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Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy	CP001	9.0
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Corporation	18 October 2022	18 October 2023
LEAD PERSON		
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COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Policy Statement

Activate Learning is committed to achieving excellence in all aspects of our work and this ambition drives us to continually develop and transform our services. In living our Learning Philosophy, we want students to feel safe, secure, valued and listened to. We want all our stakeholders to feel entirely satisfied with their experience with us and to share their views openly and directly with us, just as they will do with their friends and family.

As an organisation focused on learning, we understand the important role of feedback in the learning process. We value customer feedback and welcome any points that give insight into their experience so we can acknowledge and maintain aspects of our services that are working well and make changes to the areas that don't yet meet our customers' needs.

Our students are empowered to have an active voice in shaping their learning experience and we have proactive and responsive feedback processes that encourage them to develop skills in evaluating and providing feedback effectively. We welcome all feedback from our employer partners.

If a customer feels that the service does not meet their expectations, there are formal, user-friendly and fair procedures for making a complaint. In recognising the potential to turn complainants into advocates, we place great importance on successful and rapid complaint resolution.

2. Purpose

To provide a clear and consistent framework for dealing with feedback, whether a compliment, comment or complaint, so that:

- good practice can be celebrated
- poor experience for a customer can be rectified
- points raised can be monitored, shared and fed into actions to ensure continuous improvement.

3. Scope

This policy covers:

- Compliments, written comments and complaints by all Activate Learning customers. See below for the definition of customer.
- Learner Voice activities including surveys, focus groups, and student representation.
- 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.
- Complaints relating to data protection, which will be handled under the Data Protection Complaints Procedure.

If the complaint is about staff conduct, it will be passed across to our Human Resources department. In this case, the person raising the complaint will be advised and reassured that the issue will be investigated to

decide the best course of action in line with our internal management procedures. They will not receive an outcome or any further update regarding the complaint. However, HR may make contact to obtain further information.

If the complaint is about a partner organisation, including another provider delivering on behalf of Activate Learning, it may be dealt with under their complaints policy if this is appropriate.

If the complaint is about an awarding body, the complaint will be directed to the relevant organisation.

If the complaint is best addressed under a different Activate Learning procedure, the complainant will be advised of the procedure they need to follow and how to initiate the next steps

If the complaint relates to assessment and/or examination procedures, this will be dealt with under the relevant Academic Appeals procedure.

If the complaint relates to matters which have or are currently being considered by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE) or another external organisation, this will be dealt with under their procedure.

4. Definitions

Customer – Any person who accesses our organisation including learners on college and non-college-based further and higher education programmes as well as degree-level apprenticeships, parents, employer partners customers of college commercial outlets, nurseries, student accommodation and Activate Business School or Activate Apprenticeships.

Compliment – Positive feedback that we will share and celebrate.

Comment – A point or suggestion relating to a possible improvement in the customer experience.

Complaint – Any expression of dissatisfaction about action, or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by, or on our behalf.

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

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. Vexatious complaints may trigger a disciplinary process.

5. Responsibilities

Directors are responsible for

- Oversight of the compliments, comments and complaints for their area, ensuring that compliments are shared, issues are dealt with satisfactorily and improvement points are discussed in the appropriate forum and translate into trackable actions.
- Ensuring 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

Managers are responsible for

- Investigating and resolving complaints according to the timescales set out the complaints procedure and
- Ensuring that improvement points are addressed in quality improvement measures, identifying actions to provide sustainable positive change.

Heads of Campus are responsible for

- Designing and delivering a range of Learner Voice activities to gather feedback from students
- Ensuring that campus-based Student Engagement Advisers triage points raised and pass these to the relevant manager
- Feeding complaints into the central complaint process run by Group Administration
- Providing an independent view on complaint handling

Group Administration are responsible for

- Logging compliments, comments and complaints centrally
- Administration of the complaints procedure and monitoring compliance with the procedures.

The Group Director of Student Services is responsible for

- Oversight of the independent verification of complaint outcomes
- Monitoring and reporting on emerging themes and learning points and reporting to the Group Executive Team on key trends.

All staff are responsible for

- Forwarding any Compliment, Comment or Complaint to Group Administration for logging
- Participating in any investigation relating to a complaint
- Taking actions for improvement as agreed.

6. Policy Commitments

Customers are able to provide feedback via a feedback form on the Activate Learning website, by emailing/writing or speaking to us directly, or by participating in one of our surveys, focus groups or feedback forums. Where we don't have enough information to respond, we will contact customers for further details.

Receiving feedback is an important part of our Learning Philosophy led culture of learning from failure. We welcome all feedback and keep a central log of all compliments, comments and complaints to enable us to 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.

We will share and celebrate compliments and praise the relevant team members.

Students may appoint a representative to submit a complaint or appeal on their behalf. They should request a representative at the time of submitting a complaint, explaining why they need a representative, providing the name and contact details of who will represent them, and giving permission for Activate Learning to discuss all matters relating to the complaint with the representative.

If Activate Learning gives permission for a representative to handle the complaint on behalf of the student, we will normally correspond only with the representative about the complaint after that. We will usually accept information only via the representative and not from the student directly.

Students submitting a collective complaint should explain how each party has been affected by the situation. The investigator may ask for one nominated individual to act as a representative for the group.

Students with Learning Difficulties or Mental Health issues may have support, advice and guidance to engage effectively with the complaints procedures if they would benefit from this, upon request.

All complaints will be

- Handled in a fair, confidential and sensitive way according to a set procedure and timescale.
- Responded to within five working days in the attempt to find a prompt resolution, and where no immediate solution is available, formally investigated by a relevant manager
- Processed if the complaint is made within one month of the incident giving rise to the complaint, unless there is a reasonable reason for a delay, or if the complaint is now within scope of this policy.
- Considered resolved and no further action necessary if we have had no further correspondence within 10 working days of the resolution letter being issued.
- Investigated objectively and result in outcomes that are fair and consistent as they go through an internal verification process.
- Reported on at team and group level where actions for improvement are agreed and tracked.
- Fed into an appeal process if the customer thinks the issue was not dealt with or the process was not followed in a fair and objective way.
- Considered on its own merits. We reserve the right not to pursue a full investigation if we deem the complaint to be frivolous or vexatious.

7. References

- Activate Learning Behaviour for Success Policy
- Learner Voice Strategy
- 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

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