

Complaints and Grievances

Introduction

The Academy strives for excellence in the services it offers .However it accepts that, on occasions, individuals will feel the need to complain. The Academy will ensure that a set of procedures exists to deal speedily with such complaints in a fair and equitable manner.

The intention behind the Complaints Procedure is to:

- improve the service the Academy provides to learners, employers, staff and the broader local community
- clarify for staff and learners the procedures for handling complaints
- ensure and encourage that the procedures are sensitive to issues of confidentiality
- encourage clients to seek means of resolving problems without further or more formal procedures.
- provide where appropriate means of recording both the nature of complaints and the effectiveness of their resolutions
- encourage a regular process of monitoring and reviewing records within the quality assurance framework.

Who can complain?

Complaints can be made by any of the client groups i.e learners, employers and staff members if and when applicable.

What can be complained about?

Complaints can be made about:

- unfair coursework marking and grading
- other learners
- course tutors
- non-academic staff, including management
- alleged unfair treatment at place of work
- Academy policies and practices

For complaints against unfair coursework marking and grading it is appropriate to refer to Procedure 2.1 *Academic appeals*.

Issues excluded from Complaints procedures

There are three issues excluded from the complaints procedures:

- services outside the Academy`s control, e.g, funding criteria,
- issues involving criminal offences.
- matters dealt with under other procedures such as the Disciplinary Procedures

If the complaint is found to be malicious, action may be taken against the Complainant

Possible outcomes of complaints

The possible outcomes are

- an apology and/or appropriate redress.
- a correction of any error
- an improvement in services

The processes of a complaint

The processes of complaints is a 3 stage process (see below)

Monitoring and review

The Academy will maintain confidential records of all complaints that are dealt with. Data on numbers of complaints and issues involved will be held but not the names of the individuals or specific courses involved.

Training and support

The Academy will ensure that all persons involved in the implementation of this procedure will have access to appropriate training and support.

As it is recognised that staff who are the subject of a complaint can find it a very stressful experience, support will be provided as and when appropriate.

If members of staff are affiliated to a recognised Trade Union they may find it helpful to discuss the matter with their representative. They are entitled to union representation during the investigation of any complaint.

Complaints process

Stage 1 – Informal

- Anyone who has an issue with any persons or procedures relating to the Academy should seek to discuss their concerns with the appropriate person, trying to resolve the issue or concern informally. At this stage the complaint could be resolved by discussion, or clarification, or other possible means applicable to the complaint. At this stage the complaint needs to be resolved very quickly (within a maximum of 5 working days)
- The Academy expects that all complaints are made in writing (for record purposes) via the Complaints form.

Stage 2 – Formal

- If the complaint cannot be resolved at stage 1, the Student Welfare Officer should be notified within 5 days and a formal meeting will be arranged. Following the meeting the Academy will write to the complainant with the outcome and the proposed action to be taken
- At this stage the Academy requires the complaint, with any supporting evidence, to be recorded in writing
- The Academy would hope to produce a response within 5 working days of the meeting. However, this might on occasion take up to a maximum of 10 days.

Stage 3 – Final Stage

- If the complainant is not happy about the response to their complaint at stage 2, they may appeal the decision to a final adjudicating committee, which will include an independent person. All parties are expected to abide by the independent adjudication process.
- The complainant may be accompanied by someone at this stage and evidence from stage 2 will be reconsidered
- The complainant will be notified of the outcome in writing within 15 working days. The decision at this stage will be final. At the end of the complaint process, all records of complaints will be securely retained to ensure confidentiality and a clear audit trail.