

United Learning

Apprenticeships Feedback and Complaints Policy

Scope

The guidance set out in this document applies to all apprentices on a United Learning apprenticeship level 3 course, including internal apprentices from United Church Schools Trust (UCST) and United Learning Trust (ULT) and apprentices employed externally.

As a values-led organisation, our values of ambition, confidence, creativity, respect, enthusiasm and determination are key to our purpose and underpin all that we do.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Clearly outline the feedback and complaints processes at United Learning
- Ensure all complaints are handled sensitively, fairly and with respect for privacy (where requested)
- Resolve concerns quickly and successfully using the appropriate level of response
- Improve the services of United Learning by acting promptly to action any recommendations provided following the investigation of complaints and feedback.

This document should be viewed in conjunction with other United Learning policies and guidance, in particular:

- United Learning Group Safeguarding Policy and Procedural Guidance for Apprenticeship Scheme
- United Learning Equality & Diversity Guidelines
- United Learning Health & Safety Policy

Approved by: Steve Bull, Head of Apprenticeships

Last Review Date: August 2023

Next Review Date: August 2024



United Learning
The best in everyone™

■ Ambition ■ Confidence ■ Creativity ■ Respect ■ Enthusiasm ■ Determination

1. Introduction

United Learning is committed to providing a supportive and high-quality learning experience to all it serves and welcomes feedback about the services provided. This policy reflects sector best practice and underpins our vision and core values whereby the experience and satisfaction of apprentices and stakeholders is at the heart of the service offer.

This policy complies with Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) requirements for the handling of complaints and arrangement of appeals within Apprenticeships. In circumstances where the United Learning feedback and complaints procedure has been exhausted, appeals can be made directly to the Education and Skills Funding Agency or respective awarding organisation. Further information regarding the contact details of these organisations can be found on their independent websites or requested from the Quality Team. Contact details are included in Page 4 of this document.

Feedback and complaints may be submitted by apprentices, parents/carers/guardians of apprentices under the age of 18 (or up to the age of 25 for apprentices with Education, Health and Care Plans), employers, customers, other stakeholders or members of the public.

Complaints may not be made by representatives or a third party. Apprentice groups are entitled to submit 'collective complaints' and where this is the case, United Learning may ask apprentices to nominate a group representative.

Concerns of a serious nature may include, but not be limited to the following:

- Health and safety and safeguarding issues
- Equality and diversity issues
- Breach of confidentiality
- Theft or damage

2. Key Responsibilities

The Head of Apprenticeships is the staff member with overall responsibility for complaints, reporting to the Professional Development Board. The Quality Team's role is to establish the essential facts of the matter by collating any evidence that supports or contradicts the allegation. The Quality Team members are the Head of Apprenticeships and the Director of Professional Development. A team member (designated the investigating officer) completes an investigation report (if appropriate) and a letter of response to be issued to the complainant.

The Central administration team receives complaints and forwards these to a member of the Quality team. The Central administration team supports with investigations, responses and data analysis.

Human Resources is consulted for any staff conduct issue and assigns a designated member of the Human Resources Team to support the Investigating Officer.

A Health and Safety Officer may be involved in any complaint where there is a health and safety concern.

A Safeguarding Officer will be involved if a safeguarding concern is raised.



A Professional Development Board member will chair an Appeals Board consisting of an independent manager within United Learning and a scribe.

3. Feedback

This policy is designed to support and improve United Learning's service and ensure that our provision meets our highest expectations for apprentices. United Learning values feedback, both positive and negative, and sees this as vital to improve its services and drive success.

Feedback is defined as any comment provided about the service or experience of apprentices, employers, parents/carers/guardians or other stakeholders, which is used as a basis for recognising good practice or making improvements. Feedback can be provided verbally to any member of staff or formally, in writing, to the Central administration team who will forward it to the Quality Team or through the regularly scheduled surveys and focus groups.

On receipt of feedback United Learning will:

- Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback
- Pass on any compliments to individual staff members and their manager and ensure the good work of staff is recognised
- Share best practice to continue to improve services across the organisation
- Consider any suggestions about how improvements can be made and where possible and appropriate, act quickly to implement these.

4. Complaints

A complaint is defined as a statement that services are unsatisfactory or that action, or lack of action, taken by United Learning is unacceptable.

On receipt of a complaint United Learning will:

- Endeavour to listen carefully to all concerns raised within a reasonable amount of time
- Respect confidentiality
- Operate fairly and sensitively
- Maintain accurate and detailed records and keep all parties updated as to the progress of the matter being dealt with
- Act where appropriate
- Ensure no staff member is discriminated against due to making a complaint.

Complaints may be submitted in person, over the telephone (a written statement will be taken by a member of staff), or in writing to the Quality Team or via email: Courses@unitedlearning.org.uk. Complaints addressed to other staff will be forwarded to the Quality Team for processing. Complaint forms can be accessed in appendix 1 and via the website. Complaint forms can be provided in alternative formats upon request – please contact the Central Administration Team or speak to a member of staff, outlining your requirements. Any personal information recorded in regard to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

This policy covers all apprentices for a period of up to 3 calendar months from the last day of required attendance or from being informed that the qualification has been achieved. United Learning will take reasonable steps to resolve all concerns as quickly as possible.



5. Informal Complaints Handling

In the first instance, United Learning will endeavour to resolve complaints informally with the objective of achieving an early and satisfactory resolution. Where this is not possible, the complainant will be advised of the formal complaints handling procedure by the Quality team. Reasons for this may include:

- Failure to reach a satisfactory resolution within 15 working days
- The complainant refuses to engage with the informal handling of the complaint
- The seriousness or complexity of the complaint deems it most appropriate to be dealt with formally.

When raising a concern, a member of the Quality Team will ask that you are prepared to:

- Inform us as quickly as possible of any requirements you may have to help you in raising a concern
- Describe reasonably and fairly the details of the issue or concern you have
- Explain any actions you have taken to deal with this
- Allow us reasonable time to investigate the issue and follow the procedure outlined in this policy
- Understand that some things are outside of the control of United Learning.

When handling informal complaints, a member of the Quality Team will:

- Ask you to speak directly to the member of staff involved (this may include programme leads, tutors, assessors, team leaders or managers) within 20 days of the concern arising.
- Where it is not possible to speak to the person directly involved, you should contact any member of staff.
- If you are unsure of who to contact, please contact the Quality Team who can advise you of the best route to progress your concern or complaint.
- Staff will aim to resolve your issue within 15 working days or update you on progress.

6. Formal Complaints Handling

Where concerns have not been successfully resolved in the informal stage, or where it is deemed appropriate for them to immediately enter the formal stage, the informal stage will progress to the formal stage of complaints handling. Formal complaints developing from the informal stage must be made within 15 working days of the informal stage being exhausted.

United Learning will:

- Acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days and provide a copy of the complaints policy and/or form if requested
- Ask you to outline in full, all details of your concern or complaint, any action you have taken thus far to deal with it and what your preferred outcome to the complaint is
- Ask that you give us permission to investigate the issue, including providing any evidence required and allow us to collect statements from all parties involved (where necessary)
- Inform you of the investigation start date
- Provide a written outcome letter, within 20 working days of the start date, and inform you of the appeals process, including contact details for relevant funding organisations, awarding organisations and Ofsted, should you be unsatisfied with the outcome.



To ensure fairness and objectivity, an independent member of the Quality team will be assigned to conduct the investigation and collate all the evidence which may include witness testimony, reports and documents and physical evidence. They will complete an Investigation Report and the investigation outcome response which will include all the findings. The response will be issued to the complainant within 20 working days of the investigation start date. Complaints records will be retained by the Quality Team for at least 7 years.

7. Appeals

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, then they have the right to make an appeal (within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint outcome response) in the following circumstances:

- There is evidence that the Feedback & Complaints Policy was not followed
- There is evidence that the facts stated were not investigated
- The findings are inconsistent with the outcome

When making an appeal, the complainant should email their intention to appeal to . United Learning will acknowledge the appeal within 3 working days and ask that the complainant provide the reasons they are unhappy with the outcome provided, the grounds for their appeal and what they feel the preferred outcome should be.

On receipt of an appeal, the Appeal Board will review all evidence provided by both the complainant and the Quality team. The Appeals Board will consist of a minimum of 2 individuals comprised of:

- One member of the Apprenticeships Governance Board
- One independent manager
- A clerk to take minutes

The complainant will be informed of the date and time of the Appeals Board should they wish to attend. All relevant documentation will be distributed to all parties, no less than 5 working days in advance of the meeting.

Based on the findings of the Appeals Board, the appeal will either be upheld or dismissed. An appeal outcome response will be issued to the complainant within 5 working days, outlining the findings of the Appeals board and the reasons for their decision. Minutes will also be provided. The appeals response is final and concludes the United Learning complaints procedure. Appeals records will be retained by the Quality Team for at least 7 years.

In the event of an unsatisfactory resolution following a full internal investigation, the complainant can refer the matter to the appropriate external body (dependent upon meeting certain criteria (please check their website) within 3 months (or otherwise stated below) of the appeals response date.

For Further Education provision including apprenticeships escalated complaints should be addressed to: The Complaints Team, Education & Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT. The ESFA complaints team can also be reached by email: complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk.

For any complaints regarding the storage or use of your data, or about the handling of Freedom of Information requests, complainants should contact The Information Commissioner. Contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or via their live chat service ico.org.uk/livechat, or helpline on 0303 123 1113.



8. Monitoring

All feedback and complaints received by United Learning are centrally logged, monitored and reviewed by the Quality Team to identify any themes. Termly data reports outlining the number and primary category of complaints are reported to the apprenticeships Governance Board by the Head of Quality. Annual monitoring and evaluation reports of all feedback and complaints received are provided to the Governance Board.



Appendix 1: Complaint Form

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return to who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name	
Address	
Postcode	
Contact telephone number (1)	
Contact telephone number (2)	

Please give details of your complaint below

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (To whom did you speak to and what was the response?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork?	YES / NO
If so, please give details.	
Signature:	Date:

For Official use only

Date acknowledgement sent		Complaint resolved at which stage	
Acknowledgement sent by			
Complaint referred to			
Complaint referred on (date)			

