



COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

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Introduction & Purpose

1.1 At Skills Max Academy, we are committed to providing high quality services for all our service users. Taking account of stakeholders' views enables Skills Max Academy to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement. This document details the Complaints Policy, and Procedure that will be followed by Skills Max Academy.

1.2 Complaints will be monitored and administered centrally by the Senior Management Team under the direction of the CEO. The complaints procedure is designed to help us gain a clearer view of how learners and other users of Skills Max Academy perceive us. It sets out to ask for complaints so that we can identify those areas where we have fallen short of our high standards.

1.3 Skills Max Academy defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about:

- Standards of service
- Action or lack of action by Skills Max Academy or its employees
- Actions caused by other learners
- Provisions of Skills Max Academy affecting learners, visitors or other stakeholders

1.4A complainant may be a student, prospective student, parent, employer, subcontractor/partner or visitor to Skills Max Academy.

1.5Learners may submit a 'group complaint'. Where a complaint is made by a number of learners, Skills Max Academy may ask the group to nominate one student to act as group representative.

1.6If the complainant is an employee, they should refer to Skills Max Academy's Grievance Procedure as a means for ensuring that their issue is dealt with promptly and satisfactorily. For further information, contact the Human Resources department.

1.7Academic appeals are not part of this policy or procedure. Please refer to Skills Max Academy's Appeals Policy.

1.8The objectives of the Compliments and Complaints Policy is to provide:

- A swift, open process, which is fair to all parties.
- A procedure designed to resolve problems quickly.
- A thorough investigation into complaints received.
- Improvements to services for learners and the quality of provision by
- acting on feedback and the recommendations made following investigations.
- Accurate recording, monitoring and reporting of complaints.

1.9 Skills Max Academy will identify actions and trends from complaints received to improve and develop its services.

- 1.10 Learners individually, or in the case of a group of learners, the nominated Student Representative, should follow the procedures as described in Stages 1 - 4 below.
- 1.11 Skills Max Academy will investigate complaints thoroughly and objectively using Managers and Senior Managers who are at an appropriate level within the organisation.
- 1.12 Skills Max Academy aims to respond to complaints within 21 working days; however, some complaints, especially if the issue is more complex, may take longer to investigate. Skills Max Academy will contact the complainant to advise them if the investigation is likely to take more than 21 working days and will keep them informed of progress.
- 1.13 Skills Max Academy will ask for equality and diversity information (for example, gender and ethnicity) to help to ensure that all people are treated fairly.
- 1.14 Complaints should ideally be brought to the attention of Skills Max Academy in writing. The decision to handle complaints made verbally will be at the discretion of the Senior Management Team.
- 1.15 All complaints received by Skills Max Academy staff must be brought to the attention of a Senior Manager immediately upon receipt. From this point, an investigating lead will be assigned within 3 working days. They will be provided with details so that they have all of the information required to undertake the investigation. Once the investigating lead has completed their investigation, all records must be sent to the designated Senior Manager overseeing the complaint.
- 1.16 If the complaint is considered to be an immediate/urgent safeguarding risk, this would immediately become a safeguarding incident and be dealt with in line with Skills Max Academy's Safeguarding policy and procedures.
- 1.17 Skills Max Academy reserves the right not to pursue any malicious, vexatious or abusive complaints (i.e., complaints that are not true or use offensive or abusive language in communication to staff).
- 1.18 Skills Max Academy is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.
- 1.19 All complaints must be raised within 1 month of the original issue so that evidence is available for investigation.
- 1.20 The policy reflects the Education and Skills Funding Agency guidance relating to the management of complaints and the arrangements for appeals including the right of appeal to the funding agency when Skills Max Academy's procedure has been exhausted.

Responsibilities

2.1 The Head of Quality is responsible for the policy, for ensuring that Skills Max Academy responds to complaints in accordance with the procedure set out within the policy and for ensuring that analysis of complaints is reported to the Senior Management Team.

2.2 A relevant manager will be assigned as the investigation lead. The investigation will be conducted thoroughly, and the findings provided in a written response to the complainant.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

3.1 Skills Max Academy monitors complaints carefully. A termly report on complaints against Skills Max Academy will be produced and shared with the Senior Management Team.

Procedure - How to Complain

If you have concerns about any of your experiences with Skills Max Academy, please follow the procedure below in communicating your concerns so that Skills Max Academy can support you in achieving a satisfactory resolution to your complaint and respond appropriately.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL PROCEDURE

Skills Max Academy anticipates that the majority of concerns raised can be resolved at an early stage through informal discussion. This is referred to in this policy as 'stage 1 – informal procedure'. Therefore, if a concern arises, the first step is to bring it to the attention of the relevant staff member and discuss it with them. It should be noted that a written record or response to issues raised at this early stage would not normally be made if both parties feel satisfied with the outcome.

For learners, in the first instance, please discuss the matter with the person(s) concerned. For example, your Tutor or Assessor. If you are unable to do this, contact the manager responsible for Skills Max Academy's Local Programmes or Skills Max Academy's main switchboard **0203 815 5140** and they will be able to provide you with contact details if you do not have this.

For employers, in the first instance, please raise your concerns with the assessor or contact the senior manager responsible for Skills Max Academy's Head of Quality – et@skillsmaxacademy.com. Contact Skills Max Academy's main switchboard **0203 815 5140** and they will be able to provide you with contact details if you do not have this.

All other stakeholders, in the first instance please contact Skills Max Academy's main switchboard **0203 815 5140** who will record your initial complaint and pass it on to a member of the Senior Management Team.

If the issue remains unresolved, a formal complaint should be instigated through Skills Max Academy complaints procedure – see Stage 2 Formal Complaints.

STAGE 2 - FORMAL COMPLAINTS

If your concerns are not resolved informally at stage 1, you may wish to make a formal complaint. Formal complaints should normally be made in writing by letter or email and addressed to **complaints@skillsmaxacademy.com**.

Formal complaints are forwarded to the Senior Management Team for review and acknowledgement. All complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 3 working days of the complaint being received.

The investigating lead assigned to deal with the complaint will be named in the letter. You will also be given a date when you may expect to receive a response which is usually within our agreed service standard of 21 days from receipt of the complaint.

In order to facilitate a full investigation, the complaint may be shared with individuals named or implicated within the complaint.

The findings of the investigation will be considered, and the investigating lead will provide a response to the complaint within 21 working days. Where it is not possible to provide a formal response within 21 working days, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

The Senior Manager will continuously monitor the complaint and the matter will be closed on the complaint system only when the issue has been resolved or at the end of stage 2. Access to the confidential file will be restricted.

STAGE 3 - APPEALS

Most complaints are resolved promptly and amicably and result in service improvements, however, should the complainant wish to appeal against the outcomes of Stage 2, formal complaint, they should submit this appeal in writing, within 10 days of the stage 2 outcome to: the CEO at Skills Max Academy – ba@skillsmaxacademy.com who will acknowledge receipt, review the documentation, the investigation and the resolution to come to a judgement on the validity of the appeal. The possible judgements are:

1. Appeal rejected – the original resolution will be pursued.
2. The appeal is upheld – the CEO will propose an alternative solution to the appellant.

Following the outcome of the appeals stage, a formal response will be sent to the complainant within 21 working days of receipt of the appeal.

This is the final stage of Skills Max Academy's complaints procedure

FORMAL COMPLAINTS – EXTERNAL RESOLUTION

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaints process, they have the opportunity to appeal to the relevant external body.

If the complaint relates to a Further Education course funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency or the Greater London Authority, or West Midlands Combined Authority and the above complaints and appeals procedure has been exhausted, the complainant can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency within three months of the complaint decision using the contact details below:

ESFA - complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

Or via:

The Complaints Team,
Education and Skills Funding Agency,
Cheylesmore House,
Quinton, Road,
Coventry,
CV1 2WT

GLA - complaints@gla.gsi.gov.uk

WMCA- customerservices@wmca.org.uk

Or via:

Customer Relations,
16 Summer Lane,
Birmingham,
B19 3SD.

DfE - Ministerial and Public Communications Division

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM

Surname: _____ Other names: _____

Address: _____

_____ Post code: _____

Telephone: _____ Mobile: _____

Details of Complaint

(Please attach additional information if necessary)

I request that you investigate the following complaint:

Applicant's signature: _____ Date: _____