

# Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers of Apprentices

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# 1. Introduction

This policy sets out the process for employers of apprentices studying with UCEM to raise a complaint about the service provided by UCEM and the procedure which UCEM will follow when responding to the complaint. UCEM has a separate complaints procedure for students that wish to raise a complaint (see [section 2](#)).

UCEM is committed to delivering a high-quality service and takes feedback from both students and employers of apprentices very seriously. UCEM aims to settle complaints promptly, fairly, and courteously in the best interest of all parties, and to address areas where improvement is needed. UCEM aims to ensure that the interests and wellbeing 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 UCEM's 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 following this procedure. Apprentices can raise a complaint using the [Student Complaints Procedure \(opens new window\)](#).

An appeal is defined as '*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), the Mitigating Circumstances Panel, the Academic Misconduct Panel, or the Fitness to Study Panel. Appeals may also be related to disciplinary decisions, admissions or registration decisions, or decisions on the provision of reasonable adjustments. UCEM has separate procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals. Employers of apprentices cannot raise an appeal. Apprentices can raise an appeal using the [Student Appeals Procedure \(opens new window\)](#).

### 3. Guide to raising a complaint

The process for employers of apprentices to raise a complaint is detailed below. Employers are asked to note the following:

- If an employer raises a complaint that the apprentice involved also raises with UCEM, the issue will be investigated using both this procedure and the Student Complaints Procedure. Separate responses will be provided to each party, taking into 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, raising a complaint outside these timescales may hinder UCEM's ability to fully investigate the complaint or provide certain outcomes, and UCEM may deem it appropriate not to allow access to subsequent 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. Employers can raise a complaint with their Apprenticeship Outcomes Officer or their contact in the Business Development team.

Complaints will be acknowledged within two working days. UCEM's 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. Employers will receive a full response within 20 working days of raising their complaint. The response may initially be provided verbally but will be followed up in writing.

If the employer is dissatisfied with the action taken at Stage 1, they can make a formal complaint (see [Stage 2: Formal complaints](#)).

Any member of staff responding to a Stage 1 employer complaint should provide a copy of the written response to the Apprenticeship Management team and the Head of Business Development. The details of all informal employer complaints will be recorded to ensure that UCEM learns from complaints and improves employer and student experience as a result.

#### Stage 2: Formal complaints

If an employer is dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 1 complaint, they can make a formal complaint by emailing the Complaints Officer 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 the employer feels would be an appropriate resolution.

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

To investigate the complaint, the Investigating Officer will review all papers submitted and meet with relevant members of staff. The Investigating Officer may also contact the employer if they need to clarify any facts of the complaint. Employers will receive a full written response within 20 working days of raising their complaint at Stage 2.

If the employer is dissatisfied with the action taken at Stage 2, they can proceed to Stage 3 of the procedure (see [Stage 3: Review](#)).

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The Complaints Officer will record the details of all Stage 2 employer complaints to ensure that 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 case and how the matter has been resolved.

### Stage 3: Review

If an employer dissatisfied with the response provided by UCEM at Stage 2, they can request that the complaint be escalated for review at Stage 3 by emailing [the Complaints Officer](#) 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 reinvestigate the complaint unless new evidence has been presented.

UCEM's Executive will consider the report from the Stage 3 Reviewer when responding to a Stage 3 complaint. Employers will receive a full written response within 20 working days of raising their complaint at Stage 3.

Stage 3 is the final stage of UCEM's internal complaints procedure for employers of apprentices. If the employer is dissatisfied with the action taken at Stage 3, they can raise their complaint with the relevant adjudicator (see [Stage 4: Adjudicator](#)).

The Complaints Officer will record the details of all Stage 3 employer complaints to ensure that 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 case and how the matter has been resolved.

### Stage 4: Adjudicator

If an employer has completed the three stages of this procedure and is dissatisfied, they can escalate their complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The ESFA provides online forms for submitting a complaint via the GOV.UK website or asks that complainants write to them using the following address:

Complaints 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.