



MERCIA PARTNERSHIP

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Mercia Partnership is committed to providing a supportive working and learning environment to enable all to achieve their goals. We strive to provide the highest quality services and to be responsive to concerns or complaints from any of our customers; whether they are of a teaching or service-related nature. Both negative and positive feedback is recognised as a valuable resource to enable us to improve the quality of our services and provision.

In order that Mercia Partnership can learn and improve because of complaints; accurate and complete records of all complaints received, resulting correspondence, interviews and actions taken will be kept. A report on complaints received and their outcomes will be submitted to the Managing Director on a monthly basis. Complaints relating to issues with a direct impact on learners' experience will be passed to the Head of Operations & Quality for consideration to help to improve customer service throughout the business. Effectiveness of the complaint's procedure will be evaluated on an annual basis by the Managing Director.

The purpose of this complaint's procedure is to enable anyone interacting with Mercia Partnership to raise matters of concern about our services or provision to our attention so that they can be investigated and resolved in the clearest and fairest way possible. In most cases this will be achieved without having to conduct the formal complaints procedure; which should be a last resort in reaching a solution.

What is a complaint?

The complaints procedure covers any expression of dissatisfaction or concern about:

- Provisions of Mercia Partnership affecting customers (applicants, learners, employers, stakeholders)
- Actions or lack of actions by Mercia Partnership or its staff
- Standards of service, courses or facilities provided by the Mercia Partnership

The procedure does not cover the following:

- Matters covered by separate policies or procedures; including Appeals Procedure, Equal Opportunities, Grievance procedure
- Judgement about individual learners' performance or awarding organisation assessment decisions
- Requests for new services or provision

This procedure is for use by any existing or prospective learners, employer or customer who seeks or receives a service from us. It also extends to anyone who may be directly affected by our services or activities. Anonymous complaints will be logged and monitored but not investigated under normal circumstances.

Confidentiality and Support

All complaints will be treated seriously, handled sensitively and with due consideration to all parties involved. In line with our equal opportunities policy, all complainants will be treated fairly and not suffer any reprimand or disadvantage as a result of making a complaint. Any person named in a complaint, however, will be informed and have a right of reply as part of the investigative process.

Complaints must be made by complainants themselves, however we recognise that some learners and vulnerable adults may have difficulties with this and so encourage them to use whatever assistance is required from a third party to make their complaint effectively.

Stage 1- Informal

The complaint should be resolved early and quickly, preferably keeping it as close to the source of the problem as possible and dealing with it by informal means. By encouraging complainants to come forward with concerns at an early stage, matters can be discussed, and any misunderstandings resolved by telephone conversation, face to face meeting, email or letter to the appropriate person.

- Informal complaints will be responded to by the appropriate person within 7 days' receipt of the complaint.
- If the problem is not resolved satisfactorily at this stage, complainants should raise the matter with the Customer Service Team. They will make enquiries and report back to the complainant on the outcome

Stage 2- Formal

Mercia Partnership recognises that informal mechanisms may not resolve all problems and that some problems may be too serious or sensitive to be dealt with by raising the issue directly with the member of staff involved. In these circumstances, the formal complaints procedure should be used.

- A formal complaint should be submitted to the Customer Service Team
- The statement of complaint should be as thorough and complete as possible and include any supporting documentation
- The Customer Service Team will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 48 hours
- The complaint will be investigated within 28 days working days of receipt and the findings recorded
- The complainant will receive confirmation of the outcome of investigation

If the complainant is **not satisfied with the response received because of Stage 2**, the complaint may be taken to **Stage 3 of the procedure**.

Stage 3- Appeal

A copy of the complaint (with any supporting evidence) should be sent to the Managing Director within 14 days of receiving the Stage 2 response. The Managing Director will hear the complaint and review the evidence. The Managing Director will investigate the complaint, including all documentary evidence.

- The Managing Director may seek to resolve the complaint based on the documentary evidence alone
- Following investigation, a written response will be produced detailing whether the complaint is upheld or not and detailing action(s) necessary to resolve the issue
- The decision of the H Managing Director is final