



Lincoln Bishop University

Document Administration

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***Please Note:** This document remains valid until formally revoked or replaced by the University.

PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO EXTERNALLY AWARDED QUALIFICATIONS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

VERSION CONTROL TABLE

<u>Version Number</u>	<u>Date Authorised</u>	<u>Summary of Key Changes</u>
1.0	13 December 2017	Procedure first introduced and approved by Senate
2.0	20 June 2023	Procedure reviewed and updated to reflect revised practices
3.0	10 June 2026	Procedure reviewed and amended to reflect current practices



PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO EXTERNALLY AWARDED QUALIFICATIONS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

1. STUDENT COMPLAINTS - APPRENTICESHIPS

1.1. Lincoln Bishop University's Student Complaints Procedure will apply to complaints received from apprentices/students undertaking an apprenticeship through the University. The following will apply to complaints from apprentices:

- 1.1.1. Where an apprentice/student has made a complaint about an issue related to their study of an apprenticeship, and they are dissatisfied with the University's response to their complaint under the Review stage of the University's procedure, they may request a review of the case by the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will only consider complaints that occurred within 12 months after the issue happened, and may also signpost the apprentice to another organisation, such as the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE). Details may be found on the DfE website (<https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/>) or via the following contact information:
- i. Telephone: 08000 150600
 - ii. Email: helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.org.uk

2. STUDENT COMPLAINTS – EXTERNALLY AWARDED QUALIFICATIONS (UNFUNDED)

2.1. Students will be required to follow the University's Student Complaints Procedure until exhausted, at which point the complaint may be raised to the appropriate external awarding body.

3. EMPLOYER COMPLAINTS - APPRENTICESHIPS

3.1. The following is the University's procedure for dealing with complaints by an employer in relation to an apprenticeship through Lincoln Bishop University. The following will apply to complaints from employers.

3.2. This procedure outlines the process for employers of apprentices/students who study at Lincoln Bishop University to make a complaint about the service provided by the University. Lincoln Bishop University has a Student Complaints Procedure for apprentices/students who wish to make a complaint, which can be found on the University website.

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- 3.3. Lincoln Bishop University aims to settle complaints promptly, fairly and courteously in the best interest of all parties, and to address areas where improvement is needed. The University works to ensure that the interests and wellbeing of all those associated with a complaint are properly considered.
- 3.4. The University aims to handle complaints in a manner which:
- 3.4.1. encourages informal conciliation nearest to the source of the complaint;
 - 3.4.2. is efficient and fair;
 - 3.4.3. treats complaints with appropriate seriousness, empathy and confidentiality;
 - 3.4.4. facilitates early resolution;
 - 3.4.5. where relevant, ensure that its practice improves as a result.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1. An **Informal Complaint** is defined as an issue that an employer wishes to raise with a member of University staff, without using the formal complaints process. Informal complaints are usually quick to resolve and unlikely to require an in-depth investigation.
- 4.2. A **Complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction about Lincoln Bishop University’s action, or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by, or on behalf of the University”.
- 4.3. The process for raising a complaint by an employer of an apprentice/student studying with Lincoln Bishop University is detailed below.

5. STAGE 1: INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

- 5.1. Where possible, complaints should be raised immediately with relevant departments at the source of the complaint, or via the Apprenticeship Support Officer. The aim is to resolve the problem directly and informally at the earliest opportunity. It is anticipated that the vast majority of complaints will be resolved in this manner.

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- 5.2. Although Stage 1 is informal, the staff involved should provide a written outcome as to the Employer's complaint, copying in the Apprenticeship Support Officer, Deputy Dean: Apprenticeships and Partnerships, and the Regulatory Compliance Office (regulatorycompliance@lincolnbishop.ac.uk), who will record the details of all informal employer complaints.
- 5.3. Acknowledgement of the complaint will be provided within 5 working days, and a full response given within 1 month.
- 5.4. If the employer is unable to raise the complaint at the source, or is dissatisfied with the outcome, they should make a formal complaint (see Stage 2 below).

6. STAGE 2: FORMAL COMPLAINTS

- 6.1. To make a formal complaint, an employer should put the matter in writing to Lincoln Bishop University by email to the Regulatory Compliance Office (regulatorycompliance@lincolnbishop.ac.uk). The email should be titled as a complaint and set out the details of the complaint in full and what would be an appropriate resolution.
- 6.2. The University will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days, and the complaint will be forwarded to an 'Investigating Officer' who has not been previously involved with the complaint. The Investigating Officer will normally be a member of the University Leadership Group or be of equivalent seniority.
- 6.3. The Investigating Officer will review all information submitted and meet with relevant members of staff to review the complaint. The Investigating Office will also speak with the employer complainant to clarify facts where required. As part of the process, mediation may be offered to resolve the complaint. If mediation is offered, revised timescales for the resolution of the complaint will be agreed in writing between Lincoln Bishop University and the complainant.
- 6.4. A written response relating to the findings of the inquiry will be issued by the Investigating Officer within a maximum of four weeks of the date of receipt of the original complaint.
- 6.5. If the employer complainant is not satisfied with the action taken, he/she may proceed to Stage 3 of the procedure.

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7. STAGE 3: REVIEW

- 7.1. Where employers are not satisfied with the response provided by Lincoln Bishop University at Stage 2, they should refer their complaint to the Executive Dean: Teaching, Learning & Student Success, via Regulatory Compliance (regulatorycompliance@lincolnbishop.ac.uk) who will consider the complaint for review where:
- 7.1.1. there was a procedural irregularity in the conduct of the complaint procedures;
 - 7.1.2. clear reasons why the complaint was rejected at the Formal Stage have not been effectively communicated to the complainant;
 - 7.1.3. new evidence is now available which was not available upon reasonable enquiry or application at the time of the investigation during the Formal Stage;
 - 7.1.4. the decision reached was of such nature that it was one which no reasonable person could have reached on the available evidence.
- 7.2. The Review Stage will not normally consider issues afresh or involve further investigation. A complaint must have been considered at the Formal Stage before it can be escalated to the Review Stage.
- 7.3. The Executive Dean: Teaching, Learning & Student Success may dismiss an appeal in writing to the employer within 5 working days. In such cases, a Completion of Procedures Letter will be issued by the Regulatory Compliance team.
- 7.4. If the Executive Dean: Teaching, Learning & Student Success considers the appeal to be well found, they will allocate a request for review to a senior member of the University, normally a member of the University Executive, who has had no previous involvement with the case. The Executive Dean: Teaching, Learning & Student Success will normally respond to the employer within 5 working days, detailing the process for the Review Stage and confirming the identity and contact details of the member of the Executive who will be conducting the Review.
- 7.5. When the review has been undertaken, the employer will be issued with a letter/report from the Executive member detailing the final decision. Where a complaint is upheld or partially upheld, information will be provided on how and when the University will implement any remedies where appropriate and whether this includes an apology.



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- 7.6. The Review Stage should normally be completed within 21 working days, though in the rare circumstances that a Review Panel is convened, it is expected that this will exceed the normal timings. Where there are clear and justifiable reasons for extending the timescales at the Review Stage, then the complainant should be notified in writing of the reason for the delay and the revised timescale for bringing the review to a conclusion.
- 7.7. The outcome of the Review stage represents the Final Stage of the University's internal procedures. The employer will be issued a Completion of Procedures Letter by the Regulatory Compliance team within 28 days of the conclusion of the review. If the employer remains dissatisfied, they will be directed to pursue the matter through the procedures of the DfE. The DfE will only consider complaints within 12 months of when the issue occurred. Details may be found via the below:
- 7.7.1. Website: <https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/>
 - 7.7.2. Phone: 08000 150600
 - 7.7.3. Email: helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.org.uk