

Complaints Policy

Policy Statement

Cogent Sector Skills Council views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future. We will ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and promptly and that all complaints or comments by service users are taken seriously and seen as an opportunity to put things right. The policy is not designed to apportion blame, to consider the possibility of negligence or to provide compensation.

Aim

The aim is to ensure that the complaints procedure is properly and effectively implemented, and that service users feel confident that their complaints and worries are listened to and acted upon promptly and fairly.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at Cogent Sector Skills Council knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information, as part of our continuous improvement policy to help us to improve what we do

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of our service.

The following are examples of things that are treated as complaints and are not exhaustive:

- Claims of unfair treatment
- Dissatisfaction about how we have dealt with a situation, for example, timeliness, clarity of information, confidentiality
- Claims that a poor standard of service has been provided (for example, losing documents, resulting in time delays and extra effort for the complainant)
- Claims that staff have been unhelpful or rude

Informal Complaint

An informal complaint is defined as being any situation where a customer voices their disapproval with the service they have received, but where they do not wish to lodge a formal written complaint.

Formal Complaint

A formal complaint is defined as being a situation where a customer wishes to formally 'lodge' a complaint in writing about the service they have received.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in Cogent Sector Skills Council services. Complaints may also come from other Cogent Sector Skills Council staff who are using the service.

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing. This policy does not cover complaints from staff, and the Cogent Sector Skills Council Staff handbook should be referred to, as it details the grievance policy.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels stated above, or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person will be recorded on our complaints log system. The person who receives a complaint either by phone or in person should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, job title, company, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Cogent Sector Skills Council (for example: client, delivery partner)
- Inform the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

Recording the Complaint

All complaints are recorded on the CRM - *click **Service – Service – Cases***

The CRM database of complaints can be analysed through a dashboard and reports produced for review by the Heads of Business and the Executive team.

Resolving Complaints

Informal Complaints

One of the underlying principles of the Cogent Sector Skills Council complaints process is that complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity. In most cases, complaints will be managed on an informal basis in the first instance. This is intended to provide the complainant with a quick, amicable and satisfactory resolution. Most complaints can be resolved informally and where practical a complaint should be dealt with as close as possible to the point at which it arises. In deciding whether a complaint is informal, we apply the following criteria:

- Can the complaint be easily resolved, either at the point of contact or via referral through service management?

- Can a resolution be reached amicably?

If the answer is yes, the complaint constitutes an informal complaint. If the answer is no, it will be dealt with as a formal complaint. It should be noted that any informal complaint may escalate to become a formal complaint.

When an informal complaint is received, it should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within **1 working day**. The member of staff who receives an informal complaint will look into the matter and give a verbal response to the complainant/s within **3 working days** of the complaint being registered.

The procedure for informal complaints can be varied according to the nature of the grievance expressed. In all instances, the receiving individual should ensure it is recorded in the complaints log on the CRM and confirm who will investigate. Consideration will be given to any improvement opportunities identified as a result of informal complaints.

Formal Complaints

Stage One

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within **1 working day** of the complaint being received.

The acknowledgement should state who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a response. Complainants should receive a progress update from the person handling the complaint, **3 working days** after the complaint has been received.

Complainants should receive a definitive reply within **2 weeks** of the complaint being received. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given. Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Where ever possible, the complaint should be resolved while the formal process is going on. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is escalated. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the appropriate Senior Manager. The request for a Stage 2 review should be acknowledged within **1 working day** of receiving it by the Stage 1 respondent. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Senior Manager may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate to a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. The person who dealt with the

original complaint at Stage One should also be kept informed of what is happening.

Complainants should receive a definitive reply within **2 weeks** of escalation. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final.

NEBOSH students can appeal to NEBOSH and SQA by emailing info@nebosh.org.uk if they remain unsatisfied with the decision made by the course provider.

Stage Three

After following all internal complaints processes further resolution can be continued by referral to the Education and Skills Funding Agency website.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed monthly to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action by the Head of the Business unit.

How to Complain

Email us at Feedback@cogentskills.com

Warrington Office

Phone us on: 01925 515200

Write or visit us at: Cogent Skills, Unit 5 Mandarin Court, Warrington, WA1 1GG

Darlington Office

Phone us on: 01325 740900

Write or visit us at: Cogent Skills, 5 Pioneer Court, Morton Palms Business Park, Darlington, DL1 4WD

Or in person to any of Cogent Sector Skills Council staff at any of our events or activities.