

QA 5.2 Learner Complaints Policy

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1 Learner Complaints

In accordance with the QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) and the guidelines of other awarding bodies, Cenit College has a learner complaints policy.

1.1 Policy Ownership

This policy will be owned by the Academic Committee. The responsibility for delivering the policy will be tasked to the Academic Committee, Management Board, Head of Training, and the Head of Quality

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process for learners to initiate a complaint.

1.3 Scope

This policy applies to all learners that enrol on Cenit College programmes and utilise Cenit College services.

1.4 Roles and Responsibilities

Academic Committee: Responsible for reviewing and adjudicating learner complaints in a fair, transparent, and timely manner, ensuring adherence to institutional policies, safeguarding impartiality, and recommending appropriate resolutions and quality improvements where necessary.

Head of Quality: Ongoing review and updates to this policy along with organisation wide implementations

Head of Training: Oversees the complaint process.

Complainant: The person who makes the complaint

Complaine: The person against whom the complaint is made.

1.5 Policy Statement

Cenit College is committed to ensuring that complaints are taken seriously and are considered a constructive part of the Colleges' feedback and continuous improvement process. All complaints are handled in confidence and with an understanding of the sensitivity to both the complainant and the complaine. Learners are entitled to make an informal and/or a formal complaint.

An **informal complaint** is where Cenit College will try and resolve the issue at hand informally through meetings or phone calls between the complainant and the complaine. Cenit College will make every effort to resolve complaints using the informal mechanisms.

A **formal** complaint is initiated when the informal complaint process does not resolve the issue at hand or where learners decide that they wish to make a formal complaint without having gone through the informal complaint process. The formal complaint has a defined process to follow.

The process for making a learner complaint will be detailed in the learner handbook.

1.6 Informal Complaint Procedure

The procedure for the learner making an informal complaint is as follows:

1. The complainant must inform Cenit College in writing or in person within 5 working days of the incident occurring. This complaint can be communicated with the tutor; the programme leads or directly to the Head of Training or nominated deputy.

2. The relevant member of Cenit College staff will try and resolve the complaint informally through a meeting between the complainant and complainee **within 10 working days**. If a meeting cannot be set up, a call (telephone or virtual) will take place.
3. Where the complaint is not resolved through the informal mechanism, the complainant can.
 - a. Decide not to pursue the complaint further or
 - b. Lodge a formal complaint.

1.7 Formal Complaint Procedure

The procedure for dealing with formal complaints is as follows:

1. The complainant will submit a complaint on the **Learner Complaints Form** to complaints@cenitcollege.ie within 5 working days of the incident occurring or within 5 working days of the outcome of the informal process. Where complaints are made outside of this window the complainant must produce a valid reason for the delay. Cenit College will not deal with complaints made after 21 working days of the incident occurring. Learners must support their complaint with evidence. Cenit College will endeavour to resolve any complaints within **14 working days**.
2. The complaint will be directed to the Head of Training or nominated deputy who will within 2 working days appoint a competent member of staff to investigate the complaint. The Head of Training or nominated deputy may decide to investigate the complaint themselves.
3. The Head of Training or nominated deputy will advise the complainee of the nature of the complaint within 2 working days of receipt of the complaint and give the complainee the opportunity to respond to the complaint. The complainee has 2 working days to respond to the complaint.
4. The investigating officer will consider the response and can request a meeting with the complainee to discuss this further.
5. The investigating officer will at this point consider if there are grounds for a complaint or not. If there are no grounds for complaint, then the complainant will be informed in writing within 2 working days of the decision being made.
6. Where the investigator considers that the complaint was warranted, the Head of Training or nominated deputy will be informed on the same day that the decision has been made.
7. The Head of Training or nominated deputy will communicate in writing to all parties involved and inform them of the findings of the investigation, what decisions were made and the reasons for those decisions. This will be completed within 2 working days of the decision being made. If there are any further actions required by Cenit College or any of the parties involved this will also be communicated. All parties are informed of the right to appeal. The appeal must be made within five working days of receipt of that communication.

1.8 Formal Complaint Appeal

A learner has the right to appeal the outcome of the complaints process. The process for appeal is as follows:

1. Submission of Appeal

Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Head of Training within **5 working days** of the complaint outcome being issued. The appeal must include:

- A clear statement of the grounds for appeal (e.g. procedural irregularity, new evidence, or perceived unfairness in the outcome)
- Any relevant supporting evidence

2. Initial Review of Appeal

The Head of Training will review the appeal submission to confirm that:

- It has been submitted within the required timeframe
- It clearly outlines valid grounds for appeal

The learner will be notified in writing within 5 working days of the appeal submission whether the appeal will proceed or if it has been rejected, including the reasons for this decision.

3. Appeals Committee Consideration

Where an appeal is deemed valid, it will be referred to the Appeals Committee.

- The Appeals Committee will be independent and impartial. Individuals involved in the original complaint decision will not participate in the appeal review. Membership, roles, and responsibilities are outlined in *QA1 Governance and Management Structures (Section 1.6.7)*.
- The Appeals Committee will review all documentation and evidence submitted.
- The decision will be based on the written submission and supporting evidence provided.
- The complainant may be invited to attend or provide further clarification at the discretion of the Chairperson

4. Outcome of Appeal

The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing to the complainant within **10 working days** of receipt of the appeal (or from the date of the hearing, where applicable) unless exceptional circumstances arise. Where delays occur, the complainant will be informed. The outcome will include:

- The decision reached
- A clear rationale for the decision
- Any actions arising

5. Record Keeping

Appeal outcomes will be monitored and reported to the Academic Committee to inform quality improvement, in line with national quality assurance expectations. A formal record of the appeal will be maintained, including:

- The appeal submission
- Evidence reviewed
- Decision and rationale

6. Reporting

The outcome of all appeals will be reported to the Academic Committee for oversight and quality assurance purposes.

7. Final Review

If the learner remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request a final review by a senior member of the organisation not previously involved in the process (e.g. Senior Leadership Team nominee or Executive Director). This review will:

- Confirm whether procedures were followed correctly
- Ensure consistency and fairness

The outcome of this review will be considered the **final internal decision**.

8. External Escalation

Where a learner remains dissatisfied after exhausting internal procedures, they may escalate their complaint externally, as appropriate:

a. Awarding Body / Validating Body

A learner may refer their complaint to the relevant awarding or validating body (e.g. QQI or other awarding organisation), in accordance with that body's complaints or appeals procedures.

b. QQI (for quality assurance concerns Ireland)

Where the complaint relates to the provider's quality assurance, learners may raise concerns with **Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)** in line with QQI's external quality assurance guidance.

c. Ofsted (UK provision)

Learners may submit concerns to Ofsted where the issue relates to:

- Quality of education and training
- Safeguarding
- Leadership and management

d. Ombudsman / Independent Adjudicator (if applicable)

Where applicable, complainants may refer unresolved complaints to an appropriate independent body (e.g. ombudsman or dispute resolution service), depending on jurisdiction and programme type.

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1.9 Monitoring of this policy

The Head of Quality and the Head of Training will monitor this policy. The mechanism for monitoring this policy includes:

- All the complaint applications made in the year.
- Copy of the investigator's advice to the complainee and request for response.
- Response from the complainant.
- Copy of notification sent to all parties of the outcome of the complaint consideration.
- Copy of appeal as lodged.
- All appeal committee meeting minutes.
- Copy of notification of outcome of appeal.

1.10 Version Control

Version	Date	Description	Originator	Approved by
1	20/01/2022	Approval of Policy	QA	Academic Committee
1.1	21/11/2023	Updated 1.8 Formal Complaint Appeal process.	QA	Academic Committee
1.2	30/09/2024	• Updated 1.6 #2 to add a timeline of 10 working days • Updated 1.7 to add a timeline of 14 working days • Updated 1.7 #2 - #7 to include the following: Nominated deputy and the inclusion of timelines with each task. • Add timelines of 2 working days to the points 1.2 to 1.7 • Updated 1.8 #5 to change the timeline from 15 to 10 working days	QA	Academic Committee
2	30/06/2025	Move to SharePoint Versioning	DTCR	N/A – no changes
3.	03/06/2026	Updates throughout the policy changing terminology to “complainant” where appropriate. Updates made to senior leader roles that have changed now HoT and HoQ Section 1.4 added academic committee roles and responsibilities. Significant changes to section 1.8. Formal Complaint Appeals Process explaining process in more step-by-step detail. Removed out of date Figure on page 6 this page now left blank.	HoQ	Academic Committee

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