

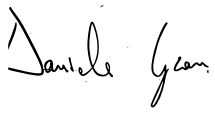


Complaints Policy



VERSION CONTROL

This policy will be monitored on a minimum of an annual basis or in the event of significant changes to our organisational approach. Similarly, the policy will be reviewed and adapted where there are clear legislative changes.

Version Number	Key changes	Author	Authoriser	Date
1.0	Initial document creation	Legal Department	Marjan Mashhadi	16 Nov 2023
2.0	Updates	Compliance Department	Joni Kurland	1 May 2024
Authorised Signature:			Daniele Grassi CEO	27 Jun 2024

By adhering to this policy, General Assembly aims to maintain high standards of service and ensure that any issues are resolved promptly and effectively.



Complaints Policy

Introduction

General Assembly is committed to providing a high-quality experience for our entire community. We recognize that from time to time, concerns or complaints may arise, and it is our policy to address these issues promptly, fairly, and efficiently. This Complaints Policy outlines the process for raising and resolving complaints, ensuring that all parties are treated with respect and that resolutions are achieved in a transparent and equitable manner. Our goal is to foster an open and supportive environment where feedback is welcomed and used constructively to improve our services.

Any complaint or expression of dissatisfaction, regarding the provision of service provided by General Assembly is taken extremely seriously and handled by all relevant departments to the specific claim. We aim to satisfactorily resolve any complaint raised as informally and quickly as possible. Complaints that an Apprentice may have in relation to the employment aspect of the apprenticeship should be raised in accordance with the (host) employer's own internal grievance procedure.

At General Assembly, we are committed to conducting business fairly, honestly, transparently and in compliance with all legal and regulatory obligations. We expect all General Assembly directors, employees and anyone acting on our behalf to do the same and to maintain the highest standards of ethical business behaviour. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations from occurring and to address them when they do occur.

Principles

- **Accessibility:** The complaints procedure is accessible to all instructors, students, apprentices, employers, employees, and stakeholders.
- **Responsiveness:** Complaints will be acknowledged and addressed promptly.
- **Fairness:** All complaints will be investigated impartially and thoroughly.
- **Confidentiality:** Information concerning a complaint will be kept confidential and only shared with relevant parties.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Complaints are used as a source of feedback to improve services and prevent recurrence.



Complaint Procedure

If any service user feels we have not provided the expected level of service, support or quality of delivery, they should follow the process outlined below:

Students/Apprentices (“Learners”)

Stage 1 - Early Resolution

The focus of Early Resolution is to support an attempt at resolving a learner complaint prior to a formal complaint being submitted. Complaints at this stage can be submitted face-to-face, in writing, or by email. Initial complaints should be raised to the deliverer of training or services directly; this will be the course/training Instructor. A learner may first raise a complaint informally to the Instructor Manager if the complaint involves Instructor misconduct.

Normally complaints raised should be submitted within 30 days of the incident taking place, however, GA recognises that there may be circumstances that prevent a learner from raising a complaint within this timeframe. Complaints raised outside of this timeframe will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Typically a discussion between the learner and an appropriate staff member will be scheduled within 5 business days.

Early Resolution of complaints will be recorded by GA and notes from any meetings may be added to a student file as evidence of the complaint and subsequent resolution. Notes may be shared with the Student Success Department or other staff with legitimate interest should a formal investigation take place.

If the informal process does not resolve the complaint, the learner can submit a formal complaint with GA.

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint

A learner can submit a formal complaint, in writing, to the Student Success Department by emailing the nature of the complaint, details of the issue(s), and any further information considered relevant to StudentSupport@generalassemb.ly. The formal complaint should be submitted within 5 working days of reaching the conclusion of the Early Resolution process. However, we are happy to extend additional time where this timescale is unable to be met. General Assembly will normally acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 7 working days. A member of the Student Services team will partner with the Instructor Manager to address and resolve the grievance.

If a resolution can still not be met, the learner can escalate the complaint by sending an email addressed to the Senior VP of Enterprise at complaints@ga.co. The learner should provide the original complaint in addition to providing the reasons why the complaint has not been adequately resolved. Details of discussions undertaken at other stages will be reviewed and senior management will work in partnership with General Assembly compliance and legal to resolve the grievance.



Stage 3 - External Resolution

If the learner remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint then a complaint can be submitted, in certain circumstances, to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

ESFA email is: complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk, or put the complaint in a letter to:

Customer Service Team, Education and Skills Funding Agency,
Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT

The circumstances in which a complaint can be escalated to the ESFA and the specifics that should be included can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-fundingagency/about/complaints-procedure#checkcomplaint>

Apprenticeship Instructors

If an Instructor has a concern with an employer or learner's actions during the training, the Instructor should bring the complaint directly to the Instructor Manager. Complaints can be submitted in writing, by email, or notes can be taken in a face-to-face meeting. The Instructor Manager will review the complaint and determine if the complaint can be resolved without further inquiry. If the complaint warrants further inquiry, the Instructor or Instructor Manager can escalate the concern with a Senior Client Success Manager if the concern is with an employer or the Student Success team if the concern is with a learner in attempts to resolve.

Employers

Stage 1 - Informal Efforts

Prior to submitting a formal complaint, it is recommended that the employer raise any concerns with GA informally. This provides the opportunity to discuss the concerns between GA and the employer. If an employer has a concern with an Instructor or the training process provided by GA, the employer should reach out directly to the Senior Client Success Manager assigned to their account.

The Senior Client Success Manager will normally acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of receiving it and will arrange to discuss the concern directly with the employer on an informal basis, and where possible, resolve the complaint.

The Senior Client Success Manager will log any informal complaints and update GA leadership on the progress or resolution of any complaints on a quarterly basis.

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint

If the informal process does not resolve the complaint, the employer can submit a formal complaint with the VP of Client Delivery and Operations at VPClientDelivery@generalassemb.ly by emailing the nature of the complaint, details of the issue(s), and any further relevant information. A formal complaint should be submitted as



close to 5 working days from the receipt of outcome from the Senior Client Success Manager. GA will normally acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within 2 working days of receiving it. The VP of Client Delivery and Operations will contact the employer within 7 working days to discuss the complaint and understand the concerns in more detail. Notes will be taken of any discussion, detailing possible solutions and whether or not the complaint was satisfactorily resolved.

If a resolution can still not be met, the employer company senior management can escalate the complaint by sending an email addressed to the Senior VP of Enterprise of GA at complaints@ga.co. The employer should be prepared to discuss the reasons why the complaint has not been adequately resolved. Once the complaint is received by the SVP of Enterprise, a written acknowledgement will typically be sent within 3 working days. Details of discussions undertaken at other stages will be reviewed and senior management will work in partnership with General Assembly compliance and legal to coordinate an appropriate response within 14 working days. Both Parties will sign a summary as record, or that it is acknowledged as an accurate representation of the meeting.

Any formal complaint documentation including resolution will be held on file.

Stage 3 - External Resolution

If the employer remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint then a complaint can be submitted, in certain circumstances, to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

ESFA email is complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk, or put the complaint in a letter to:

Customer Service Team, Education and Skills Funding Agency,
Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT

The circumstances in which a complaint can be escalated to the ESFA and the specifics that should be included can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-fundingagency/about/complaints-procedure#checkcomplaint>

Complaints Involving Safeguarding Concerns

Where a complaint is raised which potentially identifies a safeguarding risk or concern, it will be escalated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will evaluate the concern and determine the level of risk to the individual and wider business for appropriate action. This may involve communication both internally and through external parties including Local Authorities, Adult and Child Social Care Teams, and the Police where appropriate. Complex cases are often managed through a multi-agency approach or Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Safeguarding risks and concerns are outlined in greater detail in General Assembly's Prevent and Safeguarding Policy.



Monitoring and Reporting

- Record Keeping: All complaints, investigations, and outcomes will be documented and securely stored.
- Review: The complaints policy and procedure will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with regulatory requirements.
- Reporting: Summarised data on complaints will be reported to senior management to identify trends and areas for improvement.

Contact Information

For any questions, concerns or comments to this policy, please email our **Compliance Department** at compliance@generalassemb.ly