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**Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure**

TRANS4M is committed to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

We aim to provide a supportive environment for our customers and to be responsive to concerns or complaints from any source.

We recognise that, in a complex organisation, problems may arise of various natures. Any problems need to be addressed in order to ensure that normal high standards are maintained. We regard feedback, both negative and positive, as a valuable resource to help us improve the quality of our services and provision.

The complaints Procedure is designed to enable anyone interacting with Trans4m to bring matters of concern about their experiences of our services and provision to our attention and to enable investigation of those concerns to achieve satisfactory resolution. This process provides us with welcome feedback to help us improve our services too generally, as well as helping us resolve any particular problems experienced by an individual complainant.

The procedure aims to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved. It is based on the belief that complaints should be taken seriously, should be investigated promptly and dealt with as closely as possible to their origins. For this reason, all complainants are asked to try to resolve the issue as informally as possible in the first instance within the relevant department or service area. The intention is that most issues can be effectively handled locally, in a spirit of conciliation. Therefore, the formal complaints procedure should be seen as a last resort in the search for a solution.

Trans4m uses its Complaints Procedure as a positive, non-threatening means for change to the benefit of all.

**What is A Complaint?**

The complaints procedure covers any expression of dissatisfaction about:

* Standards of service, courses or facilities provided by Trans4m
* Actions or lack of actions by Trans4m or its staff
* Provisions of Trans4m affecting students, customers, partners or stakeholders

**Who can use the Complaints Procedure?**

The procedure is for use by any customer, student or prospective customer, who seeks or receives a service from Trans4m or any person who is directly affected by the activities of Trans4m.

**Guidelines for making and handling complaints**

All complaints will be taken seriously and, as far as is reasonable, be treated in a consistent fashion throughout Trans4m. In line with our Equal Opportunities policy, all complaints will be treated equally and customers who make complaints will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making a complaint. Only where complaints are proven to be malicious or vexatious might there be recourse to disciplinary investigation and possible sanction against the complainant. As a general rule, complaints which are made more than three months after the incident or action which is the subject of the complaint will not be investigated.

**Confidentiality**

All complaints will be handled sensitively and with due consideration to confidentiality for all concerned. Any person named in a complaint, however, will be informed of the complaint and will have a right of reply as part of the investigative process.

**Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints are very rare. While they will be logged and monitored, under normal circumstances they will not be investigated.

**Third Party Complaints**

Complaints must normally be made by complaints themselves and not by others acting on their behalf. However, young customers (under the age of 16), vulnerable adults or any other customers who would have difficulty making a complaint on their own behalf are fully entitled and encouraged to use whatever assistance is required from a third party to make their complaint effectively.

**Accompaniment at a complaint hearing**

In the event that a hearing is arranged to consider a complaint, any customer or member of staff asked to attend such a hearing has the right to be accompanied by a person of his/her choosing.

**How, Where, When and to Whom to Complain?**

The procedure aims to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved and seeks to allow issues to be explored in a supportive, conciliatory context. Informal resolution is encouraged at every stage of the process. Use of the formal complaints procedure should only be taken as a last resort.

**Stage 1 The Informal Stage**

Trans4m believes it is in everyone’s interest to resolve complaints as quickly as possible, as close to the source of the problem as possible, and by informal means in preference to formal ones. Dealing with small problems or areas of concern as they arise will often prevent them becoming larger problems which are harder to resolve.

Therefore, complainants are encouraged to raise any issues at an early stage and to discuss the matter with the person responsible for the issue giving rise to the complaint. Many apparent concerns result from misunderstandings which can often be resolved quickly and easily by talking through the matter.

This can be done by:

* A telephone conversation with an appropriate person
* A face to face meeting with an appropriate person
* An email or letter to an appropriate person

If you do not feel comfortable speaking to the person involved then speak to your line manager.

Informal complaints should normally be responded to within 7 days of receipt of the complaint. Records of such complaints will not normally be retained or recorded centrally, unless the complainant and member of staff dealing with it wish to do so.

If the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at this stage, complainants are encouraged to raise the matter with the manager of the department. That person will make enquiries with those concerned and report back to the complainant on the outcome.

**Stage 2 The Formal Stage**

Every effort should be made by complainants and staff to use the informal mechanisms available to resolve issues of dissatisfaction. However, we recognise that there may be problems that either have not been resolved, or are too serious to be dealt with informally. Trans4m is also aware that there may be occasions in which, for whatever reason, a complainant feels that it is impossible to raise an issue directly with the member of staff concerned. In any of these circumstances, Trans4ms formal complaints procedure should be used.

A formal complaint should be submitted to the Centre Manager (Sharon Burton), on a complaint form available from the office. Complaints can be send by post to Trans4m, 255 Belgrave Gate, Leicester, LE1 3HU, or by email to sburton@trans4mcic.com .

The statement of complaint should be as complete as possible and should include any supporting documentation (copies of previous correspondence, for example).

The Centre Manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 48 hours.

The complaint will be referred to a senior manager (Liam Farrall or Natalie Harrison), who will carry out an investigation and report the findings back to the centre manager.

The centre manager will reply to the complainant in writing within 20 working days of its receipt.

At this stage, the majority of complaints will be resolved satisfactorily with no further action being necessary. However, if the complainant is not satisfied with the response received as a result of Stage 2, the complaint may be taken to Stage 3 of the procedure.

**Stage 3 The Appeal Stage**

If a complaint has still not been satisfactorily resolved after stage 2 of the procedure, a copy of the complaint, together with any documentary evidence relating to the complaint, should be sent to the Trans4m board of Directors at 255 Belgrave Gate, Leicester, LE1 3HU within 14 days of receiving the stage 2 response.

The Directors will decide whether to convene a panel to hear the complaint and review the evidence.

The complaints panel will normally comprise three people – from the Trans4m Group of Directors.

Panel members will not have had any previous involvement in dealing with the complaint at either Stage 1 or Stage 2.

Details of the panel membership will be given to both parties to the complaint in advance of the panel hearing. Any request to veto a member of the panel for good reason must be made in advance to the Director in writing, stating clearly the reason for the request.

The panel will investigate the complaint, including all documentary evidence relating to the complaint. The panel may seek to resolve the complaint on the basis of the documentation provided alone. However, if necessary the panel will invite both parties to the complaint to a panel meeting to present evidence and to be questioned on the evidence provided.

After investigation of the complaint, the chair will produce a written response to all parties involved in the complaint, outlining whether the complaint is upheld or not and detailing what actions, if any, are necessary to resolve the issue.

The decision of the complaints panel is final.

If, however, a complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 3, he/she has recourse to taking the complaint further to the Board of Directors.

**Learning from Complaints**

In order that Trans4m can learn and improve as a result of complaints, the Centre Manager will keep accurate records and complete records of all complaints received and the resulting correspondence, interviews and actions. A report on complaints received and their outcomes will be submitted to the Board of Directors at least once a year. This will help to improve customer service throughout the organisation and monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.