



The Education and Skills Partnership

06. Complaints Policy

Statement of Policy

The Education and Skills Partnership (ESP) is committed to providing a quality service for its apprentices, their employers, other learners and clients and working in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of our customer base and other stakeholders.

One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of apprentices, their employers, other learners, our staff, customers and stakeholders, in particular, by responding positively to both compliments and complaints.

Therefore, in the handling of complaints we aim to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as easy as possible
- We treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service to which we will respond within specified timeframes
- We deal with complaints promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially
- We respond by following an agreed procedure to ensure complaints are handled in a consistent and effective way – for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc.
- We learn from complaints and use them to improve our service
- We view our complaints log regularly at senior management meetings
- We review the complaints policy and procedures annually.

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally and dealt with quickly, before they are raised as complaints using our formal complaints procedure. Our aims are to:

- Resolve informal concerns quickly
- Keep matters low-key
- Enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been referred

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An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

Our complaints policy, procedure and process are published on our website. direct link to the complaints procedure: <https://www.esp-ac.uk/complaints-procedure/>

Additionally, we make it available to apprentices and employers as an appendix to the Commitment Statement which is signed prior to the start of an apprenticeship.

Definition: ESP defines a complaint as ‘any expression of dissatisfaction that relates to ESP and that requires a formal response’.

Purpose: The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant’s satisfaction.

Responsibilities and Organisation

Complaints are handled as close to the source as possible, with the Head of Apprenticeships responsible for managing complaints from apprentices and their employers. The Head of Centre and Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for managing complaints from other learners and clients.

Senior oversight is by the Business Development Director.

ESP responsibility is to:

- Acknowledge the formal complaint in writing
- Respond within a stated period of time
- Deal responsibly and sensitively with the complaint
- Take action where appropriate

A complainant’s responsibility is to:

- Bring their complaint, in writing, to ESP’s attention normally within 8 weeks of the issue arising
- Raise concerns promptly and directly with a member of ESP staff, trainer or assessor

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- Explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date
- Allow ESP a reasonable time to deal with the matter.

Complaints about end point assessment should be directed to the relevant End Point Assessment Organisation.

Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and ESP maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint being judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

Exceptional circumstances include where a complaint gives rise to a safeguarding or Prevent Duty concern about an apprentice or other learner the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed and a safeguarding reporting procedure invoked.

Monitoring and Reporting

The ESP senior management team, including senior representatives from the apprenticeships team review the complaints log regularly as a standing item at team meetings.

Each year an anonymised report of complaints is produced to enable managers and leaders to look for patterns or frequency of complaints by categorising and grouping them by type. We look for consistency in the way we handle and resolve complaints. Lessons learnt feed into our continuous improvement process and, where appropriate the apprenticeship quality improvement plan.

Formal Complaints Procedure

Stage 1

In the first instance, if you are unable to resolve the issue informally, you should write to the member of staff who dealt with you, or their manager, so that he or she has a chance to put things right. If your complaint concerns a member of ESP staff, you should write formally to the individual concerned. In your letter or on the complaints form, you should set out the details of your complaint, the consequences for you as a result, and the remedy you are seeking.

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Apprentices should note that their complaints may be shared with their employer.

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the initial response to the complaint, then you can write to ESP Head of Apprenticeships (for apprentices) or Head of Centre (for other learners) and ask for your complaint and the response to be reviewed. You can expect them to acknowledge your request within 5 working days of receipt and a response within 15 working days.

ESP's aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, inevitably some issues will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated. Consequently, timescales given for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing what is being done to deal with the matter, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

Final Stage

If you are not satisfied with the subsequent reply from ESP Head of HR, then you have the option of writing to the Managing Director of ESP, stating the reason why you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You must do this within 15 days of receiving the written response from ESP Head of HR.

The Managing Director (or their nominee), will normally respond within 15 working days to inform you of the action which will be taken to investigate your complaint, and when you can expect to hear the outcome of the investigation.

Contact:

Jason Hargreaves
Managing Director
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