

COMPLAINTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

We try to give the best possible service in all areas of our work, but we accept that, from time to time, something may go wrong. When this happens, we'd like to know so that we can try to put things right.

We view complaints as valuable feedback about our work and will use the feedback to review the ways in which we do things, to learn from our mistakes and to improve the service you receive from HMFS Consulting (HMFSC).

We know that making a complaint can take time and seem daunting. This policy explains how to complain, and how we will deal with your complaint.

This policy deals with externally generated formal complaints. It does not cover internal grievances and complaints for which there are other policies and procedures.

THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE COMPLAINTS POLICY

All companies have a duty to act legally, equitably, responsibly and reasonably. An important part of this is having publicly available procedures for dealing with complaints whether from individuals or organisations.

We are aiming for:

- consistency with current UK best practice in this area;
- simplification of procedures to minimise administration and cost;
- avoid duplication of complaint records;
- transparent implementation.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is a demonstration of unhappiness about the service we provide, including the conduct of our staff, or the action we take (or do not take). Anyone distressed by our service, the conduct of our staff or our actions can make a complaint. This policy provides step-by-step guidance on how to complain to HMFSC about most areas of our work.

However, in some instances, your complaint may be about an issue that we have no direct control over, for example the standards and targets set by other bodies or the Government. HMFSC staff will tell you whether your complaint falls within our control and if not, where you can direct your complaint.

Making a complaint

Our aim is to resolve complaints quickly and at an early stage. First of all, please raise your complaint with the member of HMFSC staff that you have been dealing with. Let them know what the problem is, how it happened, and what you'd like us to do to sort it out. You can get in touch with them by telephone, letter or email. They will do their best to try and find a solution as quickly as possible. If you are not satisfied with the response you get, you can use **Stage 2** of the complaints procedure.

This stage involves you writing to the course manager.

If we are unsure about who should deal with your complaint, for example if it covers many aspects of our work, either the Centre Co-ordinator will look into your complaint and advise you of who is investigating your complaint.

You can complain using the form found attached to this policy or by letter, in person (by appointment), over the phone, or by fax. You can also email your complaint.

Whatever method you use, please make sure you tell us about:

- the problem, including what has happened, when it happened, and the background to the problem if you think it's relevant;
- what you've done to try and sort it out; and
- what you want us to do to put things right.

If you send a letter or fill in the complaints form, it is a good idea to keep a copy.

When the Manager receives your complaint, they will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working days;
- advise you of who is dealing with the complaint and your complaint number; and
- advise you when you can expect to receive a full response.

The person investigating the complaint will:

- respond to your complaint within 15 working days of receiving your complaint.

Sometimes, if the complaint is complicated and we need to get answers from different people, it may take longer than 15 working days for us to get back to you. If this happens, we will let you know and keep you informed of progress.

INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

Once we have received your complaint, we will investigate the complaint and send you a letter explaining our findings within 15 working days of receiving your complaint.

Please note that if you are complaining about a person or a group of persons, we have to seek permission from you before copying the complaint material or approaching those complained about to convey the facts of the complaint to them. This is normally in the form of a letter and increases the length of the investigation.

We will keep you informed of the progress of the investigation if it is taking longer than anticipated and try to keep the investigation to a reasonable timescale.

Once we have looked into your complaint, we will send you a letter explaining what our findings have been and what action you can take next if you are unhappy with our findings.

I'M UNHAPPY ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF MY COMPLAINT – WHAT CAN I DO?

If you are unhappy with our findings, you can ask for the complaint to be reviewed by the Lead Internal Verifier of HMFSC, They will:

- Review your complaint, taking into account what you have told us, and the investigation carried out by the investigator;
- send you a full response within 15 working days of receiving your complaint.

Sometimes, it may take longer than 15 working days for the Manager to respond to your complaint. If this happens, we will let you keep you informed of the progress of the investigation.

If you are still unhappy following the manager review of the complaint, you can ask for the complaint to be reviewed by our Complaints Panel committee, which is a committee of the HMFSC Management Board.

The Complaints Panel will consider if your complaint has been investigated fully and fairly. The Complaints Panel can refer the matter back to the Manager for further investigation. It can make recommendations to the Management Board of any change to policy, structure or procedures arising from the process.

HMFS COMPLAINT FORM (CONFIDENTIAL)

Please use this form to set out details of your complaint. Please feel free to add additional pages or information. Help us improve our services by giving us as much information as possible. Give dates whenever you can. All complaints are dealt with in the strictest confidence and the information you give will be held and processed in paper and/or computer files for the purpose of looking into your complaint.

| Your Details | | | |
|---|--|------|--|
| Full Name | | | |
| Name of contact (if different) | | | |
| Address | | | |
| | | | |
| Postcode | | | |
| Contact number | | | |
| YOUR COMPLAINT | | | |
| Please give details about your complaint in the space below. It will help us if you can give relevant dates, and the name of any member (s) of staff at HMFS that you've been dealing with. | | | |
| | | | |
| What do you think HMFS should do to put things right? | | | |
| | | | |
| Signature | | Date | |

The information you give will be held and processed on electronic files for the purpose of looking into your complaint.