

# **Complaints Policy and Procedure**

Apprenticeships

24<sup>th</sup> January 2025

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## 1. Introduction

This document describes the complaints policy for QA apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships, higher apprenticeships and Scottish apprenticeships. The policy may be used by current and prospective learners. The objective of the policy is to ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly and appropriately and are given careful consideration. QA's Experience Management team has overall responsibility for the complaints policy. It monitors the complaints received and the effectiveness of the policy in addressing them. The Experience Management team will review any common causes or patterns of complaints which emerge and work with colleagues to improve procedures, systems and processes.

## 2. What this policy covers

The following programmes and courses delivered by QA are covered by this policy:

1. Undergraduate and postgraduate degree apprenticeships
2. Higher apprenticeships
3. Apprenticeships
4. Scottish Apprenticeships

This is a single complaints policy which can be used to complain about the service standards a learner experiences whilst studying their programme or course. For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more learners about a certain action, or lack of action, taken by QA, or about the standard of service provided by QA.

Examples of what can be considered as a complaint are listed below. The list is not exhaustive, but complaints are likely to fall under the following categories:

- Complaints arising from the onboarding, application or admissions process;
- Complaints in respect of support services delivered;
- Complaints arising from the overall learning experience e.g., teaching, technology used, course content or assessment related decisions.
- The behaviour of another learner, or member of staff.

## 3. Complaints Escalation and Review

### 3.1 Stage one – informal escalation

If a learner is considering making a complaint, they are strongly advised to raise the issue informally with the relevant member of staff most concerned with the issue, at the earliest opportunity. For instance, if the complaint is of an academic matter the learner may wish to talk to their tutor or programme leader. If the complaint is about a QA service, then the learner should talk to an appropriate member of staff from that service. Learners studying an apprenticeship, degree and higher apprenticeship also have a relationship with an employer. Any informal complaints, issues or feedback that relate to the employer can be raised informally with the employers assigned QA Account Manager, our service management team via [ServiceManagement@qa.com](mailto:ServiceManagement@qa.com), or equivalent



by providing feedback through surveys. The Account Manager or Service Delivery Team will then escalate to the most appropriate member of QA staff.

It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved with the member of staff concerned. If further investigation is required, the complainant can contact [QAacomplaints@qa.com](mailto:QAacomplaints@qa.com) explaining the situation as clearly and as fully as possible, including names, times and dates and any remedy sought. The complaint will then be supported by the Customer Experience Specialist as part of the Experience Management team.

The Customer Experience Specialist will acknowledge receipt of the communication within one working day and then attempt to facilitate communication between the learner and the subject of the complaint. Complainants should allow sufficient time to investigate or remedy the issue, which may vary according to the nature of the complaint, but a first response will be made within five working days.

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, a learner can request a Formal Complaint Form from the Customer Experience Specialist to pursue a formal complaint.

### **3.2 Stage two - formal investigation**

The Formal Complaint Form should be completed in enough detail to enable it to be properly investigated. The Formal Complaint Form should be sent to the Complaints inbox at [qaacomplaints@qa.com](mailto:qaacomplaints@qa.com). The Head of Experience Management will conduct an initial assessment of the issue and assign the complaint to the relevant person for ownership and investigation. If the Head of Experience Management is unable to action the formal complaint, due to a conflict of interest or the seriousness of the complaint, they will refer it to another investigator.

The complainant will receive acknowledgment of receipt within one working day.

To investigate the formal complaint, the investigator may request further information or may speak with the complainant. The complainant may bring one friend or supporter (not normally a legal advisor) to any discussion.

If a learner fails to respond to a communication from the Complaints team, or the investigating officer within 10 working days, the complaint will be considered closed, unless the complainant is able to supply evidence of mitigating circumstances that explain why they could not respond in time.

Complainants should allow sufficient time for QA to investigate or remedy the formal complaint, which may vary according to the nature of the issue. An initial response will be made within 5 working days detailing how the complaint has been investigated, the evidence used, and, if appropriate, the steps taken to resolve the matter so far.

If the timescale becomes extended the complainant will be informed of the progress made, and a new investigating timeframe agreed, which will normally be within 20 working days of the original formal complaint being received.

### 3.3 Stage three - formal complaint review

Learners who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint can request a formal complaint review by QA.

The grounds on which a learner can request a review of the decision are:

- The investigator made an error in judgement or did not consider all of the evidence available to them;
- The investigator did not conduct the complaint fairly, and/or not in line with this policy;
- There is new material evidence that could not, for valid and evidenced reasons, be submitted at the time of the formal complaint;
- Formal complaint reviews should be submitted to [qaacomplaints@qa.com](mailto:qaacomplaints@qa.com) within 10 working days from the date of the outcome. Learners should clearly set out the grounds and evidence on which a review is being requested. Requests submitted without sufficient evidence will be rejected.

In addition, if a learner is on an undergraduate or postgraduate degree apprenticeship programme, and they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint, they can request a formal complaint review by the relevant University Partner. Each University has its own policy for complaints. Details of each process can be requested by contacting [qaacomplaints@qa.com](mailto:qaacomplaints@qa.com).

### 3.4 Stage four - review by external regulatory bodies

Learners studying on an undergraduate or postgraduate degree apprenticeship, who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint may contact either (or both) of the Office for the Independent Adjudicator ([OIA](#)), or the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Learners studying an Apprenticeship or Higher Apprenticeship who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint may contact the ESFA only.

In reference to learners registered with the Scottish Awarding Body, all Scottish learners have the additional right to complain to Qualifications Scotland/SQA about assessment related matters, but not assessment judgments or other QA related complaints. Scottish learners can complain to Qualifications Scotland/SQA Accreditation, or Ofqual if they are not fully satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, as long as it is specifically related to an assessment matter per the [Awarding Body Verification Guide to Scottish centres](#).

## **4. Areas not covered by this policy**

### **4.1 Third Parties**

This policy does not cover complaints by third parties (i.e., by individuals or organisations other than the actual complainant). Any complaints received through external stakeholders will be dealt with through alternative procedures led by a QA account manager, or equivalent, assigned to the third party.

### **4.2 Academic appeals**

This policy cannot be used to request a review of an academic decision, a progression decision, or programme termination. These matters should be raised through the appropriate appeals procedure. For guidance on the appeals procedure for degree and higher apprenticeships please contact [DAAcademicAppeals@qa.com](mailto:DAAcademicAppeals@qa.com).

### **4.3 Academic judgement**

You cannot use the complaints policy or the appeals policy to challenge a decision relating to academic judgement. This should be taken up with the marker in the first instance.

## **5. Enhancement and improvement**

Formal and informal complaints are logged and reviewed on a regular basis. The Experience Management Team maintains an Experience Improvement Plan document, the progress of which is reported to the Senior Management Team outlining any areas for improvement based on the nature of the complaints received.

## 6. Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Author	Description of Change
1.0	June 2022	Brett Cuming Louise Evans	New Policy
1.1	July 2022	Louise Evans Naomi Lavender	Included reference to DfE Bootcamps, changed name to Complaints Policy, Funded Learning
1.2	May 2023	Louise Evans	Procedure updated
1.3	June 2024	Louise Evans	Removed reference to DfE Bootcamps, changed name to Complaints Policy, Apprenticeships. New branding applied.
1.4	January 2025	Louise Evans Naomi Lavender	Inclusion of reference to process to support Scottish Apprentices.

