

Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers for Apprenticeships

Version number	Version 1.1
Person responsible for the document	Director of Apprenticeships and Employer Engagement
Review Date	January 2025
Approved by	Vice Chancellors Executive Board (now UEB)
Issue Date	5.12.2018; reviewed January 2021 October 2022 – amended to reflect changes to ESFA complaints information. July 2023 - amended to reflect change in job title.

1.0 **Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy sets out the process for employers to make a complaint about the service provided by the University of Worcester ('the University'). The University has a separate policy and procedure for students that wish to make a complaint, which can be found on the Registry Service webpage under [Regulations and Procedures](#).
- 1.2 The University is committed to delivering a high quality service and take feedback from both students and employers seriously. It is the University's aim to settle complaints promptly, fairly and courteously in the best interest of all parties, and to address areas where improvement is needed. The University is keen to ensure that the interests and well-being of all those associated with a complaint are properly safeguarded.
- 1.3 The University aims to handle complaints in a manner which:
- encourages informal conciliation nearest to the source of the complaint;
 - is efficient and fair;
 - treats complaints with appropriate seriousness, sympathy and confidentiality;
 - facilitates early resolution;
 - where relevant, ensures that University practice improves as a result.
- 1.4 For effective oversight of processes and provision, the Vice Chancellors Executive Board will monitor the complaints received to check for evidence of trends in failure of provision or delivery.

2.0 **Definitions**

- 2.1 A '**complaint**' is defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction about the University's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by, or on behalf of the University.*'
- 2.2 An '**informal complaint**' is defined as an issue which an employer wishes to raise with a member of University staff, without using a formal complaints process. Informal complaints are usually quick to resolve and unlikely to require an in-depth investigation.
- 2.3 An '**appeal**' is '*a request for a review of a decision taken by an individual or University body charged with making decisions about students' progression, assessment and awards*'. Procedures for Appeals is dealt with through a different process, as detailed in the [Student Academic Appeals Procedures](#)

3.0 **Guide to making a complaint**

- 3.1 The process for raising a complaint by an employer whose employee is studying at the University is detailed below:

3.2 Stage 1: Informal Complaints

- 3.2.1 As outlined in 1.1 the University has a separate policy and procedure for students that wish to make a complaint, which can be found on the Registry Service webpage under Regulations and Procedures [Regulations and Procedures](#).
- 3.2.2 Where possible, complaints should be raised immediately with relevant departments at the source of the complaint, or via the Course Lead Tutor or if a student apprentice the University of Worcester Work Place Coach / Mentor. The aim is to resolve the problem directly and informally at the earliest opportunity. It is anticipated that the vast majority of complaints will be resolved in this manner.
- 3.2.3 Although Stage 1 is informal, the member of staff involved should provide a written outcome to the employer complainant, copying in the Director of Apprenticeships and Employer Engagement at apprenticeships@worc.ac.uk who will record the details of all informal employer complaints. Acknowledgement of the complaint will be provided within 48 hours, and a full response given within 4 weeks.
- 3.2.4 If the employer is unable to raise the complaint at the source, or is dissatisfied with the outcome, they should make a formal complaint within 2 weeks of attempting to raise the complaint or from receipt of the outcome (see Stage 2 below).

3.3 Stage 2: Formal Complaints

- 3.3.1 To make a formal complaint an employer should put the matter in writing to the University by post or email to:

Complaints & Appeals Officer
University of Worcester
Henwick Grove
WR2 6AJ
01905 855396

complaintsandappeals@worc.ac.uk

- 3.3.2 Where the University is working in partnership with another provider – the employer should also copy in the Lead Provider. If the complaint is in relation to fees and funding it should be addressed to the Lead Provider directly.
- 3.3.3 The email should be titled as a complaint, and set out the details of the complaint in full and what would be an appropriate resolution.
- 3.3.4 The University will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two working days, and the complaint will be forwarded to an 'Investigating Officer' who has not been previously involved with the complaint. The Investigating Officer will be the relevant Head of School or Head of Service.
- 3.3.5 The Investigating Officer will review all information submitted, and meet with relevant members of staff to review the complaint. The Investigating Officer will also speak with the employer complainant to clarify facts where required. As part of the process, mediation may be offered to resolve the complaint. If mediation is offered, revised

timescales for the resolution of the complaint will be agreed in writing between the University and the complainant.

3.3.6 A written response relating to the findings of the inquiry will be issued by the Investigating Officer within a maximum of four weeks from the date of receipt of the original complaint.

3.3.7 If the employer complainant is not satisfied with the action taken, he/she may proceed to Stage 3 of the procedure.

3.4 Stage 3: Review

3.4.1 Where employers are not satisfied with the response provided by the University at Stage 2, they should refer their complaint to the Lead Provider representative. For University of Worcester this is the Pro Vice Chancellor Students, who will investigate the complaint in line with the complaints procedures.

3.4.2 In the event the Lead Provider is the University, a complaint can be escalated for investigation to an independent reviewer. The reviewer will not re-investigate the complaint unless new evidence is presented. The independent reviewer will ensure that appropriate procedures are followed, the decision was reasonable, as well as considering any new evidence submitted.

3.5 Stage 4 Referral to ESFA

3.5.1 If after exhausting this process the complainant is still not satisfied, they may also escalate a complaint to the Education Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA). You must contact the ESFA within 12 months after the issue happened. You can do this by email or post your complaint to the ESFA complaints team.

- Email: complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk
- Post: Complaints team
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

3.5.2 Please note the ESFA will not usually investigate complaints more than 12 months after the original decision or action has been taken.