

Complaints, Whistleblowing and Appeals Policy v2

Employment, Skills, and Training (EST)

Version Control Sheet:

Document Title	Complaints, Whistleblowing and Appeals Policy v2
Author	Mike Hampton
Owner	Rob Taylor
Approver	Victoria Wickington
Doc version/status	V2
Date issued	01/08/2025
Review Date	31/07/2026
Division	Citizen Services
Intended Audience	Internal and External

Version History:

Version	Date	Summary of changes
V1.0	13/09/2023	First Issued
V1.1	17/10/2023	Rebranding only, no content changes
V1.2	05/06/2024	Amendment to job titles, no other content changes
V1.3	16/09/2024	Annual refresh
V2.0	01/08/2025	Annual refresh, formatting and job roles, new complaints mailbox

Change Control

Any requested changes to this document should be emailed to: mike.hampton@serco.com

Contents

1. Acronyms & Definitions.....3

2. Introduction3

2.1 Purpose.....3

2.2 Responsibilities.....3

3. Complaints Procedure4

4. Assessment Appeals Procedure5

5. How to Raise a Concern of Malpractice (Whistleblowing).....6

6. Subcontractors/Partner Providers.....6

7. Appendix 1 – Complaints Form.....7

8. Appendix 2 – Appeal Form.....8

1. Acronyms & Definitions

Acronym/Term	Definition
EST	Employment, Skills, and Training
HoDA	Head of Delivery Assurance
HoD	Head of Delivery
HoQP	Head of Quality & Performance
Delivery Assurance Team	Team reporting into the structure led by the HoDA.
Complaint	An allegation of something that is unsatisfactory or unacceptable
Appeals	A challenge of an assessment decision.
Assure	Serco's Incident Management System
Whistleblowing	An allegation against someone where you believe they have acted unlawfully or against Serco's mycode
mycode	Serco value that ensures we are doing the right thing, the right way.
SpeakUp	Serco service to report concerns that break the law or Serco's my code.

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose

The term "learner," within this policy, is used to describe all learners and apprentices involved with Serco Employment, Skills, and Training (EST) this also includes those learners enrolled with subcontractors.

We believe that all learners have the right to equal and fair access to learning, development, training, and assessment that enhances their career and life opportunities. Any stakeholder, including learners and employers, who makes a complaint, or an appeal can be fully confident that any approaches or disclosures to our staff will always remain private/confidential and treated with the upmost confidence and sensitivity. This policy ensures all complaints and appeals are dealt with in an effective and timely manner.

Any stakeholder who believes that they are being subjected to, or are suffering because of victimisation, discrimination, bullying, harassment or being excluded from equality of opportunity, will be encouraged, and supported to execute these procedures and seek confidential information, advice and guidance and support that is intended to resolve the concerns that have initiated the appeal or complaint.

2.2 Responsibilities

The Head of Delivery Assurance (HoDA) is responsible for the overall control of the complaints, whistleblowing, and appeals policy. All formal complaints (appendix 1) / appeals (appendix 2) must be sent to the EST complaints mailbox: est.complaints@serco.com. The delivery team accessing the mailbox will either action the complaint/appeal or allocate this out to a relevant person within the team. *Please see the whistle-blowing section for details over responsibilities.*

Any person who is allocated the investigation into the complaint/appeal is responsible for taking prompt and effective action. All complaints/appeals must be formally responded to and resolved **within ten working days of receipt**. All complaints/appeals must be documented on the central register including progress and resolution updates.

3. Complaints Procedure

Complaints may be raised in several ways, including via email, telephone, letter or in person. HoDA will ensure that any complaints activity is reported within the bi-monthly SMT meetings. On occasions where the complaint has come about from the EST policies/procedures in place, these will be reviewed to ensure continuous improvement.

3.1 Stage 1 (concerns/informal complaint)

Learners/employers are encouraged to raise any areas of concern with their tutor/listed main contact in the first instance before raising a formal complaint. Concerns raised at this stage are not categorised as a formal complaint, if the learner is not satisfied with the response from the tutor/listed main contact then this will be escalated to Stage 2. **Stage 1 concerns do not need to be sent to the EST complaints mailbox.**

3.2 Stage 2 (formal complaints)

Where a learner/employer has raised a concern at Stage 1 and are not satisfied with the outcome, this must be escalated to Stage 2 by either the learner/employer or tutor/listed main contact.

All Stage 2 complaints must be formally recorded within the Complaints Form (appendix 1) and forwarded to the EST complaints mailbox est.complaints@serco.com. This should be done **within 24 hours** of receiving the formal complaint.

All Stage 2 complaints must be treated seriously and follow the procedures set out in this policy.

All Stage 2 complaints should be raised by the complainant within **five working days** of the concern/incident – or as soon as possible, whichever is sooner. Complaints raised outside of this will still be followed up as outlined in this policy.

The person receiving the complaint must ensure the following details are recorded:

- ✓ Name (person & organisation if appropriate).
- ✓ Address.
- ✓ Telephone number.
- ✓ Course attended (if relevant).
- ✓ Details of complain.
- ✓ Any action/outcome requested.

All Stage 2 complaints will be reviewed by the Delivery Assurance Team (who report into the HoDA), this team will:

- ✓ Ensure the details of the complaint are stored centrally on Serco's incident management system Assure.
- ✓ Classify the complaint for reporting purposes.
- ✓ Send details of the complaint to the HoDA or nominated deputy.

The HoDA or Nominated Deputy must:

- ✓ Investigate the complaints themselves or allocate this out to a relevant person within the team.
- ✓ Send an acknowledgement letter or email to the complainant **within three working days** of receiving the complaint details.
- ✓ Provide the complainant with a copy of the complaints and appeals procedure.

Where another person has been allocated the role of investigating the complaint further, they must record the following details during their investigation:

- ✓ Record the findings of the investigation.
- ✓ Agreed action to be taken, and action plan where required.
- ✓ Draft response to be sent out to the complainant with the outcome and agreed actions/action plan. This will be sent to the HoDA, who will review the draft response and send this to the complainant via the complaint's mailbox est.complaints@serco.com.

The Delivery Assurance Team will update Assure and when appropriate close the complaint.

3.3 Stage 3 (Escalation)

If a learner/employer is not satisfied with the response from Stage 2, they may escalate their complaint to Stage 3.

All stage 3 complaints must be sent to the EST complaints mailbox est.complaints@serco.com within **24 hours** of receiving the outcome of Stage 2. When raising a stage 3 complaint it is important to provide as much information as possible in why the outcome of stage 2 was unsatisfactory and what the desired outcome would be for the individual.

All stage 3 outcomes will be dealt with directly by the HODA or alternatively Head of Quality and Performance (HoQP). Due to the possible complexity of stage 3 complaints, we are unable to put a set timeframe for response, however the complainant will be kept informed at appropriately.

4. Assessment Appeals Procedure

4.1 Stage 1

On the occasion that a learner is not satisfied with the outcome of an assessment they may wish to follow through with the appeals procedure. All appeals must be formally responded to and investigated within ten working days of receipt. Learners are encouraged to raise any appeals with their tutor/coach, in writing, in the first instance to see if there is a straightforward resolution.

If the tutor/coach is unable to resolve the appeal this must be reported to the Apprenticeship Manager or Training Manager, within 24 hours. The details of the Apprenticeship Manager or Training Manager will have been shared within induction and/or can be gathered by contacting the complaints inbox (*Address to be added here*). Any referrals for an appeal to the Apprenticeship Manager or Training Manager must be completed on the Appeal Form (**appendix 2**).

The Apprenticeship Manager or Training Manager must provide the learner with a copy of this policy and the Appeal Form (**appendix 2**) which captures the following information:

- ✓ Name (person & organisation if appropriate)
- ✓ Address
- ✓ Telephone number.
- ✓ Course attended (if relevant)
- ✓ Details of appeals
- ✓ Any action/outcome requested.

The Apprenticeship Manager or Training Manager must:

- ✓ Report the appeal to the Delivery Assurance Team who will record this on Assure, following the same process as outlined in the complaints section of this policy.
- ✓ Remain the investigator for the appeal, unless this is not appropriate, then the HoDA will allocate this to an alternative, and appropriate, member of staff.
- ✓ Provide a written (letter or email) outcome to the learner within ten working days of receipt of the appeal.

On occasions where the Apprenticeship Manager or Training Manager is unable to resolve the appeal this will then be escalated to stage 2, as below (with five working days).

All appeals must be reported to the HoCI and Head of Delivery (HoD) monthly, or more frequently if required. On occasions where the appeal has come about from the policies/procedures in place, these will be reviewed to ensure continuous improvement.

4.2 Stage 2

On the occasion that the complainant (includes appeal) is not satisfied with the outcome they must respond in writing (email or letter) to the HoDA, stating the reasons for this. The HoDA must report this to the HoQP (for complaints and appeals), who will review the full complaint/appeal and make the decision on the best course of action, within ten working days of the request to review the complaint/appeals.

If the complainant is still not satisfied, they can refer the complaint further. Each funding organisation/awarding organisation will have their own processes, and the Delivery Assurance Team can provide these upon request by contacting (Address to be entered here). These details will also have been provided upon induction onto the programme.

5. How to Raise a Concern of Malpractice (Whistleblowing)

Speak Up is a confidential tool available to you if you believe someone is doing something that breaks the law or Serco's mycode. This procedure is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may, at least, initially be investigated separately but might then lead to the invocation of other procedures (e.g., disciplinary).

For up-to-date Serco policy and guidance on raising a concern please visit the following links:

- ✓ Serco Group Procedure – Raising a Concern (internal link only) <https://my.serco.com/cdp/group-procedure-raising-a-concern>
- ✓ Serco mycode: <https://www.serco.com/mycode>
- ✓ SpeakUp: <https://www.serco.com/mycode/not-sure/speaking-up>

6. Subcontractors/Partner Providers

All subcontractors/partner providers must have their own complaints and appeals processes in place. These will be reviewed by the Skills Continuous Improvement Team during initial due diligence on the subcontractor/partner provider, and annually thereafter, to ensure the process is robust and appropriate.

On the occasion a complaint or appeal is raised by a stakeholder regarding the activity associated to the subcontractor/partner provider this should initially go through the subcontractor/partner provider's processes. Any complaints and appeals raised by the subcontractor/partner provider must be reported to the Delivery Assurance Team via est.complaints@serco.com monthly, or sooner where appropriate.

The Delivery Assurance Team will record any complaints/appeals Assure, as outlined throughout this policy., and is also responsible for tracking until resolution.

7. Appendix 1 - Complaints Form

Date Complaint Received:	
--------------------------	--

PART A - Receipt			
Complaint Received			
Name:		Tel No:	
Position:		Email:	
Complaint Made By:			
Name:		Tel No:	
Company:		Email:	
Address:		Source:	
Course Attended:			
Complaint Details: <i>(Provide details of the complaint)</i>			
Requested action/outcome:			

PART B - Complaint Evaluation & Action Taken	
Details of Complaint Owner:	
Name:	Tel No:
Position:	Email:
Evaluation & Actions <i>(to be completed by Manager/Director dealing with the complaint)</i>	

PART C - Completion			
Complaint resolved with complainant	Yes	No	N/A
Recipient of complaint informed	Yes	No	N/A
Corrective/preventive action required	Yes	No	N/A (if yes please record details)
Name of Head of Delivery Assurance (or equivalent)	Signature	Date	

8. Appendix 2 – Appeal Form

Date Appeal Received:	
-----------------------	--

PART A - Receipt			
Appeal Received			
Name:		Tel No:	
Position:		Email:	
Appeal Made By:			
Name:		Tel No:	
Company:		Email:	
Address:		Source:	
Course Attended:			
Appeal Details: <i>(Provide details of the appeal)</i>			
Requested action/outcome:			

PART B – Appeal Evaluation & Action Taken	
Details of Appeal Owner:	
Name:	Tel No:
Position:	Email:
Evaluation & Actions <i>(to be completed by owner dealing with the appeal)</i>	

PART C – Completion			
Appeal resolved	Yes	No	N/A
Recipient of appeal informed	Yes	No	N/A
Corrective/preventive action required	Yes	No	N/A (if yes please record details)
Name of Head of Delivery Assurance (or equivalent)	Signature		Date