



## Learner Complaints Policy and Procedure for Higher Education and Further Education learners

<b>Policy Number</b>	<b>7.1</b>
<b>Policy Name</b>	<b>Learner Complaints Policy and Procedure for Higher Education and Further Education learners</b>
<b>Applicability</b>	<b>All HR Ltd Staff</b>
<b>Contact Person</b>	<b>Chrissy Moog, Media Services Manager</b>
<b>Policy status</b>	<b>Approved</b>
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<b>Date last amended</b>	<b>13 August 2019</b>
<b>Date of next review</b>	<b>29 May 2020</b>
<b>Related policies</b>	<b>49. Learner Appeals Policy and Procedure</b>

### Overview

Higher Rhythm is committed to providing the best possible student experience through its teaching, learning opportunities, professional services and facilities. However we recognise that students may sometimes wish to complain about its provision. We seek to ensure that any problem can be raised, investigated and resolved courteously and as quickly as possible in the interests of all concerned.

### What is a complaint

For the purpose of this Policy, a student complaint is defined as: “an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about the Organisation’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Organisation.”

Examples of complaints include:

- failure by the Organisation to provide a satisfactory service
- the quality of facilities or learning resources
- misleading or incorrect information in programme information or promotional material and other information provided by the Organisation
- concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching or administration including, where applicable, that provided by a partner organisation
- poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by the Organisation
- complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of the Organisation.

## 7.1 Learner Complaints Procedure

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A routine, first-time request for a service is not regarded as a complaint. Similarly where a review procedure already exists (e.g. parking charge appeals, bursary award appeals) these must be completed before a student complaint will be considered.

### How the process works

We have processes in place to make sure that all complaints are logged and actioned. Ultimately, the Senior Manager will monitor all complaints to make sure that they are dealt with and we aim to reach prompt and fair settlement to any dispute or complaint arising. We will normally complete all complaints within 90 calendar days of the start of the formal complaint.

Any student registered on a Higher Rhythm Ltd. course or award may use this procedure. Former students may also use the procedure subject to the timescales in the paragraph below.

The Organisation has a clear 3 Level Student Complaints Procedure to address informal and formal concerns or complaints. In brief this consists of:

- Level 1 – Early Resolution
- Level 2 – Formal Stage
- Level 3 – Review Stage

We hope that most issues can be resolved quickly either by speaking to the person your complaint relates to or if that is not possible by speaking to your Tutor. However if you are unable to resolve matters within the Organisation then you should submit a Stage 2 Complaint Letter which will escalate the complaint to the Formal Stage.

Final responsibility of processing all formal complaints rests with Senior Manager.

The Senior Manager is responsible for ensuring that all complaints are responded to within the agreed timescales and also in accordance with Complaint Procedures.

The Senior Manager will monitor and review adherence to timescales when resolving complaints.

Analysis of complaints will be included in the ISO 9001 quality system record.

The Media Services Manager will review complaints received through social media and if necessary, refer these complaints to the Senior Manager.

### Making a Complaint

- Level 1 – Early Resolution

The majority of concerns can be resolved informally within the Organisation. In most cases this approach provides a quick solution and avoids the formality of submitting a written complaint. You are encouraged to raise issues with your Tutor.

The Tutor will consider:

## 7.1 Learner Complaints Procedure

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1. What specifically is the concern about and which area(s) of the Organisation is/are involved?
2. What outcome are you hoping for and can it be achieved?
3. Is the concern straightforward and likely to be resolved with little or no investigation?
4. Can it be resolved on the spot by providing, where appropriate, an explanation, an alternative solution or an apology?
5. Can someone else assist in seeking resolution, for example where an informal administrative resolution is required?
6. Is there merit in using confidential mediation with the agreement of both parties?
7. What assistance or support can be provided to you to take this forward?

The Tutor will make every attempt to resolve the matter in consultation with you. Where it is clear that early resolution is not appropriate or possible within in timescale of 14 calendar days, you will be advised in writing to complete the Level 2 Formal Complaint process. You should submit your formal complaint in writing as soon as possible and not later than 14 calendar days of the outcome.

- Level 2 – Formal Complaint

If your complaint is not resolved through the early resolution process informal discussion, then you should submit your formal complaint in writing. Your letter should provide information on:

- i. the nature of your concern;
- ii. supporting evidence;
- iii. any actions you have taken to try to resolve the complaint;
- iv. the outcome/resolution that you are seeking.

Your Formal Stage 2 Complaint Letter should be submitted via email or post to Higher Rhythm Ltd. 53-57 Netherhall Road, Doncaster, DN1 2PG, mail@higherrhythm.co.uk.

It is important that you give sufficient detail of the complaint as it will be considered by a member of staff without prior knowledge of the matter. On receipt of your Complaint Letter, our administrative officer will check that you have attached any relevant documentation and allocate your complaint to be investigated by the Senior Manager or one of the Board of Directors who has no prior involvement in the subject of our complaint. She or he will discuss the complaint with you and will carry out appropriate investigations before reaching a decision and/or recommendation of remedial action, which will be notified to you in writing usually within 30 calendar days. If it is not possible to complete the investigation within this timescale you will be informed of the delay

- Level 3 – Review

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your formal student complaint, you may request that the Organisation carries out a review of the procedures followed at the Formal Complaints Stage by submitting your issue in writing.

## **7.1 Learner Complaints Procedure**

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Your letter should specify the reasons why you believe your complaint should be reviewed, which must fall within one or more of the following categories:

- i) proper procedures were not followed
- ii) the outcome was unreasonable.
- iii) new material evidence has come to light which you were unable for valid reason to provide earlier in the process.

The Level 3 letter must be sent to Higher Rhythm Ltd. 53-57 Netherhall Road, Doncaster, DN1 2PG, mail@higherrhythm.co.uk within 14 calendar days of receipt of the outcome letter for the Formal Complaints Stage 2.

The Stage 3 Review will not consider the issues afresh or involve a further investigation but will consider whether the relevant procedures were followed during the formal stage (including the giving of clear reasons why the complaint was rejected at the Formal Stage). If the Review Stage is upheld then the complaint will be returned either to the original complaints officer to consider the further material or to a complaints officer not previously involved in the matter.

### **Referral to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

Referral to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator within 28 days of completion of the Organisation's complaints procedures, the Organisation will issue a 'Completion of Procedures Letter' to you confirming that the internal complaints procedures have been exhausted. If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Organisation's internal complaints procedures, then you may refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within 12 months of the date of issue of the Completion of Procedures Letter.

### **Timescales for making a Complaint**

You should raise your complaint as soon as you become aware of a problem. Former students must submit their Level 2 Formal Complaint within 60 calendar days of their withdrawal.

### **Monitoring, Review and Dissemination**

This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the ISO 9001 quality system policies review.

The monitoring process will also consider changes necessary to support changes in legislation.

Adherence to this policy will be monitored through the Organisation's reporting systems.

This policy will be disseminated to students and staff as part of the induction process.

Access to the policy is via the organisation's website at:  
<https://www.higherrhythm.co.uk/public-policies/>

## **7.1 Learner Complaints Procedure**

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Complaints through social media will be monitored weekly basis by the Administrative Officer

### **General Principles**

All complaints will be handled sensitively and with the due level of confidentiality for all involved.

Any person named in a complaint will be informed of the content of the feedback at an appropriate point and if required will have the right to reply as part of the investigation.

Detailed information contained within the complaint will be made available only to those involved in its resolution.

Any person who makes a complaint, will not be treated less favourably by anyone at the Organisation and if evidence to the contrary is found, students or staff may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

It is expected that, except in exceptional and fully documented circumstances, anyone who wishes to make a complaint will do this within one calendar month of the incident which is the cause for the complaint.

Where there is no clear evidence to support the complaint the Tutor may contact the student in the first instance for additional information in order to support an investigation.

All complaints will be investigated thoroughly and fairly, and information will be used to improve the organisation's services.

If the complaints are of a criminal nature, the matter will be immediately referred to the board, who may, inform the police.

The Senior Manager will be kept informed of all complaints received concerning student welfare.

Complaints relating to Safeguarding will be passed immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer for investigation.

The Organisation reserves the right to divulge details of actions taken to resolve complaints.

### **Acting on results**

We will do everything we can to put things right and will review procedures where necessary to stop problems recurring.

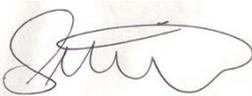
### **Your voice**

## 7.1 Learner Complaints Procedure

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We hope you agree that most of the time we provide a good quality service. We value all feedback from our customers and would also like to hear from you about what you think we do well.

You can also leave feedback, positive or negative, any time you visit our facility by filling in a feedback slip, available in reception, and placing in the plastic wallet mounted to the reception wall. We also encourage you to complete our user survey which is available online via using the computer based in reception.

Signed: 

Steven Mundin/Senior Manager

13<sup>th</sup> August 2019