

COMPLAINTS POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

At The STC Group, we care about complaints. Complaints matter for everyone using our services, who deserve an explanation when things go wrong and want to know that steps have been taken to make it less likely to happen to anyone else. They matter because every concern or complaint is an opportunity to improve. Complaints may signal a problem and we need to know as a business how to improve at all times and at all opportunities.

Complaints matter because they tell us about the quality of our provision, service and delivery. They tell us about how responsive a member of staff is, how safe, effective, caring and well-planned they are.

The STC Group place feedback from people who use our services at the heart of our work, because every concern is an opportunity for us to improve the quality of our provision. We also want to hear about positive experiences so we can highlight good and outstanding services.

We take complaints seriously – and we expect our staff to do so too. All Learners (for the purpose of this Policy, a Learner is anyone on a STC Group Learning Programme, Traineeships and Apprentices) Inductions describe complaints handling. Poor practice will be found and acted on immediately. Good practice will be shared.

We work to make it easier to give us good quality feedback, and work with our staff/associates to improve learner's experience.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Learning Programmes, Traineeships and Apprenticeship provision provided by The STC Group. We want to provide good-quality services for everyone, but things sometimes go wrong. If they do, we need to know about them so that we can put them right and learn from them. This will help us to improve our performance.

HOW WILL WE DO THAT?

We will make it easy for Learners to make a complaint by doing the following.

Giving you the chance to make a complaint:

- in person to their Tutor/Assessor, IQA, Programme Manager or Quality Manager
- email: complaints@thestcgroup.co.uk
- by phone: 0345 565 2656
- by using the Complaint Form (attached to this policy)

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

Anyone who feels that they have had a poor service from us, or from someone providing the service for us, and have tried to get the problem solved by speaking to someone in the relevant department. This will affect you and will need a particular response from us.

WHAT HAPPENS THEN?

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and The STC Group maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

RESPONSE FROM US

We will acknowledge your complaint within **two** working days of receiving it. We will tell you the name of the person who is dealing with your complaint. You will receive a progress update with details on our approach regarding any investigations required/underway within **five** working days. We will aim to provide a full response within **ten** working days. If this is not possible, we will send you an email explaining why there is a delay and saying when you will receive a full response.

SOLUTIONS

If your complaint is upheld, STC will try to solve the problem by doing one or more of the following.

- Apologising to you and explaining what went wrong
- Providing the service, you are entitled to receive
- Changing The STC Group procedures so that the mistake is not repeated
- Asking you to detail any recommendations of areas where we can improve our performance and concerning the Information, Advice and Guidance provided.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

All Learners have the right to express dissatisfaction with the services they receive from The STC Group. Learners using this policy can expect to be treated fairly and without discrimination.

As part of the Prevent strategy we promote the Fundamental British Values to reflect life in modern Britain. These values are Democracy, Rule of Law, Respect and Tolerance, Individual Liberty. Fundamental British Values underpin what it is to be a citizen in a modern and diverse Great Britain valuing our community and celebrating diversity of the UK.

Fundamental British Values are not exclusive to being British and are shared by other democratic countries as a way of creating an orderly society, where individual members can feel safe, valued and can contribute for the good of themselves and others.

These will mirror our principles and values and all the work areas that we support. These will occur throughout our programs and will be promoted by all staff.

DISSEMINATION OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Complaints Procedure shall be:

- Included in the Learner Induction
- Discussed on training courses
- The web link will be given to every learner as part of the Induction process
<https://www.thestcgroup.co.uk/complaints-process>

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE STAGES 1 - 3

The Complaints Procedure has three stages:

- **Stage 1 - Informal** – Tutor/Assessor, IQA, Programme Manager or Quality Manager
- **Stage 2 - Formal 1** – Quality Manager
- **Stage 3 - Formal 2** – Panel (always includes The STC Group Managing Director and where relevant, if not involved in the complaint, the Quality Manager, Programme Manager, Internal Quality Assurer and/or Tutor/Assessor for the relevant area any further staff as necessary, ie Administration Manager)

Stage 1 - **INFORMAL**

Wherever possible, The STC Group will endeavour to resolve any Learner issues or concerns in an informal manner to the full satisfaction of the Learner, within ten working days. Learners who wish to raise issues or concerns should be encouraged to speak directly with their Tutor/Assessor in the first instance where this is feasible. If the Learner has an issue or concern about the conduct or behaviour of a Tutor/Assessor they may wish to speak directly to either their IQA or Programme Manager for the relevant area. Should a Learner have an issue or concern regarding an IQA or a Programme Manager they may request an informal meeting directly with the Quality Manager. The purpose of the meeting is to enable the Learner to talk through and clarify any issues or concerns that they may have; a written record will be kept of such meetings and any correspondence trails, ie email conversations. Please note the Learner is able to request or be given The STC Group Complaints Policy and Complaints Form at this stage.

Stage 2 - **FORMAL 1**

If the matter is not resolved to the full satisfaction of the Learner at Stage 1 - Informal, the STC staff member who undertook the initial meeting with the Learner or the Learner themselves, should then refer the matter to the Quality Manager. The Quality Manager will investigate with the staff member in question and/or the Learner directly, to explore the learner's complaint. The Learner will be given The STC Group Complaints Policy and Complaints Form at this stage and requested to complete this in full. If requested STC will support the learner in the preparation of their written report/account of the issue/complaint by providing a representative.

A written record of all discussions, emails and completed Complaints Form, will be held and added onto The STC Group's Complaints Log. This should outline any actions and timescales agreed. The Quality Manager will report all back to the Learner verbally and in writing. If subsequent action fails to resolve the matter, within the timescale, then the Learner has the right to initiate Stage 3 – Formal 2 Formal Complaint.

Stage 3 - **FORMAL 2**

In the rare occasion when the Learners complaint has not been resolved at Stage 2 – Formal 1, the complaint is lodged in writing with The STC Managing Director.

The Managing Director:

- Formally acknowledges receipt of the complaint with the Learner
- The Managing Director will endeavour to resolve the Learners issue or concerns where possible, prior to progressing onto
- Setting a date and holding a meeting with the Learner and relevant Panel Members (this may include Quality Manager, Programme Manager, IQA and/or Tutor/Assessor for the relevant area any further staff as necessary, ie Administration Manager) for the complaint to be considered in full
- Arranges with the LIQA for External Quality Assurer/Awarding Organisation to be notified of receipt of complaint being lodged and gives details eg how it will be heard, including the composition of the complaint panel.

We would request that the Learner substantiates any complaints or allegations with as much written factual evidence as they can. It might be that we contact the Learner (always endeavouring to make contact using the Learners preferred method of communication) for further information if required in order to investigate any complaint raised, and contact details should be recorded on the Complaints Form. This will assist in reaching a speedy conclusion to the complaint.

The complaint panel will meet to consider the complaint.

COMPLAINTS PANEL

The panel shall be small and formed so as to be objective and independent and will normally consist of:

- Managing Director
- Quality Manager
- Programme Manager

It may also include, only if necessary, applicable and not involved in the complaint ...

- IQA
- Administration Manager
- Tutor / Assessor for the relevant Learner

The panel will ensure that:

- It has full accounts from all parties involved
- It will not have as members anyone involved in the complaint
- They will inform the Learner that they have the right to be accompanied in the Panel meeting.

OUTCOME

The outcome of the complaint shall also be recorded, together with reasons for that decision, with the outcome falling into one of the following categories:

- Complaint resolved informally
- Complaint dismissed
- Complaint to be dealt with under another procedure

- Complaint upheld and the appropriate action deemed to be one of:
 - Counselling
 - Training
 - General supervision
 - Other management action including disciplinary

FURTHER INFORMATION

Education and Skills Funding Agency Complaints:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>

Awarding Body Complaints:

Contacts for each awarding organisations available from the Lead Internal Quality Assurer.

ASSESSMENT EXAMINATION OR EPA DECISION APPEALS

The STC Group aims to provide a high-quality service to all our Learners. However occasionally, individuals may be unhappy about some aspect of their training or assessment which may give rise to concern. Each Learner has the right to appeal against an assessment decision if they feel that a decision is unfair.

This process is designed to ensure concerns are dealt with effectively and in the shortest possible time.

HOW DO I APPEAL – ASSESSMENT / FEEDBACK

If you feel that you have been wrongly or unfairly treated, you should, in the first instance, speak to the Tutor/Assessor concerned to try and resolve the problem informally within 2 weeks of the assessment/feedback taking place.

- If the issue remains unresolved then the learner should submit a formal letter of appeal to an Internal Quality Assurer (within two weeks of feedback provided), with the details of the qualifications and any supporting evidence.
- If the appeal remains unresolved as a result of the Internal Quality Assurer's review of the evidence provided, the appeal will then be referred to the relevant Programme Manager.
- A panel made up of Senior Leadership Team in consultation with the Internal Quality Assurer and Tutor/Assessor will meet to judge the evidence within 30 days of escalation.
- Within seven days of receipt of the decision made by the above the Programme Manager will advise the Learner of the decision in writing.
- Should the Learner remain unhappy with the decision then the Learner has the right to appeal to the relevant awarding organisation/EPA, within 7 days.
- The awarding organisation/EPA decision is final.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Lead Internal Quality Assurer will monitor the Appeals Procedure, in order to ensure that quality standards and the effectiveness of the procedure are maintained.

The Lead Internal Quality Assurer will ensure that records on any matters related to the Appeals Procedure are maintained. These records will be held securely and remain confidential to the parties involved.

FURTHER POINTS TO RAISE

- If at any stage of the Appeal you require any guidance, support or further assistance you should speak to a member of the Senior Management Team, i.e. relevant STC Programme Manager. Staff could speak to their Line Manager (if appropriate). Any help you seek will be in the strictest confidence.
- It is important that if you make the decision to appeal you appreciate that no one will proceed further without your agreement. If you feel your concern has been resolved, you can withdraw at any stage.
- Any Learner who thinks that there are circumstances outside the course. Such as health or personal problems, which could adversely affect their performance in any form of assessment should bring these to the attention of the Tutor/Assessor as soon as possible before the relevant assessment.
- Any Learner who believes that the assessment is taking place in conditions, that could significantly adversely affect their performance, should bring these to the attention of the Tutor/Assessor at the time of the assessment.

Office Use:

Policy Name: STC Group Complaints Policy		Version Number	6
Review Date	26 July 2024	Reviewer	Darren Shanley
Approved Date	26 July 2024	Next Review Date	July 2025
Approved By	Mark Eighteen Managing Director		

The STC Group CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS FORM

Name:	
Email:	
Company Name: (if applicable)	
Address:	
Telephone Number:	
Which Programme/Service is your complaint about?	
Type of complaint:	
How do you think we should respond to your complaint? (please use this section to tell us what you think we should do about your complaint)	
Please detail any recommendations of areas where we can improve our performance concerning the information, advice and guidance given	

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date complaint received:	
Complaint to be dealt with by:	
Complaint added to Complaints Log	
Date complaint resolved:	