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Complaints Policy

Introduction

A complaint arises when someone feels that an aspect of our service to them is unsatisfactory and should be investigated. It is expected that many concerns can be resolved at the point at which they arise by the person directly concerned, overcoming the need to formally record a matter of a complaint. Most complaints or grievances can be resolved by discussing the issue with the person directly involved usually with an appropriate member of staff. If the issue cannot be resolved a complaint can be made.

Policy Statement

Debut seeks to provide all its clients (whether visitors, employees, employers or learners) with the best possible service across the whole range of its activities and respond swiftly with any complaints and within realistic timescales. We will monitor the types and numbers of complaints we receive to identify any trends and/or problems which will allow us to continually improve our service provision. We will not process any anonymous complaints as these do not allow us to implement resolutions. Our complaints procedure is not intended for appeals against the decision of an Independent Assessment Authority or for matters related to unacceptable social behaviour by a member of staff or associate. Please refer to the relevant Grievance Procedure for additional guidance. Any complaint with regard to assessment practice must be made through the correct Assessment Appeals Procedure. There are two stages under this complaints policy and we would recommend that Stage 1 is attempted in order to resolve matters informally.

Once a complaint has been made it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

Definitions

A “complaint” can be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction’ towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.

A “concern” can be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt’ where reassurance is required.

A “grievance” is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the academy has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. These can be dealt with in line with the Company’s Grievance Policy.

Unreasonable Complaints

These include:

- Vexatious complaints.
- Are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
- Insist upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.
- Insist upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.
- Are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
- Demand for redress which lacks any serious purpose or value.

- Serial or persistent complaints.
- Are duplicated, sent by the same complainant once the initial complaint has been closed. Duplicate complaints are identical complaints received from the complainant's spouse, partner, grandparent, child. These complaints will not be addressed again, the individual making the second complaint will be informed that the complaint has been dealt with.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2002
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Equality Act 2010
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- EFSA (2015) 'Creating an academy complaint procedure'

STAGE 1

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the problem. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly, and do so if possible so that a formal complaint is not necessary. If this route is undertaken, the meeting between any parties should be minuted and logged, including matters raised and any follow up action that will be taken. It should also be recorded if the complainant feels this route has been unsatisfactory and reasons they have given. If the complaint is of a serious nature, then Stage 1 will not be suitable or appropriate.

STAGE 2

If the complainant feels the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1, they can request that the complaint is investigated formally under Stage 2, and this will involve completing a complaints form and submitting it, allowing the investigative process to take its course.

Confidentiality

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

Scope of Policy

The Debut complaints procedure aims to:

- Be accessible and well-publicised.
- Be simple to understand and use.
- Allow speedy handling with established time limits for action, and to keep people informed of progress.

- Ensure a full and fair investigation without recrimination.
- Encourage reconciliation. Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress.
- Provide information/feedback to management so that services can continually be improved.
- Debut will be responsible for ensuring that this procedure operates without fear of recrimination or retribution against the complainant.
- That all matters of complaint are dealt in accordance with our Equality and Diversity policy.

Responsibility and Authority

Debut has ultimate responsibility for staff, learner, employers and visitors and will ensure that the arrangements for overseeing complaints are effective, robust and reviewed on a regular basis. As such two senior members of staff have been designated as Complaints Personnel.

The designated complaints personnel are:

1. Carla Hales
Director
01268 560552
Carla@debutacademy.com

2. Linda Edwards
General Manager
01268 560552
linda@debutacademy.com

Complaints Form

If a person has a complaint they wish to raise, they must request a complaints form, which can be obtained from the Centre Manager or other Senior Manager. On completion, this must be submitted to either designated complaint personnel listed below. This form will ask for the complainant to explain the nature of the complaint they wish to raise; they may also include any desired outcome they are hoping for. The designated member of staff will then become the main complaint handler and will complete the any relevant areas of the complaint form. The complaint handler may instruct other key staff to be included in the investigation process. The complaint handler, upon assessing the complaint form, may request full details in writing of any supporting evidence from the complainant which may not have been attached to the form. A full investigation will be carried out and outcome will be relayed resolution actions will be discussed with the complainant and when agreed, these will be implemented. If an agreement cannot be reached the complaint will be forwarded to Debut's Director, Carla Hales. Dependent on the nature of the complaint it may be necessary to design and then implement preventative measures to ensure further complaints of the same nature are not received. Once all parties are satisfied and preventative measures (if required) are implemented, the Director will close the complaint.

Complaints Handling Timeframe

Formal Complaint submitted on Debut Complaint Form

Receipt is acknowledged by Debut within 48 hours of receipt in writing. The acknowledgement will provide contact details of the person(s) handling the complaint, how the complaint will be dealt with and how long it is expected to take.

Duration of Investigation

Formal complaints submitted on a complaints form are investigated and resolved within 14 days.

Extensive Investigations

Complaint investigations may take longer if there are extensive investigation interviews or specialised advice that is required to be sought.

Complaint not resolved within 20 days

If at the 20-day period the investigation into the complaint is still ongoing, the complainant and anyone else involved in the investigation will be provided with an interim update.

Complaint Handling

The complaint coordinator will:

- Ensure that all parties involved in the complaint are fully updated at specific stages.
- Keep up-to-date records of the procedure and with Data Protection guidelines upheld.
- Record the complaint on the relevant current Complaint Log.
- Liaise with all parties involved to ensure the complaints procedure runs smoothly, including informing any Governors.
- Ensure, where the complainant is dissatisfied with the response, they are allowed to escalate it to the next stage and are provided the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.
- Be aware of issues with regard to sharing third party information.
- Understand the complainant's need for additional support, including interpretation support and will be aware of any issues concerning this.
- Provide a sensitive and thorough interviewing process of the complainant to establish what has happened and who is involved.
- Consider all records, evidence and relevant information provided.
- Interviewing all parties that are involved in the complaint, including staff and other pupils.
- Analysing information in a comprehensive and fair manner.
- Liaising with the complainant and any other complaints coordinators to clarify the appropriate resolution to the problem.
- Identifying and recommending solutions and courses of actions to take.
- Being mindful of timescales and ensuring all parties involved are aware of these timescales.
- Responding to the complainant in a clear and understandable manner, informing them if the complaint has been upheld in whole or part or not dismissed.
- Allowing parents/guardians to accompany any meetings if the complainant is under 18 years.

Employment Related Complaints

If a staff member has a specific related complaint relating to their employment this is dealt with under our appointed HR company and their procedures and will involve precise routes to follow, accompanied by documentary evidence/letters and any meetings that may be necessary.

Anonymous Complaints

Debut will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Directors of Debut will determine if the complaint warrants an investigation.

If you are unhappy with the outcome

Before escalating any complaints, you should first complain to the academy and follow their complaints procedure in full. The DfE cannot change an academy's decision about a complaint. Their role is to make sure the academy handles your complaint properly. You should seek further guidance at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy#contacting-dfe>

Linked Policies

Please refer to Debut's linked policies below for additional information regarding Complaints Standards:

- Academic & Vocational Appeals Policy
- Access to Fair Assessment Policy
- Confidentiality & Disclosure Policy
- Communications Policy
- Code of Conduct – Staff Policy
- Code of Conduct – Learner Policy
- Communications Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equal Opportunities & Inclusion Policy
- Employer (Work Based) Support & Expectation Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Grading, Academic Standards & Feedback Policy
- Guidance Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- IAG Policy
- Induction Procedure – Staff Policy
- Induction Procedure – Learner Policy
- Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Policy
- Learner Safeguarding & Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Meetings Policy
Mentoring – Staff Policy
Mentoring – Learner Policy
Observation of Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy
Off-site Educational Trip & In Workplace Tutoring Policy
Prevent Policy
Promoting Fundamental British Values Policy
Quality Assurance Policy
Questionnaire & Feedback Policy
Right to Search Policy
Review & Appraisal – Staff Policy
Review & Appraisal – Learner Policy
Safer Recruitment Policy
Staff Confidentiality Policy
Security of Premises Policy
Teaching & Learning Policy
Testing & Invigilation Policy
Termination of Work Policy
Whistle Blowing Policy

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