

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Version 3

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Queries to be directed to:	Lisa Appleton- Learning and Skills Manager
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This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or earlier if changes are necessary. Trade Techs reserves the right to amend this policy, following consultation, where appropriate.

Date created:	April 2019
Date of last review:	March 2018
Date of next review:	April 2020

1. Policy Statement

The Trade Tech team is committed to providing a supportive working and learning environment to enable all to achieve their goals. We strive to provide the highest quality services and to be responsive to concerns or complaints from any of our customers; whether they are of a teaching or service-related nature. Both negative and positive feedback is recognised as a valuable resource to enable us to improve the quality of our services and apprenticeship provision.

In order for the team to learn and improve on feedback given; accurate and complete records of all complaints received, resulting correspondence, interviews and actions taken will be maintained. A report on complaints received and their outcomes will be submitted to the Learning and Skills Manager on a monthly basis to help to improve customer service throughout the business. Effectiveness of the complaint procedure will be evaluated on an annual basis.

The purpose of this complaint procedure is to enable anyone interacting with the team to raise matters of concern about our services or provision to our attention, so that they can be investigated and resolved in the clearest and fairest way possible. In most cases this will be achieved without having to conduct the formal complaints procedure; which should be seen as a last resort in reaching a solution.

2. What is a complaint?

The complaints procedure covers any expression of dissatisfaction or concern about:

- provision affecting customers (applicants, apprentices, employers, stakeholders)
- actions or lack of actions by the Chamber's Apprenticeships team and its staff
- standards of service, courses or facilities provided by the team

The procedure does not cover the following:

- matters covered by separate policies or procedures including appeals procedure, Equal Opportunities, grievance procedure
- judgement about individual apprentice performance or awarding organisation assessment decisions
- requests for new services or provision

This procedure is for use by any existing or prospective apprentice, learner, employer or customer who seeks or receives a service from us. It also extends to anyone who may be directly affected by our services or activities.

Anonymous complaints will be logged and monitored but not investigated under normal circumstances.

3. Complaint Management

We recognise that many concerns may be raised informally and can be dealt with quickly and simply. We aim to resolve early and promptly, preferably keeping it as close to the source of the problem as possible and dealing with it by informal means. By encouraging complainants to come forward with concerns at an early stage, matters can be discussed and any misunderstandings resolved by telephone conversation, face to face meeting, email or letter to the appropriate person.

Stage one – Informal

An informal approach is appropriate in some cases, these complaints will be responded to by the appropriate person within 7 days receipt of the complaint.

If the problem is not resolved satisfactorily at this stage, complainants should raise the matter with the Learning and Skills Manager Lisa Appleton- Lisa.appleton@tradetechs.co.uk –who will identify an appropriate person (Investigation Officer) to complete the formal investigation.

Stage two – Formal

Trade Techs management team recognises that informal mechanisms may not resolve all problems and that some problems may be too serious or sensitive to be dealt with by raising the issue directly with the member of staff involved. In these circumstances, the formal complaints procedure should be used.

- A formal complaint should be submitted to Lisa.appleton@tradetechs.co.uk in writing
- The statement of complaint should be as thorough and complete as possible and include any supporting documentation
- The Learning and Skills Manager will log and acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 48 hours
- It is the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Manager to assign an Investigating Officer to fully investigate the complaint within 14 working days of this being received
- The Investigation Officer will identify their findings for the central complaints log to be updated with the agreed outcome
- The Learning and Skills Manager will update the complainant of the outcome of their complaint
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response received as a result of Stage 2, the complaint may be taken to Stage 3 of the procedure.

Stage three – Appeal

A copy of the complaint (with any supporting evidence) should be sent to The Learning and Skill Manager– within 14 days of receiving the Stage 2 response. The complaint will be heard and the evidence reviewed. The Manager will investigate the complaint, including all documentary evidence.

The Learning and Skills Manager may seek to resolve the complaint based on the documentary evidence alone. Following investigation, a written response will be produced detailing whether the complaint is upheld or not and detailing action(s) necessary to resolve the issue.

The Learning and Skills Manager will acknowledge receipt of the stage 3 complaint within 5 working days of receipt and provide a response within 20 working days. Inevitably some issues will be more complex and may therefore require longer to be fully reviewed. Consequently, all timescales given for handling and responding to stage 3 complaints are subject to change.

The Learning and Skills Manager may seek to resolve the complaint based on the documentary evidence alone. Following investigation, a written response will be produced detailing whether the complaint is upheld or not and detailing action(s) necessary to resolve the issue.

The decision of the Learning and Skills Manager is final.

4. Confidentiality

All complaints will be treated seriously, handled sensitively and with due consideration to all parties involved. In line with our equal opportunities policy, all complainants will be treated fairly and not suffer any recrimination or disadvantage as a result of making a complaint. Any person named within a complaint however, will be informed and have a right of reply as part of the investigative process.

5. Recording a complaint

Complaints must be made by complainants themselves, however, we recognise that some apprentices and vulnerable adults may have difficulties with this and so encourage them to use whatever assistance is required from a third party to make their complaint effectively. External HR agencies can provide general support and advice on procedures; however, it is the complainant's responsibility to seek guidance and support when necessary.

6. Progressing a complaint

The Investigating Officer will ensure the complaint is fully investigated and that regular communication is maintained with the complainant throughout the life of the complaint. Under the normal process, we will acknowledge complaints within 48 hours and resolve within 14 working days, but inevitably some issues will be more complex and may take longer. Where this is the case, we will contact the parties within 15 days by phone and in writing with an interim response describing our investigation and when it is expected to be complete. Correspondence will be retained and attached with the complaint log for our records.

7. Reviewing a complaint

Once a complaint has been defined by the owner as resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant or to the point where the Company can reasonably do no more, the Learning and Skills Manager will update the central complaints log with all details of the outcome and mark the complaint as resolved. All documentation will be kept for future reference to defend any potential legal challenge.

The Learning and Skills Manager will review all complaints on a monthly basis and consideration will be given to whether an opportunity exists to avoid a reoccurrence of a similar complaint and to support with implementing any service improvement actions. This will be discussed at monthly Quality team meetings.

8. Closing a Complaint

Once the complaint has been investigated and resolved to the complainant's satisfaction – or to the point where the Company can reasonably do no more – the central complaint log will be updated with the time, date and name of both the person who has resolved the complaint by amending the report to 'resolved'.

9. Monitoring a complaint

The Learning and Skills Manager will maintain a central complaint log and provide weekly and monthly updates to the team with regard to updating best practice. A monthly report will be produced which will identify trends and business risk.

10. The Appeals Process for Apprenticeship Framework Assessment i.e. non-End Point Assessment appeals

Stage 1

All appeals must be made in writing, clearly stating why the appeal is being made.

Candidates can make an appeal against an assessment decision within 20 days of an assessment

Stage 2

If stage 1 is not resolved by the Tutor the appeal will be passed to the internal quality assurer (IQA) within 5 working days.

Stage 3

If the appeal is not resolved at Stage 2, the Learning and Skills Manager will investigate further and if necessary talk to the complainant within 5 working days.

Stage 4

If the appeal is not resolved at Stage 3, it will be passed to the relevant awarding body or the qualification regulator. Following their investigation, the decision is final.

11. End Point Assessment complaints and appeals

End Point Assessment (EPA) complaints and appeals will follow the End Point Assessment organisations (EPAO) appeal process- please see further documentation from your EPAO.