

Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers of Apprentices

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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 procedure for students that wish to make a complaint, which can be found on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and [UCEM website \(opens new window\)](#).

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

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*'. Employers of apprentices can raise a complaint using the procedure below. Apprentices can raise an complaint using the [Student Complaints Procedure \(opens new window\)](#).

An '**Appeal**' is '*a request for a review of a decision taken by an individual or body (i.e. one of the UCEM committees) charged with determining applications for admission and making decisions about students' progression, assessment, and awards*'. Appeals are normally, but not exclusively, related to decisions of the Board of Examiners (i.e. results), decisions of Mitigating Circumstances Panel, the Academic Misconduct Panel or the Fitness to Study Panel, disciplinary decisions, decisions on the provision of reasonable adjustments, or decisions on admissions or registration. UCEM has separate procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals. **Only students (apprentices) are able to make an appeal**, using the [Student Appeals Procedure \(opens new window\)](#).

3. Guide to making a complaint

The process for raising a complaint by an employer of an apprentice studying with UCEM is detailed below. Please note:

- If as an employer you raise a complaint that the apprentice involved also raises with us, the issue will be investigated using both this procedure and the Students Complaints Procedure. Separate responses will be provided to each party, taking in account the different perspectives, the level of information that can be shared, and the different resolutions appropriate for apprentices and employers.
- UCEM will work with employers to resolve any issues, even if they are raised outside the timescales outlined in this procedure. However, you should be aware that if a complaint is made outside the deadlines stated, this may hinder our ability to fully investigate the complaint or provide appropriate outcomes, and UCEM may deem it appropriate not to allow access to the later stages of this procedure.

Stage 1: Informal complaints

Where possible, complaints should be raised as soon as possible after the issue arises and normally within 20 working days. You can raise a complaint with your Apprenticeship Outcomes Officer, with your contact in the Business Development Team, or by emailing apprenticeshipmanagement@ucem.ac.uk or businessdevelopment@ucem.ac.uk.

Your complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days. The aim is to resolve the problem directly and informally at the earliest opportunity. It is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be resolved in this manner. You will receive a full response within 20 working days. This may initially be provided verbally but will be followed up in writing.

If you are dissatisfied with the action taken at this level, you can make a formal complaint (see Stage 2 below).

Any member of staff providing an informal Stage 1 response to a complaint should also provide a copy of the written outcome to the Apprenticeship Management Team at apprenticeships@ucem.ac.uk and businessdevelopment@ucem.ac.uk who will record the details of all informal employer complaints to ensure UCEM learns from complaints and improves employer and student experience as a result.

Stage 2: Formal complaints

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of an informal Stage 1 complaint raise, you can make a formal complaint by emailing the Complaints Officer at complaints@ucem.ac.uk within 20 working days of receiving the Stage 1 outcome. 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.

Your complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days. The Complaints Officer will allocate your complaint to an 'Investigating Officer' who has not been previously involved with the complaint. The 'Investigating Officer' will be a member of the UCEM Senior Leadership Team or Executive, whichever is higher than the level of the person who responded to your Stage 1 informal complaint.

To investigate the complaint, the Investigating Officer will review all papers submitted and meet with relevant members of staff (including senior staff in the Apprenticeship Management Team and Business Development Team). The Investigating Officer may also speak with you if they need to clarify any facts of the complaint. A written response relating to the findings of the inquiry will be issued by the Investigating Officer within a maximum of 20 working days of receipt of the formal complaint.

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If you are not satisfied with the action taken at this level, you can choose to proceed to Stage 3 of the procedure.

The Complaints Officer will record the details of all formal employer complaints, alongside the record of informal employer complaints, to ensure UCEM learns from complaints and improves employer and student experience as a result. The Complaints Officer will keep the Apprenticeship Management Team and the Head of Business Development informed of the outcome of each stage of the process and of how the matter has been resolved.

Stage 3: Review

If you are dissatisfied with the response provided by UCEM at Stage 2, you can request the complaint be escalated for review at Stage 3 by emailing complaints@ucem.ac.uk within 20 working days of receiving the Stage 2 response.

The Stage 3 review is completed by an external independent reviewer, normally an Independent Trustee from the Board of Trustees, who sits outside of UCEM's management structure. The purpose of the review is to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed correctly by UCEM, and the outcome is reasonable, as well as to consider any new evidence submitted.

The reviewer will not re-investigate the complaint unless new evidence has been presented. UCEM's Executive will consider the report from the Stage 3 Reviewer when providing UCEM's response to your Stage 3 complaint. The Complaints Officer will issue the Stage 3 response within 20 working days of receipt of your request for a Stage 3 review.

This is the end of UCEM's internal complaint procedures. If you are not satisfied with the action taken at this level, see section 4.

The Complaints Officer will record the details of all Stage 3 employer complaints, alongside the record of formal and informal employer complaints, to ensure UCEM learns from complaints and improves employer and student experience as a result. The Complaints Officer will keep the Apprenticeship Management Team and the Head of Business Development informed of the outcome of each stage of the process and of how the matter has been resolved.

Stage 4: Complaints Adjudicator

If you have completed the three stages of this procedure and are still not satisfied, you can escalate the complaint to the Complaints Adjudicator at the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Email: 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.

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