

FE Learner Complaints Policy 2022/3

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in full annually.

The policy was last reviewed and agreed by Terry Patterson, Quality Manager, on the 15th Sept 2022.

It is due for review in August 2023.

What is a complaint

A complaint is any concern or dissatisfaction with any aspect of the provision offered by BAJ. Learners can raise complaints at any time either verbally or in writing. BAJ works with learners to resolve most complaints informally if possible.

Making a complaint

If you are dissatisfied with the service you have received then talk to a member of our staff or your tutor. If we are unable to resolve the situation, you will need to follow the procedure outlined in this document.

What is the procedure for complaints?

Informal Complaints

An informal complaint is a concern or issue, which a customer wants to raise with the College or member of staff without resorting to the formal complaints process. The issue is usually quick and straightforward to resolve and is unlikely to require in-depth investigation.

Formal Complaints

A formal complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service received from the College, or about an action or lack of action taken by the College or its staff

Complaints in General

The College aims to balance the rights of the complainant with the rights of any person about whom a complaint is made, treating all parties with fairness and dignity. A complainant should not

suffer any reprisals for making a complaint in good faith and any evidence of recrimination should be brought to the immediate attention of the Principal's Office. If, however, a complaint from a student that is not upheld is found to have been made maliciously, the student may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Timescales for Making a Complaint

Complaints should be raised as soon as possible and within 3 months following the original event, action or issue causing dissatisfaction. Complaints from students no longer attending the College must be made within 3 months of their course completion date.

Expectations

The College will:

Acknowledge receipt of the complaint, provide information on the investigating officer, expected timescales and a copy of this policy within 2 working days of receipt

Listen and deal with the complaint reasonably, sensitively and respond within a stated period of time

Take follow up action where appropriate

Welcome issues being brought to its attention to prevent a possible recurrence of the problem

Provide feedback to complainants

The complainant will be expected to:

Explain the problem clearly and fully, including any action taken to date

Allow the College reasonable time to deal with the matter

Recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the College's control

Recognise that complaints relating to students and staff may be dealt with under other College processes/procedures and are therefore out of the scope of this policy. The outcomes of these will remain confidential

What happens next?

Stage 1

The investigating officer will investigate your complaint [looking at whether your questions were answered, whether you suffered any injustice and what remedy would be fair and proportionate in the circumstances]. They will inform you of the outcome of our investigations and respond within 10 working days. The Investigating Officer may contact you during the investigation for further information.

Stage 2

What to do if you are not satisfied

If you are dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at Stage 1, and/or wish to pursue your complaint, you may escalate the complaint to the Head of Academy within 10 working days of receiving the outcome from Stage 1.

If the complaint was dealt with by the Head of Academy at Stage 1, then you should submit a formal complaint to the Principal of the Academy.

The Head of FE or Principal may delegate the task of collating information concerning the complaint to another staff member, but not the decision, nor the action to be taken. The Head of FE or Principal will meet with the complainant, hear the complaint, investigate and make every effort to resolve the issue. Subsequent to this meeting, the Head of Academy or

CEO will write to the complainant summarising the outcome reached and the process for appeal.

The complainants will be informed of the outcome of the investigation within 10 working days of the meeting with the Head of Academy or CEO.

Stage 3

What to do if you're not satisfied

The complainant needs to write to the Head of Academy or CEO within 10 working days of the date of the letter notifying them of the outcome of Stage 2, notifying that they wish their complaint to be heard by the Complaints Appeal Panel. The Chair will convene a Complaints Appeal Panel consisting of at least two members of the management team of Free2Learn who are independent from the management and operation of the Academy. All panel members will have no previous knowledge of the complaint.

The appeal panel hearing is the last Academy-based stage of the complaints process. The panel will meet with the complainant, hear the complaint, investigate and make every effort to resolve the issue having met with the Head of Academy or CEO.

The remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel is to:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

Should the complainant wish to be accompanied at the panel hearing this will be allowed.

The panel will meet within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. If no dates within this timescale are convenient to the complainant, the panel may meet outside this period. The complainant will be notified in writing of the panel's decision, usually within 5 school days.

A copy of its findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and will be available for inspection on the Academy premises by the Head of Academy or CEO.

The letter will confirm the end of the Academy's involvement with the complaint.

The qualification awarding bodies such as SQA and C&G might be able to assist you in the complaints procedure but it will be your duty to contact them and the academy will have no involvement in this process.

All candidates have the right to complain to SQA and other awarding bodies about assessment related matters but not assessment judgements once they have exhausted their centre's complaints procedure. Candidates on regulated qualifications can complain to Ofqual once they have exhausted the centre and awarding body procedures.

Taking Action on Complaints

Complaints and grievances raised, will be collected, monitored and analysed by the management team. This will feed into the organisation's improvement plans as we are committed to high quality and learner satisfaction.