

The Employers Forum Complaint's Policy



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¹THE EMPLOYERS FORUM COMPLAINT'S POLICY

Section 1

Scope of the policy

This policy is for those of our customers, including our learners who wish to express dissatisfaction with us.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies, which are available on request and from the centre –

- Centre Agreement
- Quality Strategy
- Appeals Process

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of the policy is to set out the steps you need to follow when submitting a complaint to us and, should this complaint be accepted, the steps we will follow to investigate the complaint and come to a decision.

Who needs to know about the policy?

You must make sure all staff and learners who are involved in the design, delivery, management, assessment and quality assurance of our courses aware of, and familiar with, the contents of this policy.

Reviewing of the policy

This policy will be reviewed annually as identified within the quality improvement plan.

Section 2

What is a complaint?

We consider complaints as expression(s) of dissatisfaction regarding our actions, services the application of our policies and / or on occasion, the outcome or decision we've made. In particular, when considering complaints, we examine whether they relate to the following on our part –

- Mistakes or poor service;
- Unprofessional behaviour or conduct of our staff;
- Bias or unfair treatment;

- Failure to follow our published policies or procedures without a reasonable explanation.

Who can make a complaint?

The person(s) directly informed of, or directly affected by our action or decision, or a representative acting on behalf of and with the explicit written permission of that person/those persons.

We understand that some people may feel more comfortable making anonymous complaints. We will note these complaints and, depending on the nature of the complaint, may refer to them in support of our ongoing risk analysis and review.

Does Employers Forum have to accept my complaint?

We will always listen to you and see if we can put things right if they have gone wrong.

If we do not agree with your complaint, or we believe that your expression of dissatisfaction does not constitute a complaint as outlined above, we will let you know the reason(s) why.

Frivolous, meritless or vexatious complaints

We will treat every complaint fairly.

We will not engage with frivolous, meritless or vexatious complaints. We will not accept persistent and repeated contacts from complainants, without being presented with new information or evidence. Importantly, if you become abusive when corresponding with us, or persistently and repeatedly contact us without pertinent new evidence or information, we will class this as vexatious correspondence.

These types of interactions reduce the amount of time that we can dedicate to supporting our customers/students.

In such cases we will advise you of our decision and action we intend to take, such as no longer corresponding with you on the matter and/or taking any required action to protect our staff and/or reputation.

Employers Forum Complaints Procedure

Section 3

Making a complaint

3.1 Outlining your complaint

The following information will help us in understanding the reason for your dissatisfaction:

- The full nature of the complaint (what happened);
- The date(s) the issue you are complaining about came to your attention (when it happened);
- The nature of the service affected
- The contents and outcome of any investigation carried out by you or the learner(s) relating to the issue, if relevant.

We appreciate some complaints are best submitted to us and dealt with by telephone. Please note that all of our calls are recorded and that we may review the telephone recording of your complaint for quality and training purposes. To make sure we fully address your points and so that we have a clear record of your views on what happened, it is helpful if we receive your complaint in writing, either in a letter or an email. Where we consider a complaint to be unspecific, excessively long and / or complex, we may require you to provide a written summary of the key aspects of your complaint, to make sure we understand the points to be covered.

So that we can focus on the issues you have raised, we do not normally accept changes or expansions of your complaint after submission, unless we are satisfied that the information was not available at the time you made your complaint. To be considered, any new information must be material to the outcome of any review or investigation we may undertake.

If at any point you, your staff or learners wish to be legally represented in relation to any aspect of a complaint, this **must** be discussed with us. We reserve the right to be legally represented and to act upon legal advice.

Section 4

How we deal with complaints

We aim to resolve all accepted complaints as quickly as possible. Where this is not possible, we will take a staged approach to complaint escalation and resolution.

Stages 1 and 2 of our Complaints Policy are classed as informal stages. Complaints escalated to Stages 3 or 4 are classed as formal complaints. Please see each stage below for information on how your complaint will be addressed.

4.1 Stages of a complaint

Stage 1: Informal – initial complaint

Most initial (Stage 1) complaints would be submitted verbally, by phone. A Customer Support Assistant (or another appropriate team member) will listen to your complaint and aim to resolve it for you straight away.

You may alternatively choose to submit your complaint in writing at this stage. In this case, you can expect our resolution to your complaint to be conveyed to you by the Customer Support Assistant, either by phone or in writing, within **5 working days** of receipt.

Your complaint needs to be made within **3 months** of the incident you are complaining about.

Stage 2: Informal – escalation to a Team Leader

Where it has not been possible for us to resolve your complaint at Stage 1, we will escalate it to an appropriate Team Leader who will action and resolve your complaint within a further **5 working days**.

If you are not satisfied with the response from the staff member dealing with your complaint at Stage 1, you may request your complaint be escalated.

Any Stage 2 complaint must be submitted within **7 working days** of your receipt of the Customer Support Assistant's response.

Stage 3: Formal – escalation to an appointed Senior Manager

Where it has not been possible for us to resolve your complaint at Stage 2, we will escalate it to an appointed Senior Manager who will action and resolve your complaint within **10 working days**.

If you are not satisfied with the response from the Team Leader at Stage 2, you may request your complaint be escalated.

Any Stage 3 complaints must be submitted in writing, within **7 working days** of the Stage 2 outcome being given to you. You will need to provide information as to why you believe your complaint has not been resolved and / or properly addressed.

The Senior Manager will determine whether we have applied our procedures fairly, appropriately, consistently and in line with our policy.

We will inform you of the decision within **one working day** of the decision being made.

Stage 4: Formal – escalation to CEO

If you have followed all of the escalation steps above and your complaint remains unresolved, we will escalate your complaint to the CEO.

If you are not satisfied with the Stage 3 response, you may request your complaint be escalated. You must do so in writing, within **14 working days** of the Stage 3 outcome being given to you. You must outline why you believe your complaint has not been resolved and / or properly addressed.

Our CEO will consider the evidence from all aspects of the complaint to date and the

actions we have taken to resolve it, to determine whether we have dealt with your complaint correctly and fairly.

We aim to resolve any complaint lodged with the CEO within **20 working days**. We will inform you of the CEO's decision within **one working day** of the decision being made.

This stage in the complaints process is final and will complete Employers Forum's internal complaints procedures. No further complaint on the same matter will be accepted.

4.2 Exceptions to stated timescales

The timescales relating to each stage of the complaints process are outlined above. Please note that in some cases, particularly where the complaint may be complex, the complaint may take longer than the stated working days to investigate and / or resolve. In such instances, we will advise you of the reasons why and of the revised timescale.

Section 5 Outcome of a complaint

If we uphold your complaint, we will tell you what remedy we propose. The remedy chosen will be proportionate and appropriate to the issue being complained about and may include:

5.1

- An apology; and / or
- An explanation of any poor service you have received; and / or
- An explanation of how a matter has been or may be rectified; and / or
- Recommendations to change or improve our processes or procedures.

Taking it further

We hope that we can always solve your issue for you. However, if you are unhappy with our final response, you have the right to refer your complaint to our board. Our board would require evidence that you have fully exhausted the steps within this Complaints Policy.

Section 6

Mandatory disclosure and confidentiality

6.1 Mandatory disclosures

In awarding, it is imperative that the integrity of qualifications is maintained; for example, by ensuring learners who are awarded a certificate have a legitimate right to that certificate.

Our qualifications regulators have outlined some specific conditions that we must

meet to protect the integrity of regulated qualifications across the awarding community. This includes the requirement that where certain things are identified (such as malpractice), or certain actions taken (such as when sanctions are applied) the regulators and other relevant AOs who may be affected (e.g. those offering similar types of qualifications via the centre) must be informed.

Depending on the seriousness of the matter, we may be required to declare to our regulators that we are no longer compliant with the requirements of the General Conditions of Recognition, due to an act or omission by you which has put us in breach. In this event, we may have regulatory action directed against us, such as Monetary Penalties. In accordance with the Centre Agreement, we reserve the right to direct such financial penalties against you, should they be as a result of your act or omission (please see the Centre Agreement under 'Remedies' and 'Indemnity').

6.2 Confidentiality

We may need to access confidential information. We will ensure that such information is kept secure and only used for the purposes of the investigation and in line with relevant data protection legislation. We will not normally disclose the information to third parties unless required to do so, e.g. to our Regulators and / or the Police or other relevant and / or Statutory Bodies.

Section 7 Termination for Convenience

Our actions under this policy will be proportionate. Where possible, we will always try to work with you in resolving issues. However, nothing within this policy precludes us from invoking our right under the Learner Agreement to terminate our relationship with you.

Section 8 Contact details

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our Customer Support team on

Web Link: <http://www.theemployersforum.org.uk/index.php?id=home>

Telephone: 0114 2767722

Post:

The Employers Forum

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