

Complaints Policy & Procedure

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Section 1 Overview of the policy

1.1 Scope of the policy

This policy is for those of our customer and learners, who may wish to express dissatisfaction regarding our actions, products, services and / or the application of our policies. Our 'products' include both Internet Business School Diploma which are subject to scrutiny and enforcement by our regulators (regulated qualifications) and unregulated products which are owned and / or offered by Internet Business School. All Internet Business School services and products.

This policy forms part of a suite of awarding policies, all of which are designed to:

- Protect learners who are registered with us;
- Minimise the risk of an Adverse Effect¹ occurring;
- Help support us and you in risk management and risk minimisation;
- Help ensure we and you comply with all relevant legislation and guidance;
- Help improve and refine our products and services.

This policy supports your compliance with the Centre Agreement. It does not replace any of the requirements contained within that Agreement. Non-adherence to our awarding policies may constitute Malpractice and / or a breach of the Centre Agreement. Please ensure you read and implement our policies carefully.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with:

- The Centre Agreement;
- Our Malpractice Policy;

These policies are available on our website and from your Customer Support Assistant. We are committed to providing high-quality services and we will resolve any problems in our services as quickly as possible. Complaints are an important source of information for improving our services.

1.2 Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out the steps you need to follow when submitting a complaint to us and, should the complaint be accepted, the steps we will follow to investigate the complaint and come to a decision.

1.3 Who needs to know about the policy?

You (including centre, satellite, subcontract centres or contractual staff) who are involved in the design, delivery, management, assessment and quality assurance of our products aware of, and familiar with, the contents of the policy.

1.4 Obtaining copies of the policy

You can download copies of the policy from our website or request copies from your Customer Support Assistant.

1.5 Reviewing the policy

In accordance with the General Conditions of Recognition we regularly review our systems and procedures. We will review this policy regularly and may revise it as required in response to the findings of any review. We will also review the policy where there has been an incident which has occurred and highlighted 'lessons learned', which has required us to review in line with our risk management practices; a change in legislation or statutory guidance; changes in our practices; actions or guidance from our regulatory or external agencies, and / or in response to customer and stakeholder feedback.

Section 2 About complaints

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with our service, the application of our policies and / or procedures and, on occasion, the outcome or decision we've made. In particular, when considering complaints, we examine whether they relate to the following on our part (our complaints criteria): mistakes or poor service; unreasonable delay or failure to take action; unprofessional behaviour or conduct of our staff; bias or unfair treatment; failure to follow our published policies or procedures without a reasonable explanation.

Section 3 Making a Complaint

3.1 Who can make a complaint?

The person(s) directly informed of, or directly affected by our action or decision, or a representative acting on behalf of and with the explicit written permission of that person/those persons. We understand that some people may feel more comfortable making anonymous complaints. We will note these complaints and, depending on the nature of the complaint, may refer to them in support of our ongoing risk analysis and review.

3.2 Informal Complaint

Sometimes mistakes may happen or our service does not meet your expectations. On the occasions when things do go wrong we encourage you to contact us (01233 226222) so that we can try to put things right. We are always interested to hear from students/staff about their experience of studying/working with the Internet Business School and value the important feedback provided through complaints and appeals.

If you have not been successful in resolving your concerns informally, consider making a formal complaint or appeal to the Internet Business School. All formal complaints must be made in writing using recorded delivery postal service.

3.3 Formal Complaints - Stage 1

The first stage is to submit your complaint in writing. We do not take formal complaints over the phone as we need an accurate record of your concerns, to make sure that all the

issues you raise are fully investigated.

If you have a disability that means you are unable to put the complaint in writing we can make alternative arrangements to take your complaint.

When we receive your complaint we send an acknowledgement, within 10 working days, telling you who will be investigating your complaint. Your complaint is referred to a person who has knowledge and expertise in the area of your complaint to help resolve your problem. They are also responsible for addressing any issues of poor customer service you may have received from our staff.

The person assigned to your complaint will respond to you directly, normally within 10 working days of the date your complaint was acknowledged.

We hope that once you receive our response to your complaint your problem will have been resolved, and that our response will have addressed all your concerns.

3.4 Complaints - Stage 2

If you are unhappy with the response you receive or wish to pursue your complaint further, you can make a Stage 2 complaint.

To make a Stage 2 complaint you must explain why the response that you have received at Stage 1 has not answered your complaint. At Stage 2 your complaint is referred to the senior member of the Internet Business School who will respond to you within 10 working days of receipt of Stage 2 complaint.

3.5 Complaints - Stage 3

Occasionally some students or staff may wish to continue their complaint to Stage 3. To make a Stage 3 complaint you must explain why the response that you have received at Stage 2 has not answered your complaint.

At Stage 3 your complaint is referred to the Director who has final responsibility for such matters. A full and detailed investigation will be undertaken, including a review of the way your complaint has been handled. This is the final stage of the Internet Business School internal procedures. On completion of your Stage 3 complaint you are issued with a completion of procedures letter - issued within 30 working days of receipt of your Stage 3 complaint.

3.6 Appeals - Stage 1

We do not take formal appeals over the phone as we need an accurate record of your concerns, to make sure that all the issues you raise are fully investigated. Please place your appeal in writing outlining the following:

- The reasons why you feel the decision that has been made was unfair

- Provide any further information that you feel has not been previously considered
- Supply any evidence in support of the query, either by uploading it with your appeal (if it is available electronically) or by forwarding it in hard copy to the Internet Business School office

If you have a disability that prevents you from putting your complaint in writing we can make alternative arrangements to take your complaint.

The Internet Business School will:

- Review the information available to them and any further information and evidence you have provided
- Respond to you directly to advise you of the decision that's been made, within 20 working days from the date of the acknowledgement.

We hope that Stage 1 will resolve your appeal.

3.7 Appeals - Stage 2

When requesting a Stage 2 review you must explain why you feel the earlier stages of the appeal have not been handled correctly and why the decision made should be reviewed. A full and detailed investigation will be undertaken, including a review of the way your appeal has been handled. You will be provided with a report within 30 working days. This is the final stage of the Internet Business School internal procedures. On completion of your Stage 2 appeal you are issued with a completion of procedures letter.

Section 4 How we deal with complaints

We aim to resolve all accepted complaints as quickly as possible. Where this is not possible, we will take a staged approach to complaint escalation and resolution. Stages 1 and 2 of our Complaints Policy are classed as informal stages. Complaints escalated to Stages 3 are classed as formal complaints. Please see each stage below for information on how your complaint will be addressed.

4.1 Stages of a complaint

Stage 1: Informal – initial complaint

Most initial (Stage 1) complaints would be submitted verbally, by phone. Your Customer Support Assistant will listen to your complaint and aim to resolve it for you straight away. You may alternatively choose to submit your complaint in writing at this stage. In this case, you can expect our resolution to your complaint to be conveyed to you by your Customer Support Assistant, either by phone or in writing, within 5 working days of receipt. Your complaint needs to be made within 3 months of the incident you are complaining about

Stage 2: Formal – escalation to an appointed Senior Manager

Where it has not been possible for us to resolve your complaint at Stage 1, we will escalate it to an appointed Senior Manager who will action and resolve your complaint within 10 working days. you may choose to request your complaint be escalated. Any Stage 1 complaints must be submitted in writing, within 7 working days of the Stage 2 outcome being given to you. You will need to provide information as to why you believe your complaint has not been resolved and / or properly addressed. The Senior Manager will determine whether we have applied our procedures fairly, appropriately, consistently and in line with our policy. We will inform you of the decision within one working day of the decision being made.

Stage 3: Formal – escalation to an Executive Member

If you have followed all of the escalation steps above and your complaint remains unresolved, we will escalate your complaint to a member of our Executive Team. If you are not satisfied with the Stage 2 response, you may choose to request your complaint be escalated. You must do so in writing, within 14 working days of the Stage 3 outcome being given to you. You must outline why you believe your complaint has not been resolved and / or properly addressed. Our Executive Member will consider the evidence from all aspects of the complaint to date and the actions we have taken to resolve it, to determine whether we have dealt with your complaint correctly and fairly. We aim to resolve any complaint lodged with our Executive Team within 20 working days. We will inform you of the Executive Member's decision within one working day of the decision being made. This stage in the complaints process is final and will complete Internet Business School internal complaints procedures. No further complaint on the same matter will be accepted.

4.2 Exceptions to stated timescales

The timescales relating to each stage of the complaints process are outlined above. Please note that in some cases, particularly where the complaint may be complex, the complaint may take longer than the stated working days to investigate and / or resolve. In such instances, we will advise you of the reasons why and of the revised timescale.

Section 5 Outcome of the Complaint

If we uphold your complaint, we will tell you what remedy we propose. The remedy chosen will be proportionate and appropriate to the issue being complained about and may include:

- An apology; and / or an explanation of any poor service you have received; and / or
- An explanation of how a matter has been or may be rectified; and / or
- Recommendations to change or improve our processes or procedures.

Section 6 Mandatory disclosure and confidentiality

6.1 Mandatory disclosures

In awarding, it is imperative that the integrity of qualifications is maintained; for example, by ensuring learners who are awarded a certificate have a legitimate right to that certificate.

This includes the requirement that where certain things are identified (such as malpractice), or certain actions taken (such as when sanctions are applied) the regulators and other relevant AOs who may be affected (e.g. those offering similar types of qualifications via the centre) must be informed.

Depending on the seriousness of the matter, we may be required to declare to our regulators that we are no longer compliant with the requirements of the General Conditions of Recognition, due to an act or omission by you which has put us in breach. In this event, we may have regulatory action directed against us, such as Monetary Penalties

6.2 Confidentiality

We may need to access confidential information. We will ensure that such information is kept secure and only used for the purposes of the investigation and in line with relevant data protection legislation. We will not normally disclose the information to third parties unless required to do so, e.g. to our Regulators and / or the Police or other relevant and / or Statutory Bodies.

Section 7 Termination for Convenience

Our actions under this policy will be proportionate. Where possible, we will always try to work with you in resolving issues. However, nothing within this policy precludes us from invoking our right under the Centre Agreement to terminate our relationship with you.

Section 8 Contact details

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our Customer Support Team:

Email: support@internetbusinessschool.com

Telephone: 01233 226 222*

Post: Internet Business School, Bethersden, Ashford TN26 3EQ