

Complaints Policy and Procedure

The Development Manager Ltd (TDM) is committed to delivering a high-quality, fair and accessible service to apprentices, learners, employers, applicants, partners and other stakeholders. We welcome feedback and encourage people to tell us when things have gone wrong, when expectations have not been met, or where our services could be improved.

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response. TDM takes complaints seriously, handles them fairly and proportionately, and uses the outcomes to improve delivery, learner experience, employer experience and organisational practice.

This policy should be read alongside related TDM policies where relevant, including the Appeals Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Access and Reasonable Adjustments Policy, Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy, Behaviour Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Data Protection Policy and any applicable university partner, awarding organisation or assessment organisation procedures.

This aim of this policy is to provide a clear, timely and transparent route for raising, recording, investigating, resolving and learning from complaints, while signposting learners, apprentices and employers to the correct external escalation route where needed.

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What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about TDM's service, actions, omissions, staff conduct, communication, administration, learning experience, support arrangements, employer-facing service or any other matter where the complainant expects TDM to respond.

TDM will normally consider complaints from learners, apprentices, applicants, employers, parents or carers where appropriate, authorised representatives, partner organisations, customers and other stakeholders who receive or are affected by TDM services.

What This Policy Covers

This policy covers complaints about: the standard or quality of service provided by TDM; the behaviour, communication or conduct of TDM staff; action or lack of action by managers, coaches, tutors, administrators or other staff; access to learning, support or information; administration or communication failures; delivery arrangements; and any matter affecting an individual or group where TDM has responsibility.

Where a complaint includes safeguarding, harassment, bullying, discrimination, data protection, academic integrity, assessment appeal, malpractice, whistleblowing or staff conduct concerns, TDM will consider which policy or process is most appropriate. Where more than one process applies, TDM will explain which elements will be managed under each route.

What This Policy Does Not Cover

This policy does not normally cover: appeals against assessment grades or academic decisions; requests to change an assessment outcome without evidence of service failure; matters that have already been fully investigated through this policy; employment disputes between an apprentice and their employer; complaints about a university partner, awarding organisation, assessment organisation or other external body where that organisation owns the decision or process; or matters better handled through safeguarding, whistleblowing, disciplinary, malpractice, reasonable adjustments, special considerations or data protection procedures.

Anonymous complaints may be limited where TDM cannot obtain further information or provide an outcome response. However, TDM will still consider whether an anonymous concern identifies safeguarding risk, serious misconduct, discrimination, harassment, bullying, criminal activity, malpractice, data protection risk, public funding risk or another matter requiring action.

Our Standards for Handling Complaints

TDM will treat complainants with courtesy, respect and fairness and will expect all parties to communicate respectfully throughout the process.

TDM will acknowledge formal written complaints within 2 business days. Where a concern is initially received verbally, staff will record the information and ask the complainant to confirm the complaint in writing where this is reasonably possible. Reasonable adjustments will be made where a complainant cannot provide information in writing.

TDM will aim to provide a full response within 5 working days where the matter can be resolved quickly. Where investigation is required, TDM will provide updates and aim to conclude the complaint as soon as reasonably possible, and no later than 8 weeks from receipt unless exceptional circumstances apply.

TDM will explain delays, provide a revised response date where needed, and keep a clear record of actions, decisions, evidence reviewed and the final outcome.

Third Party and Representative Complaints

A third party may act on behalf of a complainant where the complainant has provided written authority, or where TDM has another lawful basis to communicate with that person. Representatives may include parents or carers, employers, advice organisations, solicitors, support workers, advocates or legally empowered attorneys.

Where a complaint is made on behalf of a learner or apprentice, TDM may need the learner/apprentice's permission before sharing personal information or progressing the complaint with the representative. Where safeguarding or legal duties apply, TDM will act in line with relevant policies and legislation.

Confidentiality, Data Protection and Record Keeping

Complaints will be handled confidentially and in line with data protection legislation. Information will be shared only with those who need it to investigate, respond, support the individuals involved, meet legal or regulatory duties, or take improvement action.

TDM will retain complaint records securely in line with internal retention requirements. Records will include the complaint received, acknowledgement, investigation notes, evidence reviewed, outcome, any appeal or escalation, and recommendations following complaint (RFC) where appropriate.

Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments

TDM is committed to making the complaints process accessible. If a complainant needs the policy in another format, help to put a complaint in writing, support to understand the process, or reasonable adjustments because of disability, learning need, health, language or other barrier, TDM will consider and arrange reasonable support.

Learners, apprentices and employers can ask for support through complaints@tdm.co.uk, their coach, support team contact or another appropriate TDM staff member.

Safeguarding, Welfare, Harassment and Serious Concerns

If a complaint indicates that a child, young person, adult at risk, learner, apprentice or staff member may be at risk of harm, TDM will refer the matter to safeguarding immediately and will not wait for the complaints process to conclude.

Complaints involving bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, victimisation, hate incidents, coercion, abuse of power, professional boundary concerns or unsafe workplace culture may be handled alongside or through the relevant TDM policy, with safeguarding involvement where needed.

Where a complaint raises possible criminal conduct, immediate danger, serious safeguarding risk or urgent welfare risk, TDM may need to contact or signpost to external agencies such as emergency services, local authority services, police, partner university safeguarding teams, employers, funding bodies or regulators.

Our Commitment and Remedies

When TDM gets something wrong, we will aim to accept responsibility, explain what happened where appropriate, apologise where appropriate, put things right where possible, and take action to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Remedies may include: a meaningful apology; clarification or correction of information; review of a decision or process; additional support or communication; adjustment to learning, coaching or administrative arrangements; referral to another policy or external body; staff training, supervision or management action; process changes; update to guidance, VLE content, communications or templates; or a recommendation following complaint (RFC) added to quality improvement monitoring.

Unreasonable, Vexatious or Persistent Behaviour

TDM will process complaints fairly even where the complaint is difficult or sensitive. However, staff should not be subjected to abusive, threatening, discriminatory, harassing or unreasonably persistent behaviour.

Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, TDM may set communication boundaries, identify a single point of contact, restrict the format or frequency of communication, or take other proportionate action while still ensuring the complaint is considered appropriately.

Continuous Quality Improvement and Governance

The Quality Manager and Operations Director will review the Complaints Log monthly. Quarterly reports will be prepared for the leadership team and governors, including numbers, categories, themes, outcomes, upheld complaints where recorded, timeliness and improvement actions.

The leadership and management team will monitor complaints data to identify systemic issues, repeated themes, equality or accessibility concerns, safeguarding links, learner-experience risks, employer-experience risks, programme-specific issues and opportunities for staff development.

Recommendations following complaint (RFCs) will be added to the quality improvement plan or relevant improvement tracker and reviewed for impact.

Complaints Procedure

The steps below apply to formal complaints. Where a concern can be resolved informally and the complainant is satisfied, TDM may still record the concern and any improvement action where this is useful for quality assurance.

Stage	Action	Expected timescale	Record / output
1. Complaint received	Complaints are received by email, telephone, in writing, through staff, or through an appropriate learner/employer route. TDM is normally the first point of contact for complaints about TDM services or programmes.	As soon as received	Complaint recorded or passed to the appropriate manager / complaints lead.
2. Written details confirmed	Where possible, the complainant is asked to provide name, contact details, programme or organisation, details of the issue, dates, people involved, supporting evidence and desired outcome. Reasonable adjustments will be made where written submission is a barrier.	At the start of the process	Written complaint or written record of verbal complaint.
3. Acknowledge and allocate	TDM acknowledges the complaint, confirms who is handling it, explains the process, and identifies whether another policy or external route is also relevant.	Within 2 business days	Acknowledgement email or letter.
4. Investigate and resolve	The relevant manager or delegated staff member gathers information, reviews records and speaks to relevant people. The IDS approach (Issue Identification, Discussion, Solution) may be used to identify root cause and remedy.	Full response within 5 working days where possible. Complex cases may take longer, up to 8 weeks maximum, unless exceptional circumstances apply.	Investigation notes, evidence reviewed, outcome decision and remedy.
5. Final response	TDM sends a written outcome explaining the complaint decision, any remedy, any improvement action, and what to do if the complainant remains dissatisfied.	At the end of the investigation	Final response and completion of complaints log.
6. Internal review / appeal	If the complainant is unhappy with how the complaint was handled, they may request an internal review. The request should explain why they believe the process was not	Request within 28 days of the final response.	Internal review outcome.

	followed, evidence was not considered, or the outcome was unreasonable.		
7. External escalation	Where the complaints have exhausted TDM's process and remains dissatisfied, they may be signposted to the relevant external organisation depending on programme type and complaint subject.	After TDM procedure and any internal review are exhausted, unless serious safeguarding or regulatory issues require earlier referral.	Evidence of completion of TDM process and signposting provided.

How to Make a Complaint

Formal complaints and requests for review should be sent to:

complaints@tdm.co.uk

Alternatively, complainants may call 0333 101 0040 or write to: TDM, Quality Manager, County House, St Mary's Street, Worcester, WR1 1HB.

To help TDM investigate, complainants should include: full name and contact details; programme, employer or organisation where relevant; what happened; when and where it happened; who was involved; any supporting documents or evidence; what has already been done to try to resolve the issue; and the resolution sought.

Appealing or Reviewing the Outcome of a Complaint

If the complainant is dissatisfied with how TDM handled their complaint, they may request an internal review within 28 days of the final response. The review will normally be considered by a senior leader who was not directly responsible for the original investigation where this is practicable.

Requests for internal review should be sent to the Managing Director / Director of Studies:

derrin.kent@tdm.co.uk

Escalating Complaints to External Organisations

Where a complaint cannot be resolved through TDM's internal procedure, and the complainant is enrolled on a publicly funded, apprenticeship, Skills Bootcamp, university-affiliated or externally certificated programme, they may be able to escalate the matter to the relevant external organisation. TDM's complaint procedure, including internal review where applicable, should normally be completed first.

Programme / issue type	External route	Notes
DfE-funded post-16 education, training or apprenticeships	DfE Customer Help Portal: https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/	DfE normally expects the provider complaints procedure and any appeal to be exhausted. DfE

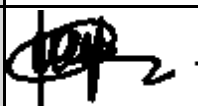
		can review whether the provider followed its procedure but does not normally re-investigate the whole complaint.
Apprenticeship Service support	Apprenticeship Service Support: 08000 150 600 or helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk	Useful where the complaint relates to apprenticeship service access or apprenticeship service support rather than the substantive provider investigation.
West Midlands Combined Authority funded Skills Bootcamps	customerservices@wmca.org.uk or Customer Relations, 16 Summer Lane, Birmingham, B19 3SD	Use where the Skills Bootcamp is funded by WMCA and TDM's process has been exhausted.
University of Staffordshire partnership provision	https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/complaints-and-appeals-procedure	Use where the concern relates to a University of Staffordshire partnered programme and is eligible for university escalation.
University of Worcester partnership provision	https://www.worcester.ac.uk/about/university-information/who-we-are/university-policies-and-procedures.aspx	Use where the concern relates to a University of Worcester partnered programme and is eligible for university escalation. You will need your university login to access or contact support@tdm.co.uk for help.
Higher education or degree apprenticeship student complaint after university process	Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA): https://www.oiahe.org.uk/	Use where the matter falls within higher education student complaint routes after the relevant university process has been completed.
Ofsted-inspected provision	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure	Ofsted states that, for FE or apprenticeship complaints, the provider's complaints procedure should

		be followed first; unresolved complaints are usually directed to DfE route.
Safeguarding, prevent, criminal or immediate risk concerns	TDM safeguarding route or emergency/external agency route as appropriate	Do not wait for the complaints process where someone may be at risk of harm or immediate action is required.

Related Policies and Procedures

- Appeals Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Access and Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Behaviour or Code of Conduct Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Assessment Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Information Security Policy
- Employer Engagement Policy

Document Management

Document Name and Reference	Complaints Policy and Procedure -TDMPP005
Classification	External
Policy Ownership	This policy is owned by all relevant staff at TDM
Policy lead originator and point of contact in relation to its content:	Elizabeth Hoyos Operations Director
TDM policy and procedure approval	Elizabeth Hoyos-Operations Director
Signature	
Date	21 st January 2022

Version Control					
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21/02/12	1		Issued	DK, EH	Annually
21/02/12	7	25/06/19	Reviewed	EH	January 2020
21/02/12	8	31/01/20	Reviewed	EH	January 2021
21/02/12	9	11/02/21	Added managers contact details	JJ	January 2022
21/02/12	10	21/01/22	Changed managers contact details to a group email: complaints@tdm.co.uk Procedure simplification of steps. Addition of funding bodies details (WMCA & DfE)	EH, JJ	January 2023
21/02/12	11	30/05/23	- Added appeals for assessment gradings to the list of what is not covered in this policy - Updated job title from Operations Manager to Director of Operations - Added link to Website for Complaints procedure. - Updated 'The TDM leadership and management team will monitor and analyse the complaints log on a quarterly basis' to a monthly basis - Changed 'Staff member receiving the complaint must also immediately log it in the "complaints log" (found in TDM's intranet) and advise the relevant manager.' To 'Any complaints received via a staff member should be put in writing using the complaints email above so that it is picked up and added by management into the complaints log.'	CB	May 2024
21/02/12	12	14/08/24	- Updated the person responsible for complaints - Removed reference to AEB - Updated ESFA complaints email address	CB/JJ	August 2025
21/02/12	13	17/06/25	- Added in Step 1 the procedure for University Partners. - Removed reference to DfE funded Skills Bootcamp - Removed reference to ESFA and updated contact details. - Added in University contact information - Updated name of Equality and Diversity policy	CB	June 2026
21/02/12	14	21/07/26	Strengthened scope; clarified complaints versus appeals, safeguarding, harassment, malpractice and external-body routes; added reasonable adjustments; updated DfE post-16 complaints escalation wording; added OIA signposting for HE/degree apprenticeship matters; strengthened governance, record keeping and quality improvement links	CB	July 2027

*Significant changes or reviewed