



# Complaints Policy

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## Policy Statement

The organisation is committed to providing high-quality and transparent service to everyone it deals with. In course of its work, the organisation understands that there may be occasions that an individual, learner, customer, client, supplier, stakeholder or member (“complainant”) is dissatisfied or disputes the service and/or actions taken by the organisation or one of its staff members.

## Aims

This policy aims to provide a procedure to resolve individual complaints in a manner which is as fair and expeditious. The organisation seeks to settle complaints fairly, courteously and promptly in the best interests of all parties.

## Objectives

The organisation’s policy is based on five key objectives:

- Encourage informal conciliation or resolution informally and nearest the source of the complaint
- Treat all complaints with seriousness, understanding and consideration of the feelings of the complainant
- Maintain confidentiality
- Be efficient and fair
- To improve from complaints, whether they are upheld or rejected

## What is a complaint?

### *Definition*

A complaint occurs when an individual or an individual presenting representing another person or entity informs the organisation that something is wrong, not satisfactory or they have a grievance. A complaint could be due to the actions, services, products and/or communication delivered by the organisation in general, an employee, contractor or a partner of the organisation. Conversely, a complaint may be due to the lack of action in delivering services, products, and communication. Moreover, a complaint could be due to an omission for example not providing an agreed service, product, communication and/or taking action that was expected.

## *Who can complain?*

Any stakeholder of the organisation can make a complaint. The organisation's main stakeholders are:

- Learners
- Applicants
- Parents
- Client
- Customers
- Regulators and statutory bodies
- Staff
- Partners
- Shareholders

The list above is not exhaustive, and the organisation understands that in its role as a funded organisation it extends this to any member of the public who has an interest in what the organisation does.

## **Complaints Procedure**

### *Stage 1 - Informal Complaint*

If a complainant has an issue or dispute relating to the delivery of services or the actions undertaken by the organisation, the complainant should in the first instance seek to raise their issue informally with a member of staff in the organisation. The organisation seeks to resolve complaints through the informal channel wherever possible.

### *Stage 2 - Formal Complaint*

If a complainant feels that the complaint requires attention through a formal channel, or if Stage 1 did not yield the intended outcome, the complainant should make the matter known to the organisation in writing to [customerfirst@apprenticeshipconnect.co.uk](mailto:customerfirst@apprenticeshipconnect.co.uk), ensuring the words 'complaint' is visible within the subject heading/email title. The complainant should explain the complaint, providing evidence if applicable.

### *Stage 3 - Investigation*

The organisation will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two working days. Complaints received and/or acknowledged outside of working hours will be dated the following working day. Following receipt of the complaint, the organisation will carry out an investigation and respond to the complainant within five working days following the date of acknowledgement. The organisation will detail its findings and outcome to all relevant parties upon the conclusion of the investigation. In the event of an incomplete

investigation, the organisation will write to the complainant within five working days following the date of acknowledgement to request an extension, outlining a clear time and date by which the complainant will receive a conclusion.

#### *Stage 4 - Appealing an Investigation Decision*

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the processing of, or outcome of a complaint, the complainant has the right to escalate the complaint to a Director in writing following the procedure outlined in Stage 2. The complainant should state why they feel the outcome is incorrect.

The complaint appeal will be acknowledged within two working days and the complainant will be notified that they will receive a response from a Director within five working days. Complaint appeals received and/or acknowledged outside of working hours will be dated the following working day. The Director will investigate the complaint and respond to the complainant within five working days following the date of acknowledgement. The Director will detail the findings and outcome to all relevant parties upon the conclusion of the investigation. In the event of an incomplete investigation, the Director will write to the complainant within five working days following the date of acknowledgement to request an extension, outlining a clear time and date by which the complainant will receive a conclusion.

### **Complaints Published on Public Forums**

The organisation requests that any complaint is made directly to the organisation and not on public forums. If a complaint is made on a public forum the organisation will follow the procedure below.

#### *Stage 1 - Complaint Published (notification)*

In the event a complaint is published on a public platform, HR management or marketing management will be notified as soon as reasonably possible following the discovery of such comment.

#### *Stage 2 - Marketing Response*

Apprenticeship Connect will respond using the relevant organisation account acknowledging the issue(s), advising it will be looked into as a matter of urgency and a member of the team will be in touch to discuss the matter further. The response will also direct the complainant to contact [customerfirst@apprenticeshipconnect.co.uk](mailto:customerfirst@apprenticeshipconnect.co.uk) if they wish to provide any additional information in the meantime. Where the organisation is unsure of the complainant's identity, they will be asked to contact Apprenticeship Connect using the email address provided to allow further investigation.

### *Stage 3 - Initial Contact*

HR management or the applicable team or department manager will attempt to contact the complainant within two working days from the marketing response to obtain further insight into the matter and collect evidence where possible. Where contact cannot be made, the organisation will return to the original complaint via the platform the complaint was communicated and request the complainant contacts Apprenticeship Connect directly.

### *Stage 4 - Investigation*

Following receipt of the complaint details, the organisation will carry out an investigation and respond to the complainant within five working days of the marketing response. The organisation will detail its findings and outcome to all relevant parties upon the conclusion of the investigation. In the event of an incomplete investigation, the organisation will write to the complainant within five working days following the date of the marketing response to request an extension, outlining a clear time and date by which the complainant will receive a conclusion.

### *Stage 5 - Appealing an Investigation Decision*

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the processing of, or outcome of a complaint, the complainant has the right to escalate the complaint to a director, ensuring the words 'complaint' is visible within the subject heading/email title. The complainant should state why they feel the outcome is incorrect.

The complaint appeal will be acknowledged within two working days and the complainant will be notified that they will receive a response from a director within five working days. Complaint appeals received and/or acknowledged outside of working hours will be dated the following working day. The director will investigate the complaint and respond to the complainant within five working days following the date of acknowledgement. The director will detail their findings and outcome to all relevant parties upon the conclusion of the investigation. In the event of an incomplete investigation, the Director will write to the complainant within five working days following the date of acknowledgement to request an extension, outlining a clear time and date by which the complainant will receive a conclusion.

## **Monitoring of Complaints**

All complaints will be recorded regardless of whether or not the complaint was meritorious and complaints will be tracked by the business manager. The business manager will report to the Director the nature, findings, and outcomes of complaints as well as trends and patterns to help improve service provision. Review meetings will take place at a minimum quarterly. The meeting report will set out the findings and

recommendations for measures to be taken to prevent further complaints or to improve/adapt/adjust the organisation's services to minimise the likelihood of any further complaints.