



Complaints & Appeal Procedure

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1 Introduction

Skills North East Ltd, (SNE) always prides itself on delivering first class customer service. The delivery of an outstanding customer experience is a key tenant of its strategic objective and organisational values.

However, SNE also recognises that sometimes things may not meet these high standards. It actively encourages feedback from a range of service users and will be open and transparent in its resolution of complaints and in learning lessons from them.

This procedure aims to ensure that complaints are resolved promptly and fairly. The procedure covers all areas of activity. The procedure can therefore be used by any learner, apprentice, parent, employers, member of staff, visitor, contractor or member of the local community who has reason to be unhappy with the service provided by SNE.

The procedure covers complaints in whatever form they are received, we encourage feedback both positive and negative through a range of channels including over the telephone, in person with a specific member of staff, via the contact us button on the website and via social media channels. In whatever form complaints are received, the principles of this procedure shall still apply.

We strongly believe that most issues can be resolved quickly and at the informal stage of our process. However, for more serious incidents or incidents where the informal stage has not been able to resolve matters there are two further formal stages to the complaints process and then recourse for individuals to take their complaint to external bodies who have oversight of the quality and funding for all aspects of the college's provision.

2 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

If resolution cannot be found at the informal stage or matters are too significant for the informal approach to be appropriate individuals may wish to make a formal complaint.

A formal complaint must be made within three months of the issue first arising and must be made in writing to:

Quality Director
Skills North East Ltd.
Unit 6 Apex Business Village
Annitsford
NE23 7BF

Alternatively, formal complaints can be provided over the telephone: 0191 2504590.

SNE will act on anonymous complaints in exceptional circumstances and where it felt that matters are significant and serious enough to warrant investigation without knowing the details of the complainant.

SNE will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within two working days from receipt of the formal complaint. An investigating officer, usually a manager from within the team subject to the

complaint will be identified. In particularly serious matters, a member of the Senior Management Team may be asked to act as investigating officer.

All complaints made to the Directors directly will be logged as per the procedure above with an investigating officer appointed.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the investigating officer will consider the issues raised by the complainant and may contact them to gather further information. In addition, the investigating officer may contact other members of staff or interview other individuals in conducting their investigation. They will respond in writing to the complainant within ten working days. Their response will detail their findings, propose a resolution, if appropriate, and/or state whether their investigation has upheld the issues raised by the complainant. A copy of the response will be logged in the central complaints record.

3 Stage 3 – Internal Appeal

In most cases complaints can be resolved within stage two. However, it may be that the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution proposed or outcome of the complaint. In these instances individuals have the right to appeal.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Quality Director and should be made within ten working days from the receipt of the original response letter.

The Quality Director will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within two working days. They will then consider the original investigation, any evidence that was not considered as part of the original complaint and the reasonableness of the proposed resolution. They will determine whether the appeal has grounds and will respond in writing within ten working days from the date of receipt.

The response made by the Quality Director will outline whether the appeal has been upheld in full, partially, or not at all, and may suggest an alternative resolution to that proposed in the original response.

The decision of the Managing Director is final and as such internal procedures for complaints are deemed to have been exhausted at this stage.

4 Complaints about a senior post-holder or concerns about potentially fraudulent, corrupt or irregular activity

SNE has a separate Whistleblowing Policy which covers complaints against a senior post-holder or concerns about potentially fraudulent, corrupt or irregular activity are dealt with via SNE's Whistleblowing Policy. A copy can be provided on request.

5 Continuing a complaint beyond SNE

For learners and employers involved in accredited programs, individuals have the right to seek independent external review via the relevant Awarding Body Complaints Procedure if they remain unsatisfied with the outcome of any complaint once all internal procedures have been followed.

For all none Awarding Body related issues, individuals have the right to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency 08000 150 600 or <https://tinyurl.com/ESFAForm>

Both agencies will want to satisfy themselves that the internal complaints processes of SNE have been exhausted prior to acting upon complaints.

6 Appealing an Assessment Decision

If you wish to appeal an assessment decision the first stage would be to discuss this with the person making the decision (usually your Tutor).

If you are still dissatisfied, take your appeal to your Internal Quality Assurer or the Quality Director who will look into the appeal and notify you of the decision.

For any appeals still not resolved at this point, contact your Awarding Organisation via their own appeals procedure (this may differ depending on Awarding Organisation) which can be accessed from either calling the SNE office on 0191 250 4590 or directly with your awarding body.

7 Whistleblowing

SNE is committed to the highest standards of integrity, probity, and openness in public life. We will maintain a whistleblowing procedure in line with relevant legislation and best practice.

Should you wish to understand more about SNE's whistleblowing procedures, please refer to the SNE Whistleblowing Policy on the SNE website www.sne.org.uk

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