



# Apprentice Complaints Policy

## 1. Definitions

### *Complaint*

For the purposes of this policy an apprentice complaint, as defined by the OIA, is "an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more apprentice about a university's action or lack of action, or about the service provided by or on behalf of the university."

### *Feedback*

An apprentice may provide feedback which will be useful to a school or service when reviewing its policies and operations, without invoking this policy. Apprentices are encouraged to provide feedback at a Local Level to the appropriate school or service provider in a prompt and constructive manner.

## 2. Overview of the Apprentice Complaint Procedure

There are three Levels to the University complaints procedure:

Level 1: Local Level

Level 2: Head of School/Service review

Level 3: Faculty Pro Vice Chancellor/Registrar

After the internal university processes have been exhausted, complainants have the opportunity to raise their complaint with the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are not satisfied with the university's response. You must contact the ESFA within 12 months after the issue happened.

Email or post your complaint to the ESFA complaints team.

### **ESFA complaints team**

[complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk)

Complaints team  
Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry  
CV1 2WT

The ESFA will reply to let you know what will happen next.

### **If you're unhappy with the ESFA response**

You can contact the Department for Education if you're unhappy with how the ESFA has dealt with your complaint.

Complainants also have the opportunity to have their complaint independently reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).



### 3. Who can use the Apprentice Complaint Procedure?

Apprentices at the University of Nottingham UK campuses may use this procedure.

This complaints procedure may only be used by an individual who is, or has been, registered as an apprentice of the University at levels 6 or 7 and who is not recorded as being a leaver (or, if they are a leaver, is complaining about events that occurred before they were a leaver, within the permitted timescales). Applicants wishing to make a complaint should address the [Admissions feedback, complaints and appeals](#) pages of the website for further information.

A group of apprentices may use this procedure to make a collective complaint provided that one apprentice identifies him/herself as the main contact for purposes of communication.

Anyone wishing to make a complaint is encouraged to do so personally. The University policy on [Communications with Third Parties](#) is applicable to this policy.

Anonymous complaints will not be considered unless there are exceptional and evidence-based reasons to do so. In many circumstances, raising a concern anonymously could impede investigation and communication of the outcome.

### 4. What issues constitute grounds for complaint under this policy?

The subject of the complaint should relate specifically to one or more of the following, or comparable issues:

- Failure of the University to meet obligations including those outlined in course/apprentice handbooks
- Misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by the University
- Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, supervision, assessment or administration including where applicable, that provided by a partner institution, subcontractor or End Point Assessment Organisation. (Please note: normally the apprentice would be expected to follow the partner institution's complaints procedures in the first instance).
- Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by the University
- Complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of the University

Complaints relating to allegations of bullying, harassment or victimisation by members of staff are associated with the [Policy of Dignity within the University](#) and should be addressed to the Director of Human Resources. If the complaint is within the scope of the Dignity at Nottingham policy and informal resolution is not appropriate then a formal investigation in accordance with the policy will be undertaken. Student Services will be informed that a complaint has been made and against whom, (no further details will be divulged). Once the Dignity Investigation Procedure has been completed, if the apprentice's allegations are proven, then the apprentice may bring a level 2 complaint relating to the impact of the behaviour on their course of study within one month of the date of the outcome letter.

If an apprentice's complaint relates to allegations of bullying, harassment or victimisation by members of staff *and* to matters which are eligible for consideration under the terms of the Apprentice Complaints Policy, the University reserves the right to appoint one investigating officer to consider the issues within the parameters of the published procedures for both the policy of Dignity and the Apprentice Complaint Policy

Complaints about the behaviour of apprentices towards other apprentices are within the scope of the University Code of Discipline for Students.



## 5. What issues do not constitute grounds for complaint under this policy?

Challenges to the academic judgement of a member of staff and/or School. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator will not interfere with the operation of a University's academic judgement. Dissatisfaction with a mark and/or the academic judgement of the University is not covered by the University's policies. Cases where complaints are upheld and there has been a clear impact on an academic outcome may, however, lead to an academic conclusion e.g. allow an apprentice a further attempt at an assessment.

Cases better suited to consideration under the [Academic Appeals Policy](#), including:

- A concern about a decision made by an academic body regarding apprentice progression, academic assessment and award.
- A concern about a decision made under specific regulations, such as fitness to practise
- A concern about a School decision relating to an extenuating circumstances claim on the basis of a procedural irregularity

Disagreement with a policy/regulation rather than its application. In this instance, the matter should be raised by the apprentice with the relevant apprentice representative to raise it at the Learning Community forum, or another appropriate committee or group.

Non-academic matters raised by apprentices who are studying by collaborative arrangement and who are studying away from the University at partner institutions.

A matter of public interest which may be better suited to the [Public Interest Disclosure Code](#) ('whistleblowing').

Complaints about the Students' Union, which has its own [policy and procedure](#).

Where an apprentice raises issues which do not fall neatly into the category of either complaint or academic appeal, the University will notify the apprentice which specific issues will be considered under which specific procedure and direct the apprentice to the alternative appropriate procedure, for example the academic appeals procedure, for the remaining issues.

## 6. Principles of this policy

Complaints should be treated seriously and apprentices must not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making a complaint in good faith. However, it is expected that apprentices or people communicating on behalf of an apprentice will conduct themselves responsibly and treat the process and those members of the University involved in the process with respect at all times. Where behaviour falls outside these expectations, the University's [Unacceptable Behaviour Policy](#) will apply. In all cases, it is desirable that complaints are resolved informally and quickly between the relevant parties, and that the formal process is only started if that fails. Evidence of an attempt at informal resolution will be required.

Mediation can be a useful means of resolving matters of complaint where the parties involved are willing to engage voluntarily in the process in an attempt to work things out. The University may make an offer of mediation to apprentices at any stage of the Complaint Procedure.

Complaints must be substantiated with evidence, expressed in clear and succinct English and submitted within prescribed timescales.



Complaints submitted outside of the timescales stipulated in the procedure will only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances and where there is good reason, supported by evidence, for the late submission.

Apprentices are encouraged to seek advice from an Education Adviser in Students' Union Advice at any stage in the process, including seeking advice on how to present their case effectively.

The University is committed to ensuring that complaints are handled in accordance with its published procedure. Occasionally, it may be sensible for the University to deviate from procedure if strict adherence to it could give rise to perceptions of prejudice or bias.

The University will not accept or investigate complaints which it considers to be in breach of the standards set out in the [Unacceptable Behaviour Policy](#). Complaints form part of the University's process of quality review and improvement and are considered as providing valuable feedback rather than criticism. We will widely publicise information about procedures to apprentices and staff, and all Schools and Central Services are required to provide a link to them via their website.

Apprentices will be notified early in the process if the remedy sought within the complaint is beyond the power of the University to deliver.

It is important for apprentices to note that the Office of the Independent Adjudicator cannot consider matters which are or which have been the subject of court proceedings. Similarly, the University reserves the right to decline, suspend or to discontinue a complaint under the Apprentice Complaint Procedure, in the event that legal proceedings are commenced and the claim concerns the same subject matter as the complaint.

## 7. Recording and monitoring of complaints

It is important that complaints are monitored in order to improve the apprentice experience. The Complaints and Conduct Team will record and provide reports to indicate the nature of complaints and complainants, and resultant action. Such reports will:

- Feed into the monitoring and evaluation procedure at various Levels: department, school, faculty, University;
- Feed directly into appropriate University-wide committees;
- Assist in identifying problems and trends across the University;
- Form the basis of positive publicity, in demonstrating that identified issues have been resolved;
- Be made available to the Students' Union.

## 8. Related policies and procedures

[Academic Appeals Policy](#)

[Complaints procedure](#)

[Code of Discipline for Students](#)

[Policy on Communications with Third Parties](#)

[Unacceptable Behaviour Policy](#)