University of Bolton

Teaching Intensive, Research Informed

March 2019

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

The University of Bolton welcomes feedback from all customers including Employers and members of the public about courses, services, facilities and other matters for which the University is responsible. All formal complaints will be fully investigated sensitively and our aim is to respond quickly, positively and to reach an outcome that is satisfactory and fair for all concerned. The information gained as a result of these investigations will be used in the pursuit of corrective action and/or continual improvement and also gives us the opportunity to make any necessary adjustments to our systems and processes.

This policy aims to ensure that our responsibilities to protect children and vulnerable adults are met and any complaint received which triggers a safeguarding issue will be passed immediately to the designated safeguarding officer.

There are a number of informal channels through which most problems can be resolved. However, if an individual feels it is necessary to pursue a complaint formally, they can be assured that we will treat it seriously and impartially.

If you are a student and wish to make a complaint about the programme of study, then please refer to the Student Complaint Policy, which can be found at the following link https://www.bolton.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/student-policies/

2. Informal Complaint

An informal complaint is a matter which an individual wishes to raise with a member of University staff without using the formal complaint process. Issues are usually quickly resolved and unlikely to require an in-depth investigation.

Initially a complainant should refer their complaint to a Lecturer, Programme Leader, or Head of School for the Department which provides the service their complaint refers to; to Student Services or to any member of our HR Team. Reception staff may assist in identifying the correct member of staff.

The member of staff will seek to resolve the issue and keep a confidential record of the issue and how it was resolved.

The Employer Engagement Team or Apprenticeship Team can assist a customer with making an informal or formal complaint should they require this support.

In the instance that a complainant does not have access to the internet, or may have difficulty completing a complaint form, the Employer Engagement Team/Apprenticeship Team will be happy to assist.

3. Formal Complaint

3.1 The University aims to balance the rights of the complainant and those of any person complained against; all parties must be treated with fairness and dignity.

3.2 Formal complaints may be made in the following way:-

- A complainant should speak with a Lecturer, Programme Leader, or Head of School for the Department which provides the service their complaint refers to and discuss their concerns with them. A complainant may find that the matter can be resolved at this stage. However, if that is not the case the complainant should then:-

- Complete a complaint form as per Annex A

3.3 Or visit the Apprenticeship Team who will assist in the completion of the form.

3.4 All formal complaints completed will be received by the Standards and Enhancement office who will nominate an Investigating Officer requesting that the complaint be investigated within 15 working days. The Investigating Officer will be a member of University staff at grade 7 or above who is not a member of the Executive Board.

3.5 An acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant, within 5 working days of receiving a complaint, with the name of Investigating Officer to whom the complaint has been passed.

3.6 At this stage the Head of School and appropriate Director will automatically be notified of the complaint.

3.7 All complaints regarding a member of staff should be referred to the Human Resources (HR) Department who will advise on a correct course of action.

3.8 The Investigating Officer will fully investigate the complaint and respond to the complainant, via the Standards and Enhancement Office. To resolve the complaint it may be necessary for the Investigating Officer to arrange a meeting with the complainant or discuss the issue by phone or to respond by letter or email.

3.9 If a response is not received from the Investigating Officer within the 15 working day period the Director of Apprenticeships will discuss the delay with the appropriate personnel

3.10 If a more extensive investigation is required which may be lengthy, the complainant should be informed, with a clear indication of when they can expect to hear from the University again with an outcome.

3.11 A letter will be sent to the complainant outlining the responses and resolution to the complaint. The complainant will also be asked at this time if the complaint has been resolved to their satisfaction. The Director will also be made aware at this stage of the response to the complaint.

3.12 If there is no response from the complainant within 14 days the complaint will be closed.

4. Dissatisfaction with the Initial Resolution of a Formal Complaint

4.1 Complainants who are dissatisfied with the initial outcome of the formal complaint should advise the Standards and Enhancement Office. The matter will then be passed to the appropriate Director who will be requested to respond to the complainant within 5 working days, if possible.

4.2 Further to the investigation and findings of the Director, if the complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome the matter will then be passed to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for resolution, who again will be requested to respond to the complainant within 5 working days, if possible. The Deputy Vice Chancellor will then make a final decision on the resolution of the complaint and will write to the complainant. This decision is final and no further action will be taken on the complaint and it will be deemed as closed.

4.3 The University aims to successfully resolve all complaints within 25 working days of the Standards and Enhancement Office receiving the details, however, this may be extended where an investigation is complex and will take longer to resolve, or where there are time constraints due to end of semester term holidays / annual leave / University shutdown etc.,

5. Timescales for Making a Complaint

Complaints should be made as soon as possible after the event, action or issue causing dissatisfaction. Complaints from customers whose learners no longer attending the University must be received within **3 months** of the learner's course completion date.

6. Whistleblowing (Public Interest Disclosure)

The University has a Public Interest Disclosure Policy which enables staff to raise concerns internally in a confidential fashion about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, failure to comply with legal obligators or unethical conduct. The full Public Interest Disclosure Policy can be found via the intranet or by contacting the Human Resources Team.

7. Confidentiality

If specific information within a complaint is to be kept confidential, the complainant should make this clear when making the complaint. However, it should be noted that in exceptional circumstances it may be difficult for confidentiality to be respected, e.g. where a criminal offence or potential gross misconduct has been disclosed or if there are any safeguarding concerns. Additionally, the demand for confidentiality may make it difficult for the University to assist the complainant or to resolve the issue in question.

8. Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

It may be that an incident relates to the physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect of someone under the age of 18 or someone who is deemed to be a "vulnerable adult". Therefore, disclosures of this kind to any members of staff (including the University Counselling Service) may not remain confidential, as the person "at risk" will require protection.

If you wish to report or discuss this type of incident contact any of the following via Reception:

- Matthew Dillon, Students Service Deputy Manager
- Beverley Knight, Students Service Manager

9. Aggressive or Abusive Complaints

The University will not tolerate aggressive behaviour, bad language, racist, sexist or discriminatory comments.

10. Anonymous Complaints

We understand it could be difficult for complainants to make a complaint if they feel it would result in a poorer service or they would feel threatened. However, if complainants do not provide us with a contact name and address/telephone number/e-mail the complaint cannot be processed.

12. Complaints Reporting

The Standards and Enhancement Office write a report routinely for the Senate Committee providing anonymous details of the number and nature of complaints dealt with during the academic year.

AREA: Employer Engagement	
Document Prepared By: Head of Apprenticeships	**Approved by** Director of Apprenticeships
Date of last review: March 2019	**Next review date:** March 2020

Annex A

SEO Reference Number:

CUSTOMER COMPLAINT FORM

This form is to be completed for all customer complaints, complaints will be dealt with following the customer Complaints Procedure and should be sent to:- Standards and Enhancement Office, Deane Road, Bolton BL3 5AB, Email: SEO@bolton.ac.uk

Independent help and advice about completing this form can be obtained from the Apprenticeship Team. Please telephone 01204 903940 or e-mail Connected@bolton.ac.uk

Complete in block capitals or type.

The Customer Complaints Procedure is available at the Apprenticeship Information Policy Zone.

DETAILS OF COMPLAINT:

Your Name:	Student Name if applicable:
Programme:	Level:
Address for correspondence in connection with the complaint …….. …… Postcode…… Telephone Number …… E-mail……	
Outline of complaint	

Please indicate below, without prejudice, what outcome or further action you are expecting. The University can only consider outcomes which are reasonable and which are allowed by the University's Regulations, Policies and Procedures.	
Element of complaint	What outcome are you hoping for?

As part of the investigation of your complaint, any member of staff mentioned will be made aware of the complaint, as will the Head of School or Professional Services Unit involved.

Due to data protection legislation action may result from the complaint which the University will not be able to make you aware of because the University cannot breach an individual's right to data protection and anonymity (such as where disciplinary action against a fellow student or member of staff results from a complaint).

Declaration	
I declare that the information given in this form is true, and that I would be willing to answer further questions if necessary.	
Signed:	Date:

Following section of form to be completed by relevant University staff

To be completed by SEO

Date form received by SEO:	Date form acknowledged:
Date form sent to Head of School/Professional Service:	SEO Officer:

Head of School/Professional Service

Details (and date) of person appointed to investigate:					
Date investigation was completed:					
Head of School / Professional Service decision on complaint: *Please tick relevant selection below – if multiple decisions on multiple elements of a complaint please provide details as necessary*					
Upheld		Partially Upheld		Not Upheld	
Please include further details if relevant:					

Date of letter to complainant advising outcome: (NB letter should inform complainant of further stage of Complaints Procedure and grounds for taking the matter further)

Once the complainant has been advised of the outcome of the investigation, a copy of this form and a copy of the letter advising the complainant of the outcome of the complaint should be sent to the Standards and Enhancement Office SEO@bolton.ac.uk