



## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (APPRENTICESHIPS)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The University requires a published Complaints Procedure for apprenticeships, with a clear route for raising concerns.

#### 1.1 DEFINITIONS

- 1.1.1 The University aims to represent itself in a professional manner in its dealings with staff, apprentices and external parties but recognises that occasionally things can go wrong. In many cases issues, problems or misunderstandings can be dealt with by discussion between the parties involved but in other instances, it may be appropriate to pursue the matter in a more formal way. Those making a complaint can expect their complaint to be dealt with promptly and fairly and in accordance with the appropriate procedure.
- 1.1.2 Some complaints will require a full investigation to be carried out and other complaints will be successfully dealt with by an explanation of why something has happened and/or an apology. In whichever case, the University will seek to give a satisfactory response to any concerns raised. A complaint may be defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction or concern”. The expression of dissatisfaction or concern may take the form of an informal verbal complaint, an informal or a formal written complaint.
- 1.1.3 A complaint is more than purely an objection to the merits of a decision or action by the University, its apprentices, staff or sub-contractors. Examples of complaints can be claims of impropriety, irregularity, misconduct, poor performance or ineffectiveness. In summary, a complaint is concerned with the manner in which a decision has been made or action taken, rather than with the decision or action itself. This Complaints Procedure is established in order to review formal or informal complaints.
- 1.1.4 Where issues of complaints around contracted provision are not resolved through this complaints procedure, they will be raised through to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) process mandated in the ESFA Funding and Performance Management Rules for Apprenticeships. The ESFA requires a published Complaints Procedure for Apprenticeships, with a clear route for raising concerns for apprentices.

#### 1.2 PURPOSE

- 1.2.1 This complaints procedure reflects the shared commitment of Keele University and employers to valuing complaints. Our aim is to resolve apprentice concerns as close to the initial point of contact as possible and to investigate complaints thoroughly and fairly so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the

facts of each individual case. This procedure takes account of the *Good Practice Framework: handling student complaints and academic appeals* issued by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA, dated December 2016). If an apprentice remains dissatisfied once their complaint has been concluded using the approved procedure and they have been issued with a 'Completion of Procedures' letter by their host institution, they can access the independent complaints scheme operated by the OIA ([www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk)).

- 1.2.2 This Student Complaints Procedure is intended as a guide for both the University, employers and apprentices. It will be signposted to apprentices on apprenticeship programmes via their Programme Handbook to ensure that apprentices are aware of their right to complain and the correct steps to follow. This procedure has been created to manage complaints that relate to the educational provision of the University, and to make clear the interface between the University and employers.

### 1.3 WHICH PROCEDURE?

- 1.3.1 Apprentices should use the University's Student complaints procedure in the following circumstances which directly relate to the University's educational provision such as classes, assessment arrangements, access to School resources and staff, as well as accommodation, welfare, library or the individualised student support provided or managed by the University (including reasonable adjustments). The information about the University's student complaints process can be found on the University's complaints webpage at [www.keele.ac.uk/studentcomplaints/](http://www.keele.ac.uk/studentcomplaints/) and in [Regulation B7 Student Complaints](#).
- 1.3.2 Apprentices should use the **procedure of the relevant employer** for matters that do not directly relate to the University's provision but relate instead to the arrangements and provisions in the workplace.
- 1.3.3 Employer complaints should be directed to the Apprenticeships Team via their Complaints Procedure in the first instance.
- 1.3.4 Resolving complaints early saves time and resource and contributes to the overall efficiency of the University and employer. Concentrating on achieving an early resolution of a complaint as close to the point of contact as possible will free up staff time and benefit our apprentices.
- 1.3.5 If an apprentice is unclear which procedure they should follow, they should contact their programme director through the relevant School Office.

### 1.4 Resolution

- 1.4.1 Apprentices can expect to receive a written outcome to any formal complaint they make via the University's or the employer's complaints procedure. Where the action taken and the proposed resolution do not resolve the issue, there is a requirement to escalate to the ESFA, in line with the Funding and Performance Management Rules for apprenticeships.

Apprentices and Employers can contact the apprenticeship helpline regarding apprenticeship concerns, complaints and enquiries via the National Apprenticeship Helpline channels below: email: [nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk](mailto:nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk) or on tel: 0800 015 0400

## 2. Employer Complaints Procedure for Apprenticeships

### 2.1 PROCEDURE

#### Informal complaints

- Informal complaints should be made to the University's Head of Apprenticeships and Experiential Learning, Lou Taylor-Murison, either in person, via email ([l.e.taylor-murison@keele.ac.uk](mailto:l.e.taylor-murison@keele.ac.uk)) or via telephone 01782 734603.
- The Head of Apprenticeships and Experiential Learning will investigate the informal complaint and respond to the complainant within ten working days.
- Informal complaints in relation to the Head of Apprenticeships and Experiential Learning should be made to the University's Associate Director of Employability and Employer Engagement, Terry Dray, either in person, via email ([t.r.dray@keele.ac.uk](mailto:t.r.dray@keele.ac.uk)) or via telephone 01782 734492.
- Every attempt should be made to resolve concerns on an informal basis in the first instance, by speaking to the relevant member of staff. The expectation remains that both parties should make a genuine attempt to solve any problems at this preliminary stage.

#### Formal Complaints

- Formal complaints should be made to the Head of Apprenticeships and Experiential Learning Lou Taylor-Murison by completing the [Complaint Form](#) and sending this via email ([l.e.taylor-murison@keele.ac.uk](mailto:l.e.taylor-murison@keele.ac.uk))
- The complainant will be expected to state clearly the nature of the complaint and, if appropriate, provide copies of any related documentation. The complainant should also state the remedy they are seeking.
- The Head of Apprenticeships and Experiential Learning will acknowledge receipt of the complaint without delay and within 10 working days and provide an indication of when the complainant could expect to hear further.
- The Head of Apprenticeships and Experiential Learning will determine the nature of the complaint (complaint, enquiry or allegation) and undertake to task the appropriate Head(s) of School (HOPD) or Associate Director at the University to investigate the matter as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).
- The Head of Apprenticeships and Experiential Learning will endeavour to provide a written response to the complainant within ten working days from the date of the initial acknowledgement. If this is not possible, the complainant will be provided with an interim statement.
- The written response of the University will include details of any arrangements for pursuing the matter with an independent body where necessary.
- The Head of Apprenticeships and Experiential Learning will keep the Director of the Keele Institute for Innovation and Teaching Excellence (KIITE), informed of the situation, and will provide them with a written statement of the nature of the complaint and the response.

Where action and mediation does not resolve the issue, there is a requirement to escalate to the ESFA, in line with the funding and Performance Management Rules for apprenticeships.

Apprentices and Employers can contact the apprenticeship helpline regarding apprenticeship concerns, complaints and enquiries via the National Apprenticeship Helpline channels below:

**email:** [nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk](mailto:nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk)

**tel:** 0800 015 0400

*Details of the ESFA complaints contact are contained within our contract for services and commitment statement.*

## 2.2. APPEALS

If you have submitted a complaint but are not satisfied with how the complaint was dealt with you may submit a grievance.

Should you wish to submit a grievance, you should do so within 10 working days of the date of the complaint investigation outcome letter to the Director of Employability and Employer Engagement, IC2, Keele University Science and Innovation Park, Keele University, Newcastle-under-Lyme ST5 5NH, providing as much information about the background of the case as possible and including any documentary evidence in support of the case.

The grievance will be reviewed by the Director of Employability and Employer Engagement in conjunction with the Director KIITE within 10 working days and provide a final written response to the complainant, which will be considered final.

## 3. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

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Related University Policy Documents	<a href="#">Student Complaints Procedure</a>