

## Complaints Policy

<b>Last reviewed</b>	May 2023
<b>Next review due</b>	November 2023
<b>Responsible division</b>	Programmes Division, School Partnerships Division, Human Resources
<b>Responsible director</b>	Senior Director, Programme Operations & Delivery
<b>Applies to</b>	All external stakeholders who engage with Ambition Institute
<b>Exceptions</b>	None
<b>Audience</b>	Shared with all staff, external contractors involved in assessment processes, all participants and all delivery partners
<b>Applicable laws</b>	Data Protection Act 2018; General Data Protection Regulation
<b>Other relevant regulations</b>	N/A

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### 1. Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all stakeholders and participants can log a formal or informal complaint should they have a need to, and that all complaints are dealt with in an appropriate, fair, consistent and timely manner.

## 2. Background and Legal/Regulatory Framework

This Complaints Policy is accessible to all and is published on our website. All participants, schools and delivery partners will be made aware of this policy through various means including in participant and school contracts.

Ambition Institute is committed to providing the best service possible and to supporting participants to keep getting better. It is therefore important that we use complaints as an opportunity to re-examine systems and services and, through feedback to the complainant, show that we are responsive to their concerns. In addition, our complaints procedure aligns to the requirements outlined within the guidance provided by regulatory and quality assurance bodies overseeing qualifications awarded by Ambition. This includes:

- > For legacy National Professional Qualifications (NPQs): Tribal
- > For reformed NPQs and the Early Career Teachers Programme: Ofsted
- > For Masters in Expert Teaching (MET): Plymouth Marjon University (PMU)

## 3. Responsibilities

- > Oversight of the process and stakeholders involved, including guidance on handling serious complaints, as well as accountability for the resolution of the complaint: The Director with oversight for the area of operations that the complaint relates to (School Partnerships, Programmes, Human Resources)
- > Supporting the effective implementation of this policy: Programme Teams, School Partnerships Area Teams, Human Resources (regarding complaints against members of staff)
- > Responsible for ensuring this process complies with regulations and guidelines relating to qualifications awarded by Ambition, reviewed annually or as and when regulations and guidelines are revised: Accreditation Team

## 4. Policy

### What is a Complaint?

1. A complaint is defined as an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, and requires a formal response from Ambition Institute.
2. We will address all complaints seriously and in a timely manner and invoke our formal complaints procedure where necessary.
3. If you would like to raise a complaint, please contact a member of Ambition Institute staff so they can address your concerns as quickly as possible.

### Making a Complaint

4. A complaint can be raised in person, via telephone or electronically. We aim to resolve all complaints informally but will invoke our formal complaints policy where necessary. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.
5. A complaint becomes formal when it is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and requires escalation. It should be made within ten days of the incident occurring. Ambition Institute may request justification for any complaints raised after the original ten-day window.
6. If the complaint relates to suspected or actual plagiarism, this should be dealt with according to Ambition's Plagiarism Policy. Complaints relating to data protection, including Data Subject Rights,

should be dealt with in line with our Data Protection Policy and handled by Ambition Institute's Data Protection Officer. If there is suspected malpractice, participants should contact the relevant Ambition Institute Management team and the 'Malpractice and Maladministration Policy' will be applied.

7. Ambition Institute requests that as much information as possible is provided when making a formal complaint. Helpful information includes but is not limited to:
  - > Names of any relevant parties
  - > Date, time and location of the incident
  - > Details of any informal attempts to resolve the matter
8. In the instance where a participant on one of our partner programmes wants to make a complaint in regard to the running of a partner programme, we would expect in the first instance that this is resolved between the participant and delivery partner. If an informal or formal complaint is raised directly with us that relates to a partner, we will therefore advise the participant to take this complaint directly to the partner in question. Once the delivery partner's complaints procedure has been fully exhausted, participants have the right to escalate their complaint to Ambition Institute only on the grounds that:
  - > The participant feels that the delivery partner's procedures were not followed properly;
  - > The participant feels that the delivery partner's decision maker(s) reached an unreasonable decision;
  - > The participant has new material evidence that they were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process;
  - > There is bias or reasonable perception of bias during the procedure.In these instances, the complaint will be addressed by Ambition Institute in accordance with this policy.
9. For participants on the Masters in Expert Teaching (MET) programme, any complaints in regard to the running of the programme should be made to Ambition Institute in the first instance, in accordance with this policy. Once Ambition Institute's complaints procedure has been fully exhausted, MET participants have the right to escalate their complaint to Plymouth Marjon University only on the grounds that:
  - > The participant feels that Ambition Institute's procedures were not followed properly;
  - > The participant feels that Ambition Institute's decision maker(s) reached an unreasonable decision;
  - > The participant has new material evidence that they were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process;
  - > There is bias or reasonable perception of bias during the procedure.In these instances, the complaint will be addressed by PMU in accordance with their Complaints Procedure.
10. If the complainant would like to record any conversation during of the complaints process, for instance because they have a disability which may affect their ability to process or record information, please agree this in advance with the staff member designated to investigate the complaint.

### **Handling a Complaint**

11. All complaints will be handled with appropriate discretion, confidentiality and sensitivity.
12. The complaint will be formally acknowledged within two working days of receiving it by the person who received the complaint. A relevant staff member will be assigned to investigate the complaint.

13. The allocated staff member will investigate the complaint within five working days of receipt and communicate an acceptable timeframe within which a response will be issued.
14. Where a complaint is made against a specific member of staff the investigating manager will ensure that the complaint is handled in line with our internal HR policies and procedures. The HR Team will take over the investigation if required by the nature of the complaint.
15. On completion of the investigation the manager responsible will send a formal response to the complainant within two working days of the conclusion of the investigation. The response will detail the findings from the investigation, and any resolution offered to the complainant, if applicable.

## **Appeals**

16. Every complainant has the right to appeal against a decision made under this procedure, if they are not satisfied with the outcome or the resolution offered. Details of how to appeal will be provided as part of the response to the original complaint. The appeal must be made within five working days of the complainant being informed of the decision and must be in writing.
17. The complaint will then be passed to the relevant department Director to review. In the case of complaints relating to qualifications awarded by Ambition this will be the Director, Programme Operations, who will ensure that all regulatory or quality assurance bodies overseeing the award of the qualification in question are informed immediately of the appeal.
18. The Director of the department considering the appeal will review the original complaint and response and conduct another investigation which will be undertaken within ten working days of the appeal.
19. The Director of the department considering the appeal will inform all parties of their decision within 2 working days of it being reached.
20. Where a complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction through the internal procedure, in some cases where the complaint relates to services funded by a third party or qualifications awarded by Ambition under external regulatory oversight, the complainant may have the option to submit a complaint to a funder or regulatory body. Complaints will not normally be investigated externally until our internal complaint procedure has been exhausted. At this stage the relevant department Director will redirect the complaint to the relevant external body and their complaints procedure will be followed.

## **Confidentiality**

21. It is important that documents relating to an investigation are retained in a secure place (within Ambition Institute, this will be our CRM system, Salesforce), together with a written record of the outcome and, if the investigation results in disciplinary action against an Ambition staff member, details retained on the member of staff's personal and confidential file. Only staff directly involved with the complaint / investigation / resolution will be given access to the facts of the case.
22. All complaints will be treated fairly and in the strictest confidence in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation. Any information relating to a third party will also be treated in confidence and in accordance with the Act. The information provided will only be used for the purpose of dealing with complaints and for monitoring.
23. In the case that it is absolutely necessary that someone needs to know about the complaint, then it will be considered carefully how much detail that individual needs to know in order to fulfil their role in the process (e.g. if they are being interviewed regarding a specific point of the complaint). It will not always be necessary to reveal the name of the complainant or of any individuals being investigated.

**Our Information:**

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**5. Links to Other Policies**

- > [Plagiarism Policy](#)
- > [Malpractice and Maladministration Policy](#)
- > [Privacy Policy](#)
- > [Plymouth Marjon University Complaints Procedure](#)