



Complaints Policy and Procedure; apprentices and their employers

Introduction

Inspire Middlesex College is committed to providing a high-quality educational experience fully supported by a range of academic and administrative services and facilities. It is acknowledged, however, that on occasion things can go wrong and we recognise the need for apprentices, employers and all stakeholders to be able to express their dissatisfaction where this happens through a formal complaints policy.

The complaints policy and procedure applies to apprentices and their employers and can be used for all complaints either individually or as a collective. These concerns can be, but not limited to:

- Programmes, modules, services or facilities
- Actions, or lack of actions by staff; including concerns raised in relation to apprentices and their employers
- Complaints about assessment are handled using a different procedure.

The Staff Handbook refers to policies and procedures and new staff are informed how apprentices and their employers can make complaints. This is explained during their staff induction programme. The Learner Handbook contains information on how to make a complaint and includes forms for both complaints and general feedback. A copy of the complaints' procedure is also provided to employers during apprentice on-boarding and to the apprentice, as an attachment to the Contract for Services for Employers and/or the Commitment Statement.

A copy of the policy and procedure is published on our website, which can be found here: <https://www.inspiremiddlesexcollege.co.uk/>

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the work undertaken within our training and apprenticeship training delivery service.

Our complaints procedure has two aspects;

1. Complaints about our services surrounding apprenticeship training delivery
2. Complaints about assessment which we call Appeals and appertain to complaints or queries about an assessment decision or the conduct of the formative assessment undertaken during the delivered part of an apprenticeship.
3. Complaints about end point assessment should be directed to the relevant End Point Assessment Organisation.

Complaints Procedure

This procedure is divided into two main stages; an **Informal Stage** and a **Formal Stage** which are as follows.

- Complaints can be raised verbally, in writing or by emailing:
complaints@inspiremiddlesexcollege.org
- Upon receipt of a complaint an initial acknowledgement letter/email will be sent to the apprentice or their employer within 10 working days. The letter will, additionally, contain the details of the person who will be dealing with the complaint.
- A manager will be assigned to handle the complaint or conduct an investigation, if required. They will arrange to meet with the apprentice or their employer to discuss the details in order to obtain further information in respect of the complaint.
- Statements will be requested from all named individuals in the complaint and any further witnesses may be asked to provide a statement.
- In the case of apprentices, their employer may be informed.
- If the complaint is not resolved then you can use the ESFA escalation process through the link below, and by e-mailing as per the link below:
 - [Complaints about post 16 education and training provision funded by ESFA - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complaints-about-post-16-education-and-training-provision-funded-by-esfa)
 - complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

Informal Action

Before taking any formal action, it should be considered whether the matter can be dealt with informally in the first instance.

This will consist of informal 'discussions' taking place with the apprentice or their employer to discuss the initial complaint and discuss how this can be resolved informally.

Further meetings will take place with the named individual outlining the complaint taking informal resolution into consideration. The purpose of the meeting is to reaffirm knowledge and understanding of the standards of conduct expected and to help and support and facilitate this.

Informal measures may include, but are not limited to: verbal warning, advice, coaching, counselling, training and re-training.

Informal outcomes will be confirmed in writing and kept on the apprentice learner record or employer engagement record.

Right of appeal against informal outcomes

If the apprentice or their employer remains dissatisfied with the actions taken during the informal stage, they should raise their concerns formally and in writing using the appropriate form. This will be within 10 days of the outcome being communicated either verbally or in writing.

Stage 1

This is the formal stage.

- The completed complaints form should be sent to the Quality Assurer, by emailing: complaints@inspiremiddlesexcollege.org
- The Quality Assurer will record the details of the complaint in the complaints log and an initial acknowledgement letter will be sent to the apprentice or their employer, within 10 working days. The letter will additionally contain the details of the person who will be dealing with the complaint.
- The manager assigned to the investigation will arrange to meet with the apprentice or their employer, or the stakeholder to discuss the details in order to obtain further information in respect of the complaint.
- Statements will be requested from all named individuals in the complaint and any further witnesses identified may be asked to provide a statement.
- Apprentices and their employers have the right to be accompanied by their line manager, an accredited union representative or friend during all stages.
- Following the review of all submitted statements and the evidence obtained via investigation the investigating manager will provide a report outlining the findings of investigation, outlining any recommendations.

Stage 2

If the apprentice or their employer remains dissatisfied with the outcome, he/she should notify the Quality Assurer within 10 days of receiving the response. They will either:

- Hear the case themselves
- Arrange for another senior manager, not previously involved, to hear the case
- Follow the option/stages in stage one above

- Inform the apprentice and their employer, in writing, of the outcome and of their rights.

Stage 3

If the apprentice and their employer is dissatisfied with the response, he/she has the right to refer the complaint to the Inspire Middlesex College Managing Director who will investigate.

Without prejudice to the apprentice and their employer's legal and/or statutory rights, the decision of the MD or his/her representative under stage 3 will be final.

ESFA Complaints Adjudicator

If after exhausting the Inspire Middlesex College process the apprentice or employer complainant is still not satisfied, they can also contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) who will investigate complaints about post 16 education and training provision funded by ESFA.

Email: complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk, or put them in a letter to:

Customer Service Team,
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT.

Please note that the ESFA will not usually investigate complaints more than 12 months after the original decision or action has been taken. For further information on how ESFA handle complaints please see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-post-16-education-and-training-provision-funded-by-esfa>

Recording of Feedback and Complaints

A formal record of all complaints investigated under the Inspire Middlesex College procedure will be kept by the Quality Assurer and recorded in a central Complaints Log.

Monitoring of Complaints

Senior managers review the Complaints Log at regular team meetings. Analysis of complaints feeds into our quality and/or continuous improvement plan, and, where necessary, may be entered into the Risk Register and resultant risks will be accorded a rag rating and mitigating actions.

Forms

Completed Complaints Forms should be forwarded to the Quality Assurer
complaints@inspiremiddlesexcollege.org

Review and Updates

A review date is included in the document control box which is on the front page of this plan.

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months or in the event of: (a) publication of new guidelines/official communications (b) any incident being reported, upon its conclusion; whichever is the sooner. It will also be amended as appropriate to meet the demands of future legislation.

Appendix A:
Inspire Middlesex College Complaint Form

<u>Complaint Form for apprentices and their employers</u>	
Name:	Course:
Date:	Staff Member/Assessor:
Address:	Telephone Number: Email:
Details/Nature of Complaint:	
Signature	Date: