<Creative Academy>

< Complaints & Appeals Procedures>

Overview

Complaints and appeals procedures are structured, phased processes (informal, formal, review) designed to address dissatisfaction or challenge decisions within educational settings. They require submitting evidence within strict timeframes. Successful processes usually involve an investigation, written response, and, if unresolved, escalation to a higher authority.

1. Introduction and purpose

Creative Academy aspires for every student or beneficiary on our courses or programmes to have a positive and nurturing experience. We are committed to delivering a high-quality, fair and enriching syllabus and projects that give students the skills, abilities and industry knowledge needed to gain sustainable employment in the creative industries.

There may be occasions when a student/beneficiary is dissatisfied with an aspect of their experience. This procedure sets out how students can raise a complaint or appeal, how we will handle it, the timescales that apply, and the external bodies that may consider the matter once the internal procedure is complete.

The aims of this procedure are to:

- enable students/beneficiaries to enquire about, question or appeal against decisions made while training at Creative Academy (for example, an assessment decision);
- provide a clear, staged structure for resolving issues at the earliest opportunity;
- record and standardise all complaints and appeals to ensure openness, consistency and fairness;
- facilitate a student's right of appeal to the relevant awarding or validating body, where appropriate; and
- protect the interests of all students and the integrity of the qualifications we deliver.

2. Definitions

- Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Creative Academy, its staff or its community projects.
- Appeal: a request to review a specific decision, such as an assessment outcome, grade, or admissions decision.
- Student/beneficiary: a person currently enrolled with, or who has completed a course with, Creative Academy within the last **3 months**.
- Working day: Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays and periods when Creative Academy is closed.
- Formal external route: **ONLY** one external channel a student chooses after Stage 4 (see Section 7).

3. Scope

This procedure applies to all students/beneficiaries of Creative Academy. It covers complaints about:

- the organisation, its policies, facilities and services;
- the conduct of staff or other users;
- community and outreach projects; and

- academic and assessment matters relating to a course, module or qualification.

It does not cover matters dealt with under separate procedures, such as safeguarding concerns, disciplinary proceedings, data protection requests or staff grievances. These will be redirected to the appropriate procedure, and the student will be told this in writing.

4. Who can make a complaint

4.1 Complaints must come from the student

Complaints and appeals must be made by the student personally. Parents, guardians, carers, family members or other third parties cannot make a complaint or appeal on a student's behalf, and Creative Academy will not accept or act on complaints submitted by them.

All correspondence relating to a complaint or appeal will be sent directly to, and must be received directly from, the student/beneficiary. Creative Academy will not discuss the details of a complaint with a third party without the student's explicit written consent(from the student's email or by post), in line with UK data protection law (UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018).

4.2 Advocacy and support

If a student needs support to make or pursue a complaint, for example because of a disability, learning difference, language need or wellbeing concern, they may be accompanied or supported by an advocate. Students should refer to the **Creative Academy Student Advocacy Statement,** which sets out who can act as an advocate, how to nominate one, and the written consent required. An advocate supports the student; the complaint remains the student's own and all formal correspondence continues to be with the student.

4.3 Students under 18

Where a student is under 18, this procedure still requires the complaint to come from the student. Nothing in this procedure overrides Creative Academy's safeguarding duties; any safeguarding concern will be handled under the Safeguarding Policy.

5. Principles

- Complaints will be handled fairly, confidentially and without prejudice. No student will be disadvantaged or treated less favourably for making a complaint in good faith.
- A member of staff named in a complaint will not investigate or decide on that complaint.
- Students should provide evidence (emails, dates, notes of conversations, documents). Keeping a record of interactions is strongly recommended. Covert recording will not be accepted.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made to the process where needed, in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- Complaints that are vexatious, malicious or repeat a matter already concluded may be closed, with written reasons given.
- Complaints should normally be raised within 14 calendar days of the event, or of the student becoming aware of it. Late complaints will only be accepted where there is a good reason for the delay.

6. The internal procedure (Stages 1–4)

All timescales are maximums. If Creative Academy cannot meet a timescale, the student will be told in writing, with reasons and a revised date.

Stage 1 — Informal resolution

The student discusses the issue with the member of staff involved, with mediation from another suitable member of staff where appropriate. Students are encouraged to speak first to their Personal Tutor (allocated at the start of each academic year). If unresolved, the student may progress to Stage 2 within **5 working days**.

Stage 2 — Module Leader / Personal Tutor

The student meets the Module Leader or Personal Tutor responsible to discuss the situation and attempt resolution. If the student wishes to progress further, they must request Stage 3 in writing within **5 working days** of the Stage 2 outcome.

Stage 3 — Senior Lecturer review
A Senior member of Creative Academy staff not previously involved reviews the matter in greater detail and attempts resolution within **5 working days**. If unresolved, the complaint is forwarded to Stage 4.

Stage 4 — Principal / Quality Assurance review
The Creative Academy Principal or the Quality Assurance and Business Manager reviews the complaint with the student to attempt a final internal resolution. A written outcome will be issued within **15 working days**. This letter confirms that the internal procedure is complete and sets out the formal external route available to the student.

7. Formal external route after Stage 4

7.1 One route only

After Stage 4, a student may pursue one formal external route only. The correct route depends on what the complaint is about (see 7.2–7.4). Once a student has started a formal complaint through *one route*, they cannot open a parallel or subsequent complaint about the same matter through another route. For example, a student who takes a complaint to Slough Borough Council cannot then refer the same matter to the University of West London, and vice versa.

This is because each route leads to a different independent ombudsman:

- Slough Borough Council → Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
- University of West London → Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

Where a complaint contains more than one element, each element must be directed to the body responsible for it (although if it is multiple issues, *Slough Borough Council* is the advised route), and each element may only follow one route.

7.2 Primary route: Slough Borough Council

All complaints primarily go through Slough Borough Council. Complaints about the organisation, its staff and its community projects are non-modular issues and must follow this route; they cannot be referred to the University of West London or an awarding body. Formal written complaints should be sent to either:

- Director of Education, Slough Borough Council, 25 Windsor Road, Slough, SL1 2EL
- Corporate Complaints Team, Slough Borough Council, 25 Windsor Road, Slough, SL1 2EL

Slough Borough Council aims to respond within 15 working days. If the student or beneficiary remains dissatisfied once the Council's complaints procedure is complete, they may contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH — https://www.lgo.org.uk/make-a-complaint

7.3 Module and academic issues (Level 4 to 6) (University of West London)

Complaints and appeals relating solely to a university-validated modules/awards or academic matter may, instead of the Council route, be submitted to: Head of Performing Arts, University of West London, St Mary's Road, Ealing, London, W5 5RF — https://www.uwl.ac.uk/about-us/policies-and-regulations

Once the University's procedures are complete and a Completion of Procedures letter has been issued, the student may contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, Second Floor, Abbey Gate, 57–75 King's Road, Reading, RG1 3AB — https://www.oiahe.org.uk

7.4 Level 3 and awarding body qualifications

Complaints and appeals about a Level 3 or awarding body qualification must be sent to the relevant body below and must relate to that qualification only:

- Level 3 qualifications: SCL College — https://online.flippingbook.com/view/802101347/

- ISTD qualifications: Head of ISTD Customer Service and Quality Assurance, Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, Imperial House, 22/26 Paul Street, London, EC2A 4QE — https://www.istd.org/examinations/quality-assurance/
- Pilates qualifications: Active IQ — csteam@activeiq.co.uk, +44 (0)1480 467 950 — https://www.activeiq.co.uk/for-centres/policies-and-procedures/

Awarding bodies set their own deadlines (for example, Active IQ requires appeals within 20 working days of the student being notified of the decision). Students must check and meet those deadlines. Where an awarding body procedure is complete, the student may contact the qualifications regulator, Ofqual (public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk, 0300 303 3344).

8. Creative Academy's commitments

- inform every student of this procedure at induction and publish it on our website;
- record, track and validate every complaint and appeal;
- forward an appeal to the awarding body where a student considers a decision continues to disadvantage them after the internal procedure is complete;
- keep complaints and appeals records securely for a minimum of 18 months, and for any longer period required by an awarding body, then dispose of them securely;
- take appropriate action to protect other students and the integrity of the qualification where an outcome questions the validity of other results; and
- monitor complaints and appeals to inform quality improvement.

9. Confidentiality and data protection

Information about a complaint will be shared only with those who need it to investigate and resolve the matter, or where required by law, safeguarding duties, an awarding body or an ombudsman. Personal data will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Creative Academy's Privacy Notice.

10. How to make a complaint

- Phone: 01753 875400
- Email: info@creativeacademy.org
- Post: Creative Academy, 73a Stoke Poges Lane, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 3NY
- In person: by speaking to a member of staff or manager
- Website: the Contact Us page at www.creativeacademy.ac.uk

Please include your full name, course, a description of the issue, the dates involved, any evidence, and the outcome you are seeking.

11. Review of this procedure

This procedure will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation, regulatory requirements or partner arrangements change. Student representation will form part of the review. Updated versions will be published on the Creative Academy website. This procedure does not affect a student's statutory rights.

Related documents

- Student Advocacy Statement
- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Privacy Notice
- Awarding body complaints and appeals policies (SCL College, ISTD, Active IQ)