



TITLE	REF [as per policy register]	VERSION	
Comments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy	CP001	8.1	
APPROVAL BODY	DATE	REVIEW DATE	
Corporation	20 July 2020	20 July 2021	
LEAD PERSON	Group Director of Student Services		
EQIA DATE	09/06/2020	DPIA DATE	09/06/2020

POLICY TITLE

1. Policy Statement

1.1 Activate Learning aims to be renowned for achieving a high level of customer satisfaction and is committed to continually innovating and improving services for all its customers.

1.2 Activate Learning recognises the value of customer feedback and seeks out comments and suggestions that give insight into the customer experience and so inform service design and assist in achieving its goal of continuous improvement.

1.3 Where a customer feels that the service does not meet their expectations, there are customer-friendly and fair procedures for making a complaint. In recognising the potential to turn complainants into advocates, Activate Learning places great importance on complaint resolution.

2. Purpose

2.1 To provide a clear and consistent framework for dealing with comments, suggestions and complaints so that they can be monitored and reviewed to ensure continuous improvement.

3 Scope

3.1 This policy covers all comments, suggestions and complaints by all Activate Learning customers, this includes learners on college and non-college-based further and higher education programmes as well as degree-level apprenticeships, customers of college commercial outlets, nurseries, student accommodation and Activate Business School or Activate Apprenticeships. Activate Learning may pass a complaint regarding one of our subcontracted providers to the provider for resolution, if this is deemed more appropriate.

3.2 This policy covers complaints relating to Freedom of Information requests and complaints made against the Corporation, a board member or the Clerk to the Corporation, which will be handled under the Procedure for Complaints against the Corporation, Board Members and the Clerk. This policy also covers complaints relating to data protection, which will be handled under the Data Protection Complaints Procedure.

3.3 If the complaint is about a staff member it may be dealt with under our HR procedures if this is deemed more appropriate. If this is the case, the complainant will be informed that this is being dealt with in line with our internal staff disciplinary policy and that there will be no further information provided to the complainant after that point.

4. Definitions

4.1 A comment/suggestion is an idea relating to a possible improvement in the customer experience.

4.2 A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about action, or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by, or on our behalf.

- An informal complaint is where a customer expresses dissatisfaction with a service where the issue

can be resolved quickly and satisfactorily by the Activate Learning staff member communicating with the customer directly and there is no need for an investigation.

- A formal complaint is a complaint that is clearly stated as requiring formal action to be taken or an informal complaint that is not resolved to the satisfaction of the customer so needs to be handled according to a structured procedure including an investigation.

4.3 A frivolous complaint has no serious purpose or value. It may have little merit and be trivial.

4.4 A Vexatious complaint is one where it is apparent that the complainant is making a complaint without any merit for the purpose of causing inconvenience, harassment or expense.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Activate Learning ensures that all staff involved in the handling of complaints are appropriately trained and made aware of their individual roles and responsibilities in following the policy and related procedures

5.2 All staff are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of and follow all relevant policies and procedures.

5.3 Managers and directors are responsible for investigating and resolving complaints according to the timescales set out the complaints procedure and for ensuring that improvement points are addressed in quality improvement measures.

5.4 The Activate Learning group is responsible for the central overview of complaints and for monitoring compliance with standards. This is administered by the Group Administration service.

5.5 The Group Director of Student Services has group overview of comments, suggestions and complaints, oversees the internal verification of complaints, monitors complaints for emerging themes and learning points and reports to the Group Executive Team on key trends.

6. Policy commitments

6.1 We expect staff to take responsibility for recognising and resolving all informal complaints immediately to the satisfaction of the complainant.

6.2 Students may appoint a representative to submit a complaint or appeal on their behalf.

6.3 Students with Specific Learning Difficulties or Mental Health issues will be offered independent support, advice and guidance to engage effectively with the complaints procedures.

6.4 All complaints will be managed in a confidential and sensitive way.

6.5 All formal complaints will be fully investigated if they are made within three months of the incident giving rise to the complaint unless there is a reasonable reason for a delay.

6.6 We will follow set procedures for dealing with complaints along with timeframes for seeking a solution.

6.7 We aim to satisfactorily respond to all complaints first time round but will provide opportunity to appeal if the customer thinks the issue was not dealt with or the process was not followed in a fair and objective way.

6.8 We will keep a central log of all comments and suggestions and one central Complaints Tracker.

6.9 We will regularly review patterns and trends within comments and complaints received and use this

information to continually improve our service. The Group Executive Team reviews and discusses suggestions and complaints together with the Corporation on an annual basis.

6.10 We will ensure that all investigations are conducted objectively and that outcomes are fair and consistent, through an internal verification process comprising monthly reviews of a sample of complaints by an independent and impartial manager. The results of the reviews will be included in the Director of Student Services report.

6.11 Reports on the outcomes of formal complaints along with the emerging themes are produced by the Director of Student Services and are made available to managers providing a valuable input into the self-assessment and quality improvement process.

6.12 We will consider the complaint resolved and no further action necessary if we have had no further correspondence within 10 working days of the completion of procedure letter being issued.

6.13 Every complaint will be considered on its own merits. Activate Learning will reserve the right not to pursue a full investigation if we deem the complaint to be frivolous or vexatious.

7. References

- Activate Learning Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy
- Education Act 1996
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) good practice framework for higher education
- Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights
- Admissions Policy
- Fees Policy

8. Appendices

- Comments and Suggestions Procedure
- Complaints Procedure
- Complaints Appeals Procedure
- Complaints against the Corporation Board Members and Clerk Procedure
- Data Protection Complaints Procedure