

Complaints Handling Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Step into Learning (SiL) recognises the importance of addressing and resolving concerns raised by learners, staff members, parents/guardians, partner organisations, and the public. This policy outlines the procedures for lodging complaints and ensures that all complaints are treated with seriousness, sensitivity, and fairness.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all staff and learners of Step into Learning, whether full-time or part-time.

3 Definition

3.1 **Complaint:** Any expression of dissatisfaction, whether oral or written, and whether justified or not, from or on behalf of an eligible complainant about the firm's treatment of them and/or a failure to provide appropriate support or service.

4 Policy

Statement of Key Principles:

- All stakeholders have the right to make a complaint about any issue concerning them, with clear guidance provided on the procedure to follow.
- Complaints may be submitted in writing or verbally and will be formally logged and promptly addressed.
- Every complaint will be taken seriously and handled sensitively, with attempts made to resolve issues informally whenever possible.
- The complaints procedure covers issues arising within the previous three years, with exceptions considered by the board.

Complaints from Learners:

- Learners are encouraged to resolve issues informally before making formal complaints, as outlined in the SiL Learner Handbook.
- However, any party has the right to initiate a formal complaint from the outset if desired.
- Complaint records must be maintained at each stage by the Internal Quality Assurance Lead.

Complaints by a Member of Staff:

- Staff members are encouraged to address concerns informally through line management channels.
- Formal complaints or grievances may be pursued if informal resolution is not possible.

Unresolved Complaints:

- External bodies such as the Commission for Equality and Human Rights may be consulted for advice on unresolved complaints.

Implementation:

Personnel:

- The Internal Quality Assurance Lead will oversee formal complaints, with delegation where appropriate.



- Complaints against the Internal Quality Assurance Lead will be handled by the Chair of the Trustees.
- Complaints against Trustees will be addressed by the Chair or, in the case of a complaint against the Chair, by a panel of three Trustees.
- Complaints against SiL may be referred to external agencies such as OFQUAL or Awarding organisations.

Internal Procedure:

- Formal complaints should be submitted in writing to the Internal Quality Assurance Lead.
- Complaints involving staff members will afford them the opportunity to respond fully, either verbally or in writing.
- The initial response to complaints should be provided within 5 working days, with further investigations and outcomes communicated within 10 working days if possible.
- Dissatisfied complainants may escalate the issue to the Board of Trustees within 10 days of the initial outcome, with the decision of the Trustees being final.
- Learners also have the right to submit a complaint to the Awarding Organisation if they are not satisfied with the internal procedure.

Confidentiality and Monitoring:

- Confidential records of complaints will be maintained, with details stored in a central file for annual monitoring.
- Decisions resulting from investigations may lead to disciplinary actions in accordance with relevant policies.

Appeals and Complaints:

- Applicants wishing to appeal decisions may do so to SiL's Executive Director or the Chair of the Board of Trustees, with responses provided within 10 working days.
- The outcome of the appeal decision is final.

Step into Learning is committed to transparent and fair complaints handling, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement in its services and operations.



Actions:

Stage 1:

- A verbal discussion, raising any points of concern. This is the informal stage. Learner and tutor involvement. Actions are agreed and outcome informally recorded

Stage 2:

- This is the first part of the formal process. A written document is required with any evidence to substantiate any issues raised.
- Any evidence presented must be factual and linked to the original person making the complaint. All complaints must be linked to individual people/Learners
- Any complaint must also contain the purpose and desired outcome linked to the complaint.
- If the complaint is linked to the Internal Quality Officer, then the complaint escalates to Stage 3 immediately. The outcome is 5 days for a response.

Stage 3:

- The Internal Quality Officer will present findings that if found to be unacceptable or disagreeable to the complainant then the Head of Centre will take forward.
- The original decision is reviewed and the HOC will make a decision based on whether the original outcome is flawed.
- The decision will be made within 5 days of receiving

Stage 4:

- The Executive Director will review the outcome and process undertaken by the LIQA and the HOC.
- The ED will agree or disagree with the outcome. The ED will still be reviewing the original complaint
- The ED will respond within 5 days of receiving the complaint.



Stage 5:

- The outcome of the review by the ED will be passed to the complainee. If the complainee still does not accept the outcome, they can ask for the board/Chair to review. The Board/Chair will respond within 10 days to the original complaint., and to the investigation process undertaken by the LIQA, HOC and ED.
- The Board decision is the final section of the internal process.
- Any action after this will be undertaken with the warding Organisation

Please note. Complainee's cannot introduce new evidence to their complaint at different stages.

Please note Complainees' cannot be the spokesperson for learner groups. Each learner must issue a separate complaint, if there is more than one.

Acronyms:

LIQA- Lead Internal Quality Officer

HOC – Head of Centre

ED – Executive Director