



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
OF ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales

[www.ucem.ac.uk](http://www.ucem.ac.uk)

Horizons, 60 Queen's Road,  
Reading RG1 4BS

t +44 (0)118 921 4696  
e [enquiries@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ucem.ac.uk)

# Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers of Apprentices

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Definitions.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. Guide to making a complaint .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Stage 1: Informal complaints .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Stage 2: Formal complaints .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Stage 3: Review.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Stage 4: Complaints Adjudicator.....</b>	<b>3</b>

# 1. Introduction

This policy sets out the process for employers of apprentices to make a complaint about the service provided by UCEM. UCEM has a separate complaints policy and procedure for students that wish to make a complaint, which can be found on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and UCEM website.

UCEM is committed to delivering a high quality service and takes feedback from both students and employers very seriously. It is UCEM's aim to settle complaints promptly, fairly and courteously in the best interest of all parties, and to address areas where improvement is needed. UCEM is keen to ensure that the interests and well-being of all those associated with a complaint are properly safeguarded.

UCEM 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 UCEM practice improves as a result.

For effective oversight of processes and provision, UCEM's Senior Leadership Team will monitor the complaints received to check for evidence of trends in failure of provision or delivery. An anonymised summary of complaints on record and how they have been managed will also be reported annually to the Academic Board.

# 2. Definitions

An **'informal complaint'** is defined as an issue which an employer wishes to raise with a member of UCEM staff, without using the formal complaints process. Informal complaints are usually quick to resolve and unlikely to require an in-depth investigation.

A **'Complaint'** is defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction about UCEM's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by, or on behalf of UCEM'*.

An **'Appeal'** is *'a request for a review of a decision taken by an individual or academic body charged with making decisions about students' progression, assessment, and awards'*. Procedures for Appeals are dealt with through a different process, as detailed in the Student Appeals Guidance Notes, which are available to students on the VLE.

# 3. Guide to making a complaint

The process for raising a complaint by an employer of an apprenticeship student studying with UCEM is detailed below.

## Stage 1: Informal complaints

Where possible, complaints should be raised immediately with relevant departments at the source of the complaint, or via the Apprenticeship Management Team ([apprenticeships@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@ucem.ac.uk)). 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.

## Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers of Apprentices

Although Stage 1 is informal, the member of staff involved should provide a written outcome to the employer complainant, copying in the Apprenticeship Management Team at [apprenticeships@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@ucem.ac.uk) and [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.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.

If the employer is unable to raise the complaint at the source, or is dissatisfied with the outcome, they should make a formal complaint (see Stage 2 below).

## Stage 2: Formal complaints

To make a formal complaint an employer should put the matter in writing to UCEM by email to the Complaints Officer at [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk), copying in [apprenticeships@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@ucem.ac.uk) and – where UCEM is working in partnership with another provider – 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.

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.

The Apprenticeship Management Team will log the complaint on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

UCEM 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 a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

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 UCEM and the complainant.

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.

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

## Stage 3: Review

Where employers are not satisfied with the response provided by UCEM at Stage 2, they should refer their complaint to the Lead Provider, who will investigate the complaint in line with their complaints procedures. Details of the contact at the Lead Provider for complaints is contained within the 'Written Agreement for delivery on apprenticeship standard'.

In the event the Lead Provider is UCEM, the complaint can be escalated for investigation by 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.

## Stage 4: Complaints Adjudicator

If after exhausting this process the employer complainant is still not satisfied, they can escalate their complaint to the Complaints Adjudicator at the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Email: [complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk),

Address:

Customer Service Team,  
Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT

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