

Complaints Policy and Procedure

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Approved By:	Group Chief Executive Officer
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Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	06/08/2024	Sophie Gilmore	Initial policy creation
1.1	26/08/2025	Patsy Crocker	Updated email address for complaints
2.0	Jan 2026	Sophie Gilmore	Major revision: expanded scope, detailed procedure with timeframes, responsibilities, external escalation routes, quality improvement framework

1. Purpose

Hybrid Training Centre (HTC) is committed to providing high-quality training and services to all stakeholders. This policy establishes a clear, fair, and accessible process for handling complaints, ensuring that concerns are addressed promptly and effectively.

HTC values feedback, including complaints, as an opportunity to improve services and maintain the trust of learners, apprentices, employers, and other stakeholders. We are committed to:

- Making it easy and straightforward to raise concerns
- Responding to complaints promptly and keeping complainants informed
- Investigating complaints thoroughly and fairly
- Resolving complaints at the earliest possible stage
- Learning from complaints to improve our services
- Treating all parties with respect throughout the process

2. Scope

2.1 Who Can Complain

This policy covers complaints from anyone who receives, requests, or is affected by HTC's services, including:

- Learners and apprentices
- Parents or guardians of learners (particularly those under 18)

- Employers of apprentices
- Prospective learners or employers
- Members of the public affected by HTC's activities
- Partner organisations

2.2 What Can Be Complained About

A complaint may relate to:

- The quality or standard of training, teaching, or assessment
- The quality of facilities or learning resources
- Treatment by, attitude, or behaviour of HTC staff
- Failure to follow administrative processes or procedures
- Communication or lack of communication
- Failure to deliver services as described or contracted
- Health and safety concerns

2.3 What This Policy Does Not Cover

This policy does not cover:

- Appeals against assessment decisions (see Appeals Policy)
- Matters subject to other specific procedures (disciplinary, grievance, malpractice)
- Complaints about matters that occurred more than 3 months ago (unless there are exceptional circumstances)
- Complaints that have already been fully investigated under this policy
- Anonymous complaints (although these may be noted for monitoring purposes)

3. Key Definitions

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction about HTC's services, actions, or lack of action that requires a response.

Complainant: The individual or organisation making the complaint.

Investigating Officer: The member of staff appointed to investigate a formal complaint.

Working days: Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays and HTC closure days.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Chief Operating Officer (Policy Owner)

- Overall responsibility for the complaints policy and procedure
- Ensuring complaints are investigated and resolved appropriately
- Appointing Investigating Officers for formal complaints
- Reviewing Stage 3 appeals
- Reporting to the Senior Leadership Team on complaints data and trends
- Ensuring learning from complaints informs service improvement

4.2 Head of Quality

- Maintaining the Complaints Register
- Tracking complaint handling against timeframes
- Analysing complaints data for quality improvement
- Coordinating responses to external bodies

4.3 All Staff

- Treating complainants with courtesy and respect
- Attempting to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity
- Escalating complaints they cannot resolve
- Cooperating with complaint investigations
- Maintaining confidentiality

5. Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure has three internal stages, with external escalation routes available after internal processes are exhausted.

STAGE 1: INFORMAL RESOLUTION

Timeframe: Resolution within 5 working days

Most concerns can be resolved quickly and informally by speaking directly to the relevant member of staff or their line manager.

The complainant should:

- Raise the concern with the staff member involved, or their manager
- Explain the issue clearly and what outcome they are seeking

The staff member will attempt to resolve the matter immediately or within 5 working days. If resolved, no further action is required.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may proceed to Stage 2.

STAGE 2: FORMAL COMPLAINT

Timeframe: Acknowledgement within 48 hours; Investigation outcome within 10 working days

If Stage 1 does not resolve the matter, the complainant may submit a formal written complaint to:
quality@hybridtec.co.uk

The complaint should include:

- Full name and contact details
- Description of the complaint and relevant dates
- Any previous attempts to resolve the matter
- Any supporting evidence
- The outcome the complainant is seeking

Process:

1. Acknowledgement sent within 48 hours confirming receipt and the Investigating Officer
2. Investigation conducted by a member of the Senior Leadership Team
3. Complainant may be contacted for further information
4. Written outcome provided within 10 working days, stating whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld, with reasons

If the investigation cannot be completed within 10 working days, the complainant will be informed of the delay and given a revised timeline.

STAGE 3: APPEAL / REVIEW

Timeframe: Submit within 10 working days of Stage 2 outcome; Decision within 7 working

days

If dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome, the complainant may request a review. An appeal will only be considered if:

- There is new evidence that was not available at Stage 2
- There is evidence that the procedure was not followed correctly
- The outcome was unreasonable given the evidence

The appeal will be reviewed by the COO (or Group CEO if the COO was the original Investigating Officer). The decision is final within HTC's internal process.

The complainant will be informed of external escalation routes in the outcome letter.

6. Timeframes Summary

Stage	Response Time	Resolution Time
Stage 1: Informal	Immediate	5 working days
Stage 2: Formal	48 hours acknowledgement	10 working days
Stage 3: Appeal	48 hours acknowledgement	7 working days

7. External Escalation

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after completing HTC's internal complaints procedure, they may escalate their complaint to external bodies, depending on the nature of the complaint:

7.1 Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

For complaints relating to apprenticeship delivery or funded provision:

- ESFA Complaints Team
- Website: gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency
- The ESFA will only consider complaints after the provider's internal process has been exhausted

7.2 Awarding Organisations

For complaints relating to qualifications or certification:

- City & Guilds: Customer Relations Team
- Pearson: Customer Services
- Contact details are available on each awarding organisation's website

7.3 End-Point Assessment Organisations

For complaints relating to End-Point Assessment:

- Contact the relevant EPAO directly using their published complaints procedure

7.4 Ofsted

Ofsted does not normally investigate individual complaints but may use information to inform future inspections:

- Website: [gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

8. Support for Complainants

HTC will:

- Provide assistance to complainants who need help submitting their complaint (e.g., those with additional needs or limited English)
- Allow complainants to be accompanied by a friend, family member, or advocate at meetings
- Communicate in the complainant's preferred format where reasonable
- Provide reasonable adjustments for complainants with disabilities
- Signpost to external support or advocacy services where appropriate

9. Confidentiality

All complaints are handled with appropriate confidentiality. Information is shared only with those who need to know for the purposes of investigating or responding to the complaint. Personal data is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR.

Complainants should be aware that in order to investigate effectively, it may be necessary to share details of the complaint with the person(s) complained about.

10. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

HTC is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. However, we reserve the right to manage complaints that are:

- Repeatedly submitted without new information
- Abusive, threatening, or harassing towards staff
- Making unreasonable demands on time or resources
- Clearly designed to cause disruption rather than address a genuine concern

In such cases, the COO may restrict the ways in which the complainant can communicate with HTC, or decline to respond further to a complaint that has already been fully addressed.

11. Recording and Monitoring

All formal complaints (Stage 2 and above) are recorded in the Complaints Register, including:

- Date received and complainant details
- Nature of the complaint
- Investigating Officer
- Outcome and any actions taken
- Timeframes achieved

Complaints data is analysed termly and reported to the Senior Leadership Team to identify trends, recurring issues, and inform service improvement.

12. Learning from Complaints

HTC views complaints as valuable feedback. Following resolution, consideration is given to:

- Whether changes are needed to policies, procedures, or practices
- Whether staff training or development is required
- Whether other learners or stakeholders may have been similarly affected

- How similar complaints can be prevented in future
- Improvements made as a result of complaints are communicated to the complainant where appropriate.

13. Related Documents

- Appeals Policy
- Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy

14. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the COO or sooner if required by changes to regulatory requirements, feedback from stakeholders, or lessons learned from complaints handling.

Policy Approval

Signature:

Date:

Sophie Gilmore

Group Chief Executive Officer