

Complaints Procedure

Policy Overview Skills4Stem is keen to minimize all kinds of non-conformities and to encounter those non-conformities through an established system of receiving and dealing with complaints. Appropriate systems of receiving and dealing with the complaints provide the gateway to learn the views of those who experienced the company's services. This gives the company an opportunity to rectify the non-conformities and thus brighten the image of the company when correctional actions to remedy the non-conformities are taken.

Who can complain?

The following people may bring complaints:

- those who are not satisfied with any services received from Skills4Stem ;
- candidate/apprentices (or those acting on candidate/apprentice's behalf)
- visitors
- service users
- staff members

Skills4Stem does not accept anonymous complaints.

How to complain: Skills4Stem take complaints extremely seriously and look for opportunities for feedback on a regular basis. To make a complaint you can use the accompanying form to this policy which is available via our website or by contacting: tracy@skills4stem.co.uk

Reasons for Complaints

Complainants may bring complaints for any of the reasons set out below:

- That the advice provided was not appropriate or wrong;
- That the personnel did not provide appropriate guidance;
- That the matter has been dealt with negligently;
- That the company did not update the complainant properly and in time, thus complainant failed to take appropriate action and suffered loss and damage;
- That the complainant received substandard services;
- That the complainant had been misled about the matter;
- That the company did not deal with complainant's problem expeditiously and thus had caused him/her problems of a substantial nature;
- That the company has charged in excess of the fee scheme;
- That the company had never provided the complainant with the services for which he/she had already paid; You may also add any other reasons that suit you most in your complaint. Please give details of the reasons as much as possible. State your reasons clearly and without any apparent ambiguity.

Purpose of the Complaints Procedure

The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to establish an effective monitoring system in the company. Skills4Stem can identify any on-going irregularities or ineffectiveness of systems, when there is a complaint about the matter from an interested party. The complaints procedures are also used as indicators of standards of customer service that have been successfully established and tested.

When a complainant approaches Skills4Stem with a genuine complaint, it is believed that the complainant has giving Skills4Stem a chance to rectify the errors or ineffectiveness or unfairness in the system. It also helps Skills4Stem to take appropriate policy decisions after careful consideration and investigation of the complaint. The most important purpose of the complaints procedure is to ensure that no candidate/apprentice leaves the company with bad experience, dissatisfactions or grievance.

Informal Complaints Procedure

Introduction This is a less formal procedure where a complainant may raise his or her concern about the way a particular service was provided. The complainant may meet with the complaints officer and discuss the matter that will be then immediately dealt with. However, if the matter is serious and complicated and the complainant is still dissatisfied, the complaints officer may accept the complaint as a formal one. Every effort will be made to ensure complaints are treated confidentially, unless there is a risk to the organisation, staff, candidates, apprentices or stakeholders. Each complaint will be judged on its own merit.

Report to the Complaints Officer

If a candidate/apprentice, visitor, or other interested party is dissatisfied because of the way she or he was dealt with, the dissatisfied person may complain about the matter. The Complaints Officer will record the complaint in writing and will immediately look into the matter.

Investigation The Complaints Officer will then immediately investigate the matter. If necessary, the Complaints Officer will contact the department from which the complaint emanated. If the complaint is able to be immediately resolved, the Complaints Officer will make a decision as to the resolution of the complaint and inform the relevant parties. However, if it is not possible to investigate the matter on the same day, the Complaints Officer will provide a possible time frame to deal with the complaint, explaining to the complainant why it was not possible to give a decision immediately. If, upon investigation, the Complaints Officer feels that the situation is serious enough to warrant a formal complaint, the complainant will be advised of this, and encouraged to pursue this.

Decision If the Complaints Officer is able to resolve the complaint and provide a decision, this will be done so orally, but should be followed by a written confirmation of the decision to the relevant parties. A copy of the written decision must be given to a relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team. If the Complaints Officer is unable to satisfactorily resolve the complaint, the advice of the Senior Leadership Team may be sought, or the complaint may be escalated to the status of a Formal Complaint.

Formal Complaints Procedure

If a complainant wishes to bring a serious complaint about any matter in relation to the way services are provided, or the way they have been dealt with, or if an informal complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily, the complainant may bring a formal complaint. A complaint form should be completed, with documentary evidence attached as appropriate, and this should be submitted to the Office Manager for consideration. At this stage, the documentary evidence submitted need not be the original copies.

Letter of acknowledgement

When the Office Manager receives a formal complaint, a letter of acknowledgement will be sent within 2 working days. The letter must set out the next steps to be taken and indicate a time frame of the investigation. The maximum time for an investigation will be 10 working days or a reason as to the delay.

Investigation

After receiving the formal complaint, the Office Manager will liaise with a member of Skills4Stem's Senior Leadership Team who will appoint a Complaints Officer. The Complaint's Officer must contact the department or the member of the staff against whom the complaint has been brought. Details of the complaint will be provided for their prompt response. The Complaints Officer will consider the evidence brought by both parties, and may interview witnesses if appropriate in order to accumulate further evidence.

Report of Findings

The Complaints Officer will report their findings in writing to the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team and will inform both parties in writing of his/her decision in the matter, along with recommendations as to steps to be taken in order that the matter may be fully resolved. The written decision must indicate the following:

- Background of complaint
- Summary of investigation
- Summary of evidence or documents and witness statements
- Summary of findings
- Decision
- Reasons for such decisions
- Conclusion

The letter must clearly explain the steps already taken in relation to the complaint such as suspension or reprimand.

Appeal of Decision

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision given by the Complaints Officer, he/she may submit an appeal. The appeal will be heard by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Appeals should be submitted in writing to the identified member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) within 14 days of the Complaints Officer's original decision. Additional evidence which the complainant wishes to submit should be attached. The SLT member will consider all evidence available, both new evidence and that from the Complaints Officer's investigation, and shall provide the staff member or department against whom the complaint has been lodged the opportunity to respond to the accusations in writing.

The SLT member will then complete a report, in line with the guidance above, and make a decision as to the outcome of the appeal. He/she may decide to support the original decision of the Complaints Officer, or may make alternative recommendations as to the resolution of the complaint. The decision of the SLT member will be final and no further right of appeal will be offered.