

Praise and Complaints Policy	
Praise and Complaints Policy for Apprentices undertaking work or training with Ebor Academy Trust.	
Reviewed	January 2021
Next review date	January 2024
Signed	 Sue Hinchcliffe Director of Apprenticeships

1. Introduction

The Trust is committed to providing education and training of the highest quality and, as such, welcomes all kinds of constructive feedback. This policy explains the Trust's approach to praise and complaints related to its apprenticeship programme and details the procedure for the investigation of concerns raised relating to the service provided. A separate policy applies for complaints related to the Trust's other areas of work i.e. other than its apprenticeship programmes.

This policy is available to employers, apprentices and members of the public. All feedback provided will be gratefully acknowledged, considered and utilised.

2. When should the Policy be used?

The Praise and Complaints Policy should be used:

- By anyone who is unhappy with any aspect of the service provided by the Trust in its provision of apprenticeships.
- If anyone wishes to suggest how the apprenticeship programme might be improved.
- By anyone who would like to comment on any aspect of the apprenticeship programme which they have found to be particularly good.

3. What methods are used to record praise and complaints?

- a) Suggestions and general comments, made either in writing or verbally, regarding Ebor's apprenticeship programme should be sent to the Director of Apprenticeships.
- b) Questionnaires: Apprentices and employers may be asked to complete a questionnaire on Ebor programmes in order to obtain formal feedback on the learning and its impact on the school environment.
- c) Suggestions on how programmes might be improved can be handed in at school reception desks or at the Trust's Business and Training Centre, in the suggestion boxes provided.

4. How is feedback considered?

The Director of Apprenticeships will consider all feedback received. Where the feedback suggests that minor changes or improvements should be made to the Trust's apprenticeship delivery, amendments will be made forthwith. Where the feedback suggests a more serious or fundamental issue(s), or alternatively is a cause for celebration or positive recognition at a more senior level, it will be brought to the attention of the Apprenticeship Management Team.

POLICY DETAILS FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS

This section and the procedure contained herewith is available to apprentices enrolled on all courses, or their employer. This includes apprentices enrolled on programmes that are delivered by a partner organisation. Recent graduates may raise a complaint under this policy up to 3 months from the award date.

Anyone lodging a complaint in good faith will not be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint, or making an appeal.

The Trust will not accept a complaint lodged on behalf of a third party, or any representative attempting to act on his or her behalf, except in the case of apprentices whose parents or guardians may need to raise a complaint on their behalf, or an apprentice with specific individual needs for whom an advocate is an appropriate means of accessing support to make a complaint. In such circumstances, the Trust will check for consent for a complaint to be made wherever possible.

Any complaint should be submitted within three months of the date upon which the event occurred.

5. Confidentiality

All complaints are dealt with in accordance with current data protection legislation and good practice guidance. Information, documents or other information relating to a complaint, investigation or resolution of a complaint will be treated in confidence as far as reasonably possible and shall be disclosed to only those persons involved in the complaint. An exception to this is where disclosure is necessary to progress the complaint, with permission from the complainant.

Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Trust. The Trust's decision in determining whether or not such complaints should be investigated will be final.

Vexatious or malicious complaints

Any apprentice making a complaint that they know, or have reasonable grounds for believing, is untrue or for which they are unable to submit any supporting evidence, may be liable to action being taken against them. Any complaint determined to be vexatious or malicious may be rejected by the Trust's investigating officer subject to the complainant being advised in writing of that decision at the earliest opportunity and being given reasons why the complaint is considered vexatious or malicious.

Resolution

Complaints may relate to issues that are readily resolved and may stem from relatively simple misunderstandings, lack of communication or administrative errors. Talking a problem through often helps to resolve it. All parties should attempt to resolve matters informally in the first instance through discussion with the individual, employer, tutor or member of staff to which the concern relates.

At all meetings held under the complaints policy, complainants have the right to be accompanied by one supporter e.g. family member, friend, colleague or advocate who, with the agreement of the investigating officer, may speak on their behalf if they wish.

Only when it has not been possible to resolve the matter informally should apprentices or their employers invoke the formal procedure set out within this policy. However, if the issue is beyond the authority of the individual who is dealing with the matter informally (such as a significant financial issue above an individual's financial authority, or an area of expertise that they do not have), or in the case of very serious matters, such as health and wellbeing issues, the complainant may take the matter directly to the formal stage of the policy and the member of staff should refer the complainant accordingly.

A file note should be kept of complaints resolved informally which will be filed confidentially.

At any point a complaint may be made directly to the ESFA; the Apprenticeship helpline can be contacted on 0800 015 0400 or by email nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk

Stage 1 – Formal Resolution

Following informal consultation a complaint may be made formal at stage 1 and this will usually be investigated within one month by the manager of the Trust's apprenticeship programme. If it is not appropriate for the Director of Apprenticeships to investigate the issue because they are not appropriately impartial, the matter may be referred to the HR Director. Documentation/evidence and any actions/meetings relating to the complaint will be stored as a record.

Normally within a month of receiving the complaint and commencing the investigation, the investigator shall provide the complainant with a written response, comprising:

- A summary of the evidence gathered including details of any witnesses interviewed
- A statement of conclusion including whether or not the complaint is upheld either in full or in part
- Any recommendations stemming from the investigation of the complaint

The investigator may also offer a face-to-face meeting to review the outcome of a complaint to provide more detailed feedback to a complainant.

Where the investigation cannot be undertaken within a month, the complainant will be informed in writing and given an updated timescale for completion.

A decision on the outcome of a complaint investigation in the absence of the complainant and their representative if the complainant is unwilling/does not wish to attend.

Stage 2 – Appeal

Where the complainant does not accept the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation, they have the right to appeal to the Trust's Chief Operating Officer (COO). The appellant must outline why they do not agree with the Stage 1 outcome within 10 working days of receiving the outcome of Stage One. An appeal can only be raised on the following grounds:

- the facts of the case and/or
- procedural points and/or
- new evidence that has emerged.

The COO or their representative will conduct an investigation into the appeal. This is not a complete re-investigation of the initial complaint. The investigation may include an interview with the complainant, acceptance of a written statement from the complainant, interviews and/or acceptance of written statements from other persons relevant to the complaint who are able to provide information relevant to the case. Paperwork relevant to the complaint will be reviewed. The investigator will have authority to receive copies of any documentation and/or receive evidence from any person that they deem to be relevant to the investigation.

Normally within a month of receiving the appeal the investigator shall provide the complainant with a written response, outlining whether or not the appeal is upheld. Where the investigation cannot be undertaken within a month, the complainant will be informed in writing and given an updated timescale for completion.

The appeal stage is final.

6. Monitoring of complaints

Reports detailing formal complaints and their outcome are presented termly to the Trust's Apprenticeship Management meeting.