

Apprentice & Employer/Partner Complaints Policy & Procedure

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Pareto is committed to promoting and ensuring adherence to this policy and procedure. We will actively promote and reinforce this commitment during staff induction processes so that our apprentices and their employers are confident that they receive equal access and opportunities.

Additionally, continuous training will be provided to our employees to ensure proper implementation of the policy and procedure.

To maintain its effectiveness and relevance, this policy and procedure will be reviewed at least once annually. The purpose of these regular reviews is to assess its suitability, identify any areas for improvement, and make necessary updates as required.

For the purposes of this policy, the terms "us", "our" and "we" refer to Pareto Apprenticeships.

Scope and Purpose

Our aim: Pareto is committed to providing a quality service for its members and working in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of all our stakeholders. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our members, customers and stakeholders, and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

Therefore 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 which calls for an immediate response;
- We deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
- We respond in the right 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, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly. 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.

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.

Policy Statement

All complaints must follow the complaint procedure in order, each time a customer raises a new formal complaint. The complaints database is used to record complaints and what we have learnt from them, as part of the process. Information inputted into the complaints database must be factual, concise and accurate, with copies of correspondence and other relevant records stored using appropriate file names. Our complaints are subject to audit and inspection and may, where appropriate, also inform investigations.

This document is intended to support Pareto Complaints Policy and Procedure. It provides details of responsibilities, time scales and record keeping requirements of the process which must be adhered to.

Apprentices and Employers/Partners can contact us about any aspect of the service they've received to let us know they are not happy. The guide below provides a brief overview of our complaints process, including what information we will need from them and what we will do in response to this.

Definition: The Apprenticeship Leadership Team defines a complaint as 'any expression of dissatisfaction that requires a formal response'.

The formal complaints process is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

If at any stage you do not feel comfortable about how your complaint is being handled or you do not feel comfortable liaising with the person who is handling your complaint;

Email our feedback email address at:

feedback@pareto.co.uk

Or call our main office on:

0333 455 1416

And ask to speak to a member of the apprenticeship senior leadership team.

Record Keeping

All complaints must be logged using the Pareto complaint database and files containing documentation relating to individual complaints kept up to date. These will be entered onto the database by the Quality team. Staff must complete a complaint record template for the relevant stage of the complaint.

Staff must maintain confidentiality and security of customer information.

Processes

Should a complaint be regarding an academic/assessment decision, please refer to our Learner Appeals Policy and Procedure

If a complainant has referred to this policy following a dissatisfactory outcome of an appeal linked to an academic/assessment decision as per the Learner Appeals Policy and Procedure, continue with the following processes.

Apprentice Complaint Process

Process:	What you need to do	What we will do
Stage 1	Tell your Skills Coach that you want to make a formal complaint. Please provide as much detail as possible, ideally in writing, to enable us to investigate and resolve the issue. You may ask for help with writing if you need it.	The person receiving the complaint will provide contact details for the stage 1 complaint handler (who will be an Apprenticeship Experience Officer) if they are unable to deal with the complaint themselves. This person will send you a written response within 5 working days and will include the contact details of the stage 2 complaint handler (who will be the National Quality Manager or another appropriate designated manager). If for any reason it is going to take longer, they will explain why and when you can expect a response. Stage 1 complaints will be discussed among local delivery teams to ensure that longer term solutions are put in place to address any commonly occurring issues.
Stage 2	If you are not satisfied with our response at stage 1, you need to provide details of the reasons why you're not happy, to the stage 2 complaint handler, within 10 working days of receiving our response.	The stage 2 complaint handler will contact you, usually by phone, to review your complaint and agree how it will be investigated and followed up.
Stage 3	If you are not satisfied with our response at stage 2, you need to provide details of the reasons why you're not happy, within 10 working days of receiving our response. to: Head of Curriculum and Quality afowkes@pareto.co.uk	The stage 2 complaint handler will contact you, usually by phone, to review your complaint and agree how it will be investigated and followed up.



Stage 4	<p>The bodies to which you can refer your complaint further are provided. You must make the National Quality Manager aware that you are contacting an external body. We will respond to and co- operate directly with these bodies at this stage.</p>	<p>Following this review, this person will respond in writing within 10 working days to advise you of the outcome and provide contact details of the stage 3 complaint handler. If for any reason it is going to take longer, they will advise you why and when you can expect a response and how it has been handled through the previous 2 stages. The results of this investigation will be sent to you by the stage 3 complaint handler in writing within 10 working days and will include details of the stage 4 complaint handling organisation. If for any reason it is going to take longer, they will advise you why and when you can expect a response.</p>
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Employer/Partner Complaint Process

Process:	What you need to do	What we will do
Stage 1	Please inform your Pareto Apprenticeship Experience via feedback@pareto.co.uk team or one of our Skills Coaches that you want to make a formal complaint. Please provide as much detail as possible, ideally in writing, to enable us to investigate and resolve the issue.	The person receiving the complaint will provide contact details for the stage 1 complaint handler (who will be an Apprenticeship Experience Officer) if they are unable to deal with the complaint themselves. This person will send you a written response within 5 working days and will include the contact details of the stage 2 complaint handler (who will be the National Quality Manager or another appropriate designated manager). If for any reason it is going to take longer, they will explain why and when you can expect a response. Stage 1 complaints will be discussed among local delivery teams to ensure that longer term solutions are put in place to address any commonly occurring issues.
Stage 2	If you are not satisfied with our response at stage 1, you need to provide details of the reasons why you're not happy, to the stage 2 complaint handler, within 10 working days of receiving our response.	The stage 2 complaint handler will contact you, usually by phone, to review your complaint and agree how it will be investigated and followed up.
Stage 3	If you are not satisfied with our response at stage 2, you need to provide details of the reasons why you're not happy, within 10 working days of receiving our response. to: Head of Curriculum and Quality afowkes@pareto.co.uk	Following this review, this person will respond in writing within 10 working days to advise you of the outcome and provide contact details of the stage 3 complaint handler. If for any reason it is going to take longer, they will advise you why and when you can expect a response and how it has been handled through the previous 2 stages. The results of this investigation will be sent to you by the stage 3 complaint handler in writing within 10 working days and will include details of the stage 4 complaint handling organisation. If for any reason it is going to take longer, they will advise you why and when you can expect a response.
Stage 4	If you've been through all our complaints stages, received our final response and still aren't satisfied, you can ask an external body or the funder for your training to look at your complaint.	The bodies to which you can refer your complaint further are provided. You must make the National Quality Manager aware that you are contacting an external body. We will respond to and co-operate directly with these bodies at this stage. Please note that you will usually be expected to have exhausted this process before contacting the external bodies.



DFE Complaints Process:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-age-ncy/about/complaints-procedure>

Contact Ofsted:

Email: CIE@ofsted.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 123 4666

Contact Form: <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>

Staff guidance and responsibilities

This section is intended to support staff in implementing the Pareto Customer Complaint Process. It provides details of responsibilities, time scales and record keeping requirements of the process which all colleagues must adhere to. This document has been developed to comply with the Department for Education (DfE). The generic term “customer” has been used in the Pareto Customer Complaint Process and refers to all people who use our services, including apprentices, customers, employers and partners.

Stage 1

1. The recipient of the complaint will decide if they are able to deal with the issue raised, based on the nature of the complaint. An explanation must be forwarded to the Delivery or Account Manager detailing the reasons why they do not feel able to deal with the complaint.
2. If the recipient of the complaint is not able to deal with the issues they must ensure they pass on all appropriate details to the person who can for example be their line manager or a suitable person in one of the support teams. The Quality team must be informed. This must be done on the same day the complaint is received as the response is required within 5 working days.
3. The complaint handler will send a written acknowledgement, including a copy of the Customer Complaints Process to the customer on the day the complaint is received, using the customers preferred method of communication, i.e. Letter to home address or email. Check details held on file are correct and request an update if necessary.
4. The complaint handler will conduct a fair and balanced investigation of the facts, by contacting the complainant, staff, and other relevant parties. The investigation should include a review of written or digital records to establish the details such as dates and times where appropriate to ensure that a full and prompt investigation takes place.
5. The complaint handler will respond to the customer complaint in writing within 5 working days of the complaint being received and include contact details of the stage 2 complaint handler, so the customer knows who to contact if they are not satisfied with the response at stage 1. If the complaint handler is unable to respond within 5 working days, they must inform the customer before this period expires, giving the reason for the delay and the date they can expect a response that is



realistic and reasonable. This information should be included in the customer records that the manager will create.

6. The complaint handler is responsible for keeping notes, copies of correspondence or other records relating to the complaint. The complaint handler will provide all details, including records to the National Quality Manager and Head of Curriculum & Quality.

7. The complaint handler is responsible for creating a new record file locally and forwarding onto the Quality team either when the complaint has been satisfactorily dealt with or in the event that the complaint reaches stage 2. The file name should include the customer's name, e.g. Jennifer Saunders 21-12-2121. Please ensure documents are named appropriately, including the date. If the complaint is closed at this stage, the complaint handler must complete the lessons learnt and changes made or recommended section on the appropriate document and forward to the Quality team via the appropriate email feedback@pareto.co.uk. This will ensure that consideration has been given to how we can reduce the risk of this type of complaint reoccurring and that we highlight any changes made or recommended.

Stage 2

1. If the customer is not satisfied with the response from us at stage 1, they have the right to escalate their complaint to stage 2. The customer must address this in writing (or with help if they need support with their writing) justifying why they are not satisfied with the stage 1 response to the stage 2 complaint handler. The stage 2 complaint handler will be a manager.

2. If the manager is the subject of the complaint they must refer it to feedback@pareto.co.uk within 1 working day of receiving the complaint, providing the complainants name so the investigation can be carried out by another manager, designated by the Quality team.

3. The complaint handler will send a written acknowledgement to the customer on the day the complaint is escalated, using the customers preferred method of communication, i.e. Letter to home address or email. If corresponding by email, include a delivery and read receipt.

4. The stage 2 complaint handler is responsible for reviewing all the information, making contact with all parties concerned and responding to the customer in writing within 10 working days of the stage 2 complaint being received. This correspondence will include contact details of the Head of Curriculum and Quality, so the customer knows who to contact if they are not satisfied with the response at stage 2. If the complaint handler is unable to respond within 10 working days, they must inform the customer before this period expires, giving the reason for the delay and the date they can expect a response.

5. The stage 2 complaint handler will be responsible for updating the customer file with additional correspondence or other appropriate records and forwarding onto the Quality team either when the complaint has been satisfactorily dealt with or in the event that the complaint reaches stage 3. The file name should include the customer's name, e.g. Jennifer Saunders 21-12-2121. Please ensure documents are named appropriately, including the date.

6. If the complaint is closed at this stage, the complaint handler must complete the lessons learnt and changes made or recommended section on the appropriate form and forward to the

7. Quality Team via the appropriate feedback inbox. This will ensure that consideration has been given to how we can reduce the risk of this type of complaint reoccurring and that we highlight any changes made or recommended.

Stage 3

- 1.** If the customer is not satisfied with the response from us at stage 2, they have the right to escalate their complaint to stage 3. The customer must address this in writing. The complaint must be referred to the Quality team within 1 working day of the stage 3 complaint being received. The Quality team will designate the stage 3 complaint handler
- 2.** The stage 3 complaint handler will be a Senior Manager. The stage 2 complaint handler is responsible for collating all the information about the complaint and presenting it to the appropriate Senior Manager.
- 3.** The Stage 3 complaint handler will send a written acknowledgement to the customer on the day the complaint is escalated, using the customers preferred method of communication, i.e. Letter to home address or email. If corresponding by email, include a delivery and read receipt.
- 4.** The stage 3 complaint handler will review all the information, make contact with all parties concerned if appropriate and respond to the customer in writing within 10 working days of the stage 3 complaint being received. This correspondence will include contact details of the stage 4 organisation appropriate to the customer's complaint. If the complaint handler is unable to respond within 10 working days, they must inform the customer before this period expires, giving the reason for the delay and the revised date for the response that is realistic and reasonable.
- 5.** The stage 3 complaint handler will be responsible for updating the customer file with additional correspondence or other appropriate records and forwarding onto the Quality team either when the complaint has been satisfactorily dealt with or in the event that the complaint reaches stage 4. The file name should include the customer's name, e.g. Jennifer Saunders 21-12-2121. Please ensure documents are named appropriately, including the date.
- 6.** If the complaint is closed at this stage, the complaint handler must complete the lessons learnt and changes made or recommended section on the appropriate form and forward to the Quality team. This will ensure that consideration has been given to how we can reduce the risk of this type of complaint reoccurring and that we highlight any changes made or recommended.

Stage 4

- 1.** If the customer is not satisfied with the response from us at stage 3, they have the right to escalate their complaint to stage 4. The customer must address this in writing to the appropriate external body. Details of the contact details and timescales where relevant are provided below and on the apprentice or employer/partner process.
- 2.** The Quality team will be responsible for coordinating any complaints at this level. The Standards Lead with support from the Senior Manager who responded at stage 3 will respond to requests for information from the external body the Quality team will update the database (Stage 4).
- 3.** If the complaint is closed at this stage, the Senior Manager must complete the lessons learnt and changes made or recommended section on the appropriate form and forward to the Quality team. This will ensure that consideration has been given to how we can reduce the risk of this type of complaint reoccurring and that we highlight any changes that need to be made or recommended.