we ought to change our procedures. We keep a record of all the complaints we receive and publish details in our annual reports.