

# Complaints Policy

Prepared by	Board Signature
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<b>Date last reviewed:</b>	31/07/25
<b>Effective from:</b>	01/08/25
<b>Date of new review:</b>	31/07/26

## Purpose

Apprentify aims to provide a high quality of service in all its work. We take complaints seriously and welcome feedback on the service that we provide. To ensure we are dealing with complaints effectively, we have adopted the procedure outlined below.

## Scope

The policy applies to all employees of Apprentify Limited. It also applies to all clients, learners, contractors and agency workers.

## Who can make a complaint?

Any person who receives a service from Apprentify (for example, a learner or employer), any of the agencies with whom we work, or anyone who is impacted by the service we deliver can make a complaint. If necessary, a person can ask a representative to make the complaint on their behalf.

## How should complaints be made?

Complaints may be made verbally, or in writing. We commit to handling all complaints as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Complaints can be made in the following ways:

- a) Telephoning our main line or an individual
- b) In person, by scheduling an appointment with a member of staff
- c) Via email to an Apprentify member of staff
- d) Directly to the awarding organisation (if relevant to the nature of the complaint)
- e) Formally via our Formal Complaint form on our website
- f) Directly to the Department for Education (DfE) via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-further-education-apprenticeship>

## Response Times

All telephone calls requesting a return call received before noon will be returned that same day; those received in the afternoon will be returned by the end of the next working day. Written complaints will be acknowledged within three working days of receipt and a full reply will be sent within 14 working days of receipt. Further response times are set out in the procedure itself.

At all stages the complainant will be kept informed as to what is happening with their complaint or appeal. If for whatever reason it is not possible to deal with the complaint within the published timescale then the complainant will be informed of this, and a reason given.

# Stages of the Complaints Procedure

## Stage One

In the first instance, a complaint can be made to any employee of Apprentify via the process documented above. Contact a), b) and c) will be dealt with within two working days by the relevant staff member. Formal complaints via e) are dealt with by the Quality Team and will be responded to within the timescales set out above.

The complainant will be informed of the timescale within which they will receive a response as indicated above (should they want to receive one).

If the matter is not resolved within the timescale or within a mutually agreed time, it will be referred to stage two.

## Stage Two

At this stage, a meeting will be convened between the person (and their representative if necessary) and an appointed employee who has not been involved in the complaint. This will take place within 14 days of the matter being escalated to stage two.

Following discussions with all relevant parties, the appointed employee looking into the complaint will prepare a written report of their findings and any recommendations. A copy of the report will be given to the complainant.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision, they then have the option to appeal within seven working days of receiving the decision.

The complaint will then be referred to stage three.

## Stage Three

A panel will be convened of independent persons who have the relevant skill and knowledge to understand the issues surrounding the complaint being made. The person making the complaint along with their representative if appropriate will be invited to attend the panel hearing and present their complaint. The complaint will be heard again in its entirety.

The panel will then inform the complainant in writing of their decision within three working days of the hearing. The decision from this panel hearing is final.

If the complaint relates to an apprenticeship or qualification and the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint raised with the centre, they have the right to raise a complaint directly to the awarding body or end point assessment organisation. Contact details are available from the relevant awarding body/end point assessment organisation's website.

## Recording the complaints

Formal complaints via our website are kept, recorded, and monitored centrally.

## Complaints resulting in disciplinary

This policy is concerned only with resolving complaints and not with the investigation of disciplinary matters.

The purpose of the complaint's procedure is not to apportion blame amongst staff. It is to investigate complaints to the satisfaction of complainants (while being fair to any staff involved) and to learn any lessons for improvement in service delivery. Inevitably however, some complaints will identify serious matters, which indicate a need for disciplinary investigation.

A case for considering disciplinary action can be suggested at any point during the complaint procedure, but consideration as to whether disciplinary action is warranted is a separate matter for management, outside the complaints procedure and must be subject to a separate process of investigation in line with Apprentify's Staff Disciplinary Policy.

Relevant papers that have been accumulated during the investigation of the complaint may be passed to the appropriate person in Apprentify, who will consider the need for a disciplinary or other form of investigation.

The complaints procedure will not deal with matters which are currently the subject of disciplinary investigation. If action is initiated under the disciplinary procedure the complainant should be advised accordingly.

When a decision is made to embark upon a disciplinary investigation, the processing of the complaint's procedure does not automatically cease. There may well be other aspects of the original complaint, not covered by the disciplinary inquiry that should continue to be investigated.

On the other hand, there may be no outstanding issues from the original complaint to be investigated, in which case the complainant should be advised that no further action would be taken other than that through the disciplinary procedure. The complainant may well ask at this point to be informed of the outcome of the disciplinary inquiry.

A judgement will need to be made; on the one hand, in terms of reassuring the complainant who will be concerned that the original complaint has been dealt with seriously and satisfactorily; and on the other, the protection of the confidentiality of the member of staff.

The guiding principle will be that when the disciplinary procedure is invoked, the complainant receives the same consideration and level of information as if the matter had been dealt with through the complaint's procedure. The complainant should be able to understand what happened, why it happened and what action has been taken consequently to ensure that it does not happen again. The complainant should be informed in general terms of any disciplinary sanction imposed on any staff member.

## Monitoring and reporting

The Senior Management Team will oversee all complaints received. Continued monitoring of complaints will take place within Apprentify and will form part of the customer satisfaction reviews.

Apprentify will be required to make available information regarding the numbers of complaints as part of its annual report.

Arrangements for dealing with complaints will be monitored by the Director of Education to identify trends and ensure that appropriate action has been taken. Procedures will be reviewed annually, both to consider any amendments that are necessary to services and procedures as well as to enable effective and satisfactory working arrangements to be maintained.

Apprentify through its monitoring and reporting of the frequency and handling of complaints will constantly be looking for ways in which complaints, policies and procedures can be improved. When such improvements are implemented, these will in turn be monitored by the Board of Governors.

Spot checks may be made to verify that action resulting from a complaint has been implemented. All formal complaints should be in writing. Where the complainant is unable to put the formal complaint in writing, the relevant staff member should ensure that a record of the complaint is made and ask the complainant to sign it.

## Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if required.