
Complaints Policy and Procedure

Complaints Policy

A customer complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

Complaints

1. Introduction

This procedure is the mechanism for individuals to raise concerns or complaints about LAURUS services, LAURUS Development Awards (The Centre) or partner organisations. The aim is to prevent unnecessary delay whilst ensuring a full and fair assessment of the particular circumstances of an individual complaint.

A formal complaints procedure should be seen as a last resort in the search for a solution to a problem. Before using the formal Complaints Procedure, the issue should normally be raised with the named contact within LAURUS. Where, in the complainant's opinion, the matter is too sensitive, personal or confidential to discuss with their normal point of contact the issue(s) can, in the first instance, be presented directly to the LAURUS office.

The following procedure applies to any of our users. These can be applicants, learners, apprentices, universities or employers.

2. Operating Principles:

- 2.1. LAURUS acknowledges that there are two sides to every dispute. This procedure intends to provide both parties with the opportunity to provide evidence to substantiate their version of the issue/incident. Full disclosure of any allegations or evidence will be made to both parties.
- 2.2. Where issues cannot be resolved informally, an independent officer They will consider the evidence of the complaint and will have had no previous involvement in the issue or concern.
- 2.3. All information supplied by individuals will remain confidential for use within the complaints process. Only staff directly involved with the complaint / investigation / resolution will be given access to the facts of the case. Complaints provide an important source of feedback on the performance of LAURUS services. LAURUS monitors the registration of each complaint and the progress towards reaching a satisfactory resolve.
- 2.4. Complaints will be monitored by the LAURUS senior management team to ensure they are dealt with promptly and efficiently.

- 2.5 Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.
- 2.6 There will be a written acknowledgement from LAURUS for any complaint received either written or verbal.
- 2.7 Any party involved in a complaint has the right to be accompanied and represented by a person of his or her choice at every relevant stage of the procedure.
- 2.8 LAURUS staff have the right to be accompanied by their immediate line manager or colleague.
- 2.9 All staff that are dealing with complaints shall where appropriate, seek guidance and advice from internal/external sources in order to resolve a complaint. The identity of all parties will be protected, wherever possible.
- 2.10 Wherever possible the complaint should be resolved at the earliest opportunity and lowest level. Where the complaint involves learners the complaint should be discussed with the assessor for resolution. Where it is not possible to achieve resolution the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) will be involved.

3. Making a Complaint

- 3.1 All complaints shall be dealt with within 20 working days of the alleged incident, matter or concern. To support any allegation that is made the complainant shall provide evidence. Where supportive evidence is not provided, LAURUS reserves the right not to progress with the complaint.
- 3.2 Each complaint will be recorded on a Complaints record.
- 3.3 All communications relating to a complaint shall be submitted in writing where reasonably practicable.
- 3.4 Where a matter is not fully resolved within the 20 working days period, the Complaint will be reviewed by the Chief Executive.

4. Investigating a Complaint

- 4.1 An investigation will be conducted to consider the facts of a case. Supportive evidence shall be provided along with related documentation to substantiate the allegations. A summary of the complaint and details of any evidence considered will be recorded on the Complaints record.
- 4.2 Any persons that are interviewed are entitled to be accompanied by a representative of their choice at all stages of the process.
- 4.3 Once all of the evidence has been collated and the facts of the case have been identified, the complainant will be notified of the decision and any relevant proposals for addressing the complaint.

- 4.4 Any decision whether to initiate disciplinary action against a member of LAURUS staff, is a management decision and does not impact upon the outcome of the complaint. The outcome of any disciplinary action will remain confidential and is a LAURUS management decision.
- 4.5 If disciplinary action is taken the complainant may be required to attend a formal disciplinary hearing in the capacity of a witness to substantiate allegations.
- 4.6 Where the complaint involves the Centre, the Centre Manager will inform the External Quality Assurer.
- 4.7 The Chief Executive Officer will convene a panel meeting within twenty working days of the receipt of a valid complaint. The Panel will comprise:
- a. The Chief Executive Officer
 - b. An IQA (not involved in the complaint)
 - c. A representative from the learner's employing authority
- 4.8 The complainant has the right to attend the panel meeting accompanied by a person of their choice for personal support.
- 4.9 The outcome of the complaint will either be:
- The complaint is not upheld against the Centre.
 - The complaint is upheld and that restorative action has been identified. This may involve an explanation, an apology and, if applicable, the required solution to put matters right.
- 4.10 The Chief Executive Officer will provide the outcome in writing to the complainant within five working days of the panel meeting.
- 4.11 There is no appeal about the decision of the Panel but a learner may, at this stage, make a direct formal complaint to the Awarding Organisation.
- 4.12 The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for ensuring that the necessary actions have been taken.
- 4.13 The Centre Manager will inform the External Quality Assurer of the outcome and any indicative improvements to assessment service provided

5. Appeal

- 5.1 If the complainant feels that the procedures have not been followed or a decision is unreasonable, they have the right to appeal to the Chief Executive within (21) days of the announcement of the decision.
- 5.2 The grounds for the appeal should be clearly stated and evidenced in writing and sent, in the first instance, to the Chief Executive. Supporting papers should be included with the submission at this stage.

- 5.3 The Chief Executive will review the papers and re-interview relevant parties where necessary.
- 5.4 The Chief Executive will respond to the appeal within 21 days of the appeal being received.
- 5.5 The Chief Executive's decision will be final.
- 5.6 Awarding Organisations do not arbitrate in cases of dispute between learners and centres. Where complaints between learners and centres are not satisfactorily resolved, learners can contact the Awarding Organisation.
- 5.7 Learners must follow and exhaust the Centre's complaints procedure fully before making a direct formal complaint to the relevant Awarding Organisation.

LAURUS OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The Chief Operating Officer is responsible for dealing with complaints (unless the complaint relates directly to this individual in which case the Quality Manger should be the point of contact).

LAURUS shall take into account its duty to promote equality and diversity throughout this process.

LAURUS shall endeavour to deal with all complaints informally in the first instance, aiming for a quick and satisfactory resolution.

All information that you give will be treated fairly and in the strictest confidence in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR. 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.

All complaints that are submitted to LAURUS will be dealt with in accordance with this procedure.

Once your complaint has been received, LAURUS will:

1. Acknowledge receipt of your complaint by telephone or in writing.
2. Tell you who will be dealing with your complaint.
3. Tell you what action will be taken.
4. Tell you when you can expect a resolution.
5. Keep you informed of the advances being made with your case.