

Complaints Policy and Procedure

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, fair, and accessible process for learners and other stakeholders to raise complaints about any aspect of the service provided by iO-Sphere.

iO-Sphere is committed to providing a high-quality service and achieving the highest standards of conduct. One of the means in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of all employees / learners / apprentices in a quick and professional manner. Therefore, we aim to ensure that:

- We are approachable and willing to receive feedback
- We are open minded and encourage feedback
- We make time to listen to feedback
- We often ask for employee feedback/opinions
- We are easily accessible to staff and conduct regular reviews

At iO-Sphere feedback is highly appreciated and always encouraged. We know that feedback is a key element to continuously improve our service, systems, and processes. This is something that is instilled within all staff from the point of induction and throughout their time at iO-Sphere.

This policy outlines who can make a complaint, how it should be handled, and the steps to appeal a decision. Complaints relating to the delivery, assessment, and awarding of Ofqual-regulated qualifications will be handled in line with Ofqual's General Conditions and can be escalated to Ofqual if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome.

2. Complaints

iO-Sphere is dedicated and committed in providing high standard services, however it is important that we can recognise at times, things may go wrong. If or when these occasions occur and an apprentice, client, learner, guardian/parent etc expresses any sort of dissatisfaction it is key we are made aware of this, so we are in turn, conduct a review to ensure that this does not occur again and potentially make relevant changes or amendments to improve processes. If a complaint is raised, we ensure that:

- We treat each complaint seriously
- We will acknowledge and respond to the complaint within 48 hours of receipt
- We will conduct a full investigation into all complaints
- All findings will be relayed to the complainant in full
- We deal with the complaint promptly and politely
- If appropriate, we aim to deal with complaint informally (for example, by email)

Complaints will be acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt, complaints can be received via email, written letter, or telephone. The complaint will be logged on our internal log and investigated promptly with efforts to ensure the complaint is resolved in a timely manner. We may need to contact the complainant to obtain information or further details regarding the complaint with the aim to resolve the complaint promptly and informally.

On instances where a complaint cannot be resolved informally after an investigation, a 4-week timeframe will be set, and a formal investigation will be conducted, and careful consideration will be taken in reviewing relevant processes. A final response letter will be sent to the complainant within the 4-week deadline detailing the outcome of the complaint.

3. Scope

This policy is intended for any person or organisation who wishes to make a complaint in relation to the training, assessment, or other services provided by iO-Sphere. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Current, prospective, and former apprentices/learners
- Current, prospective, and former apprentices/learners parents
- Authorised representatives of current, prospective, and former apprentices/learners
- Apprentices and their employers
- Staff members
- Awarding Organisations and regulatory bodies
- Visitors and contractors

This policy does not cover appeals against assessment decisions, which are handled by the iO-Sphere Appeals Procedure V1 Procedure. Complaints regarding assessment decisions should follow the Appeals Procedure in the first instance, but procedural complaints or concerns about the administration of assessments can be raised under this policy.

4. Policy Owner

The Director of Delivery is the owner of this policy and is responsible for its implementation and review, ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities within this procedure.

5. How to Make a Complaint

- Who can make a complaint: Any individual or organisation listed in the Scope (Section 3) can make a complaint.
- Who the complaint should be made to: In the first instance, complaints should be raised with the Director of Delivery.
- Method of raising a complaint: Complaints should be made in writing, preferably by email, to ensure that the details are captured accurately.

Stage 1 - Informal complaints: Where possible, complaints should be raised immediately with the iO-Sphere Management team or via the Programme Team. The aim is to resolve the problem directly and informally at the earliest opportunity. It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved in this manner.

Stage 2 - Formal complaints: To make a formal complaint this should be sent to the Director of Delivery of iO-Sphere on complaints@io-sphere.io. The email should be titled as a complaint and set out the details of the complaint in full and what would be an appropriate resolution. An acknowledgement email will be sent, and a response will be provided within 48 hours. The Managing Director will review all information submitted and meet with relevant members of staff to review the complaint if necessary.

Stage 3 – Resolve: If the complaint has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, they should write to James Cotton (Managing Director) james@io-sphere.io of iO-Sphere within 10 days outlining why they are dissatisfied with how the complaint has been addressed. The Strategy Board will appoint an individual to investigate the case fully, including how the original complaint was handled, and reply to the customer within 10 days with the outcome and suggested resolution.

Stage 4 – If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint and the appeal process, and the complaint relates to the delivery, assessment, or awarding of a regulated qualification, they may escalate their complaint to Ofqual at [<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>], or to ESFA via complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk.

When contact is made, you will need to provide the following:

- your full name and contact details
- your relationship to iO-Sphere (e.g., learner, apprentice, employer).
- the name of the organisation you are complaining about
- details of what your complaint is, together with the relevant documents including dates, times, the names of any individuals involved and locations if relevant
- evidence that you have fully exhausted the organisation's complaints procedure, including any appeals process (for example, written correspondence confirming the outcome)
- the resolution you are seeking
- permission to disclose details of your complaint to the organisation concerned
- if you are acting on behalf of a learner, evidence that you have their permission to do so

We can only investigate on behalf of learners whose courses we fund or employers that we fund. We may ask you for further information to help us confirm this.

6. How a Complaint is Handled

When complaints are received, they are acknowledged and then logged onto a central complaints log. The reason for the complaint and all progress made during the life of a complaint is recorded on the log until it is resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant or to a point at which iO-Sphere can reasonably be expected to do no more. Complaints data is collated for analysis and presented in quarterly governance and oversight meetings to the iO-Sphere management team. Records of complaints are retained for a minimum of five years and may be shared with Ofqual if required to ensure compliance with regulatory obligations. We ensure that complaints are handled impartially, and where appropriate, final reviews may be conducted by an independent decision-maker.

- **Who is responsible for managing the complaint:** The Director of Delivery is responsible for managing the investigation and resolution of the complaint.
- **Timescales for managing the complaint:**
 - We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing within 2 working days.
 - We aim to investigate and provide a full written response within 10 working days of acknowledgement. If the investigation is complex and likely to take longer, we will inform you of the delay and provide a new target date for resolution.
- **Methods of investigation:** The investigation may involve:
 - Reviewing relevant documentation, correspondence, and records.
 - Conducting interviews with the complainant and any individuals named in the complaint.
 - Liaising with relevant departments or external partners.
- **Methods of response:** You will receive a formal written response at the conclusion of the investigation. This response will detail the findings of the investigation, the decision reached, and the reasons for that decision. If the complaint is upheld, the response will also outline the action we will take to resolve the issue.

7. Appeal Against a Decision

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you have the right to appeal.

- An appeal must be submitted in writing to the Director of Delivery within 10 working days of receiving the complaint outcome.
- Your appeal should clearly state the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the original outcome.
- The Director of Delivery will review the original investigation and may conduct further enquiries.
- You will receive a final written response within 15 working days. This decision is final.

8. Confidentiality

All complaints will be treated seriously, handled sensitively and with due consideration to all parties involved. In line with our equal opportunities policy, all complainants will be treated fairly and not suffer any recrimination or disadvantage as a result of making a complaint. Any person named in a complaint, however, will be informed and have a right of reply as part of the investigation process. We ensure that complaints are handled impartially, and where appropriate, final reviews may be conducted by an independent decision-maker.

9. Monitoring and Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually by the Director of Delivery to ensure it remains effective and fit for purpose.

10. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- iO-Sphere Appeals Procedure V1

Version Control

Version: V2

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