

Appeals and Complaints Policy and Procedures

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Version No	2
Operational from	September 2024
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Review date	September 2025

Purpose

Educationwise Academy is committed to providing a positive, supportive, and high-quality learning experience for all learners. We understand that issues may arise during your learning journey that could lead to dissatisfaction. This policy outlines the procedure for raising and resolving complaints and appeals related to any aspect of a learner's experience with Educationwise Academy. The policy is designed to ensure that all concerns are handled fairly, transparently, and promptly.

Scope

This policy applies to all learners enrolled in any programme offered by Educationwise Academy. It covers complaints and appeals relating to any aspect of a learner's journey, including but not limited to:

- Teaching and learning.
- Assessment and feedback.
- Support and guidance.
- Health, safety, and wellbeing.
- Administrative processes.
- Any interactions with staff, tutors, or peers.
- Learning resources and facilities.
- Behavioural issues, including bullying, harassment, or discrimination.

This policy does not replace other specific policies (e.g., disciplinary procedures) but works in tandem with them. It is also applicable across all learning environments, whether face-to-face, remote, or online.

Key Principles

- **Fairness:** The process for addressing complaints and appeals is transparent, unbiased, and ensures that all parties involved are treated fairly.
- **Timeliness:** All complaints and appeals will be acknowledged, investigated, and resolved in a timely manner to minimise disruption to learners' progress.
- **Support:** Learners will have access to guidance and support throughout the process, ensuring they feel comfortable and confident in raising their concerns.
- **Confidentiality:** Complaints and appeals will be handled with the utmost confidentiality to protect the privacy of all individuals involved.
- **Non-retaliation:** Learners will not face any form of retaliation or disadvantage for raising a complaint or making an appeal in good faith.

Complaints Procedure

If a learner has concerns regarding any aspect of their experience with Educationwise Academy, the following steps should be taken:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- **Initial Discussion:** Learners are encouraged to first discuss their concerns informally with the relevant tutor, assessor, or staff member. Many issues can be resolved quickly and effectively through direct communication.
- **Resolution:** If the issue is resolved at this stage, no further action is required. If the issue remains unresolved, the learner may escalate the matter.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Submitting a Formal Complaint: If the issue cannot be resolved informally, learners should submit a formal written complaint to Nick Preston, Director of Quality, Compliance & Excellence, via email at npreston@education-wise.org or by phone at **0117 379 0450**.

- **Details:** The complaint should include the nature of the issue, the individuals involved (if applicable), and any relevant supporting evidence.
- **Acknowledgment:** The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days.
- **Investigation:** A thorough investigation will be conducted, and the learner will be informed of the outcome within 10 working days of the acknowledgment.
- **Outcome:** A written response will be provided, outlining the findings and any actions to be taken.

Stage 3 – Escalation to Senior Management

- **Escalation:** If the learner is not satisfied with the outcome, they can escalate the complaint to the senior management team.
- **Investigation and Response:** The senior management team will review the case and provide a final decision within 10 working days.

Stage 4 – External Complaint

If the learner remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal process, and the complaint relates to a service or qualification regulated by an external body, they can escalate the complaint to the relevant Awarding Organisation (AO), End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO), or external regulatory bodies, such as:

- **Ofsted:** If the complaint relates to the quality of education or training, or any aspect of the learner's experience that falls under Ofsted's remit.
- **ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency):** For complaints relating to funding, apprenticeship delivery, or other issues within the scope of the ESFA's responsibilities.
- Contact details for relevant external bodies, including Ofsted and ESFA, will be provided as part of the final response from Educationwise Academy, if necessary.

Appeals Procedure

If a learner disagrees with an assessment decision or any other decision impacting their progression, they have the right to appeal. The following steps should be taken:

Stage 1 – Initial Appeal

- **Discussion with Tutor/Assessor:** The learner should first discuss the issue with their tutor or assessor to review the decision.
- **Outcome:** The tutor/assessor will provide feedback within 5 working days. If the learner is not satisfied, they may proceed to the next stage.

Stage 2 – Formal Appeal

Submitting a Formal Appeal: The learner should submit a formal appeal in writing to the Internal Verifier (IV) within 10 working days of receiving feedback.

- **Details:** The appeal should include the reason for disagreement, supporting evidence, and the desired outcome.
- **Acknowledgment:** The appeal will be acknowledged within 5 working days.
- **Review:** The IV will review the appeal and provide a written response within 10 working days.

Stage 3 – External Review

If the learner is not satisfied with the outcome of the internal appeal, they may escalate the appeal to the relevant AO/EPAO or external regulatory body.

- The AO/EPAO will conduct an independent review of the decision.
- Contact details for the relevant AO/EPAO will be provided in the response from Educationwise Academy.

Confidentiality and Non-Retaliation

- **Confidential Reporting:** All complaints and appeals will be treated confidentially. Information will only be shared with those involved in the investigation or decision-making process.
- **Non-Retaliation:** Learners will not face any disadvantage or retaliation for raising a complaint or appeal in good faith.

Supporting Learners

Learners will have access to support throughout the complaints and appeals process. This may include guidance from tutors, administrative staff, or independent advisors. Educationwise Academy will ensure that learners are kept informed at all stages of the process and that their concerns are addressed professionally and promptly.

Record Keeping

All complaints and appeals will be documented, and records will be securely maintained by Educationwise Academy. These records will include:

- Details of the complaint or appeal.
- The actions taken at each stage of the process.
- The final outcome.

Records will be kept for a minimum of 3 years, in compliance with data protection regulations.

Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to any significant changes in relevant legislation, regulatory guidance, or internal procedures. Amendments will be communicated to all learners, staff, and stakeholders.