

The Guild for Lifelong Learning

Policy 12: Complaints Policy

Charity No. 1151387

Company No. 8331345

Date March 2026

Review March 2028

Classification General

1. Overview and Scope

The Guild for Lifelong Learning is committed to providing a high-quality learning environment. We value all feedback and view complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve our service.

- a) Scope: This policy applies to students and members of the public who use our facilities or services.
- b) Exclusions: This policy does not cover staff grievances or student disciplinary matters which are covered by separate policies.

2. Definitions

In line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance:

- a) Concern: An expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered important for which reassurances are sought.
- b) Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action by the Guild.

3. Principles of Handling Complaints

The Guild will ensure the process is:

- a) Accessible: Published clearly on our website and available in alternative formats.
- b) Fair: Investigations will be impartial and non-adversarial.
- c) Timely: We aim to resolve all matters within the specified timeframes.

- d) Confidential: Information will only be shared with those necessary to investigate the claim, in compliance with UK GDPR.

4. The Three-Stage Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Resolution (Early Resolution)

Most concerns can be resolved quickly by speaking with the staff member or tutor involved.

- a) Action: The complainant should raise the issue within 10 working days of the incident.
- b) Outcome: We aim to provide an informal response within 5 working days.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint (Investigation)

If the matter is not resolved at Stage 1, or is too serious for informal resolution:

- a) Action: Submit a formal Complaint Form to the Principal. If the complaint concerns the Principal, it should be sent to the Chair of Trustees.
- b) Timeline: Receipt will be acknowledged within 3 working days. A full written response will be provided within 15 working days following a thorough investigation.

Stage 3: Appeal (Review Panel)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome, they may request a review.

- a) Action: Request an appeal in writing within 10 working days of the Stage 2 decision.
- b) The Panel: The Principal will convene an Appeal Panel consisting of at least three people not previously involved, including at least one member who is independent of the management and running of the Guild (Best Practice).
- c) Outcome: The Panel's decision is the final internal stage and will be issued within 20 working days of the hearing.

5. External Escalation

If the internal procedure is exhausted and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may escalate the matter externally:

- a) The Awarding Body: Applicable only for students on accredited courses.

- b) The Charity Commission: For serious concerns regarding the administration of the charity (e.g., risk to assets or reputation).

6. Learning from Complaints

As a board-governed charity, the Guild will:

- Record: Maintain a central log of all formal complaints, outcomes, and response times.
- Report: The Principal will provide an anonymised summary of complaints to the Board of Trustees annually to identify trends and service improvements.

Source Material and Legislative References

- Education Act 2002 (Section 29): Requirements for handling complaints.
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015: For complaints relating to Prevent Duty.
- Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR): For the handling of personal data during investigations.
- Equality Act 2010: Ensuring accessibility and reasonable adjustments.
- ESFA Guidance (2025): *Complaints about post-16 education and training provision funded by DfE.*
- OIA Good Practice Framework (2024): *Handling complaints and academic appeals.*
- Charity Commission Guidance (CC29): *Complaints handling guidance for charities.*

The Guild for Lifelong Learning: Formal Complaint Form (Stage 2)

Please complete this form and return it to the **Principal**. If your complaint is regarding the Principal, please address it to the **Chair of Trustees**. You can submit this via email to [Insert Email Address] or by post to our Wilmslow office.

1. Your Details

Full Name	
Guild email address	
Address	
Phone Number	
Email Address	

2. Details of the Complaint

Please provide a concise description of your complaint. Include dates, times, and the names of any staff members or witnesses involved. (Attach additional sheets if necessary).

[Space for description]

3. Informal Resolution (Stage 1)

Before a formal investigation begins, we normally expect an attempt at informal resolution.

- **Have you discussed this issue with the relevant staff member or tutor?**

[Yes / No]

- **If yes, who did you speak to and what was the outcome?**

[Space for details]

- **If no, please explain why you felt an informal approach was not appropriate:**

[Space for details]

4. Desired Outcome

What actions or resolutions are you seeking to resolve this matter?

[Space for desired outcome]

5. Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that this information will be shared with relevant staff members involved in the investigation in accordance with the Guild's Privacy Policy.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Official Use Only (To be completed by the Guild)

Action	Date	Initials
Date Form Received		
Acknowledgement Sent		
Investigator Assigned		
Deadline for Response		
Stage 2 Response Issued		

Data Protection Statement

The Guild for Lifelong Learning processes personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. The information provided on this form will be used solely for the purpose of investigating and resolving your complaint. Records of complaints are kept for a period of [e.g., 6 years] following the resolution of the matter for regulatory and insurance purposes.