

PACE Northwest – Customer Service Charter & Complaints Procedure

Approved by: Board of Directors

Policy owner: Quality Manager

Effective date: 29 August 2025

Next review due: Annually each August (or sooner if law/guidance changes)

1. Purpose

PACE Northwest is committed to delivering high-quality training and education services with professionalism, integrity and respect. This **Customer Service Charter** sets out what learners, employers and partners can expect from us, and what we expect in return. It also includes our legally compliant **Complaints Procedure** to ensure concerns are dealt with fairly, transparently and in line with UK regulatory and funding requirements.

2. Customer Service Charter

Our commitments

We will:

- Treat all learners, employers, staff and partners with courtesy, dignity and respect, in line with the **Equality Act 2010** and our Equality & Diversity Policy.
- Provide accurate, up-to-date information on programmes, entry requirements, costs/funding, support and progression opportunities, complying with consumer protection law (e.g., **Consumer Rights Act 2015**).
- Ensure impartial and accessible Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) before enrolment, in line with **ESFA funding rules** and the **matrix Standard**.
- Deliver training and assessment to awarding-body standards, supported by qualified and competent staff.

- Provide safe learning and working environments, in line with **Health & Safety at Work Act 1974** and **Safeguarding/Prevent duties**.
- Respect confidentiality and process personal data in line with **UK GDPR** and **Data Protection Act 2018**.
- Respond promptly to enquiries and feedback, aiming to:
 - Acknowledge general enquiries within **2 working days**.
 - Provide a substantive response within **10 working days**.
- Regularly review and improve services, seeking feedback from learners and employers.

Our expectations of customers

We ask learners, employers and partners to:

- Treat staff, learners and partners with respect.
- Provide accurate information when enrolling or engaging with us.
- Attend training punctually, participate fully and follow provider/employer health and safety rules.
- Respect our policies on safeguarding, equality, diversity, inclusion and acceptable use of IT.
- Pay fees promptly (where applicable) and comply with funding/contract terms.

3. Complaints Procedure

PACE Northwest takes all complaints seriously. We aim to resolve issues quickly, informally where possible, but also provide a formal route of escalation.

3.1 Scope

This procedure applies to all learners, employers, partners and members of the public who wish to raise a complaint about our services, staff or contractors. It does not cover:

- Appeals against academic assessment decisions (covered in the **Assessment Appeals Policy**).
- Whistleblowing concerns (covered in the **Whistleblowing Policy**).

3.2 Principles

- Accessible: anyone can raise a complaint without disadvantage.
- Fair: complaints will be considered objectively and without bias.
- Confidential: details will be shared only with those who need to know.
- Transparent: outcomes will be explained and reasons given.
- Timely: we will adhere to clear response timescales.
- Escalation: independent routes available if not resolved.

3.3 Stages

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

- Raise the issue with the relevant staff member, tutor or line manager as soon as possible.
- We aim to resolve informally within **5 working days**.

Stage 2 – Formal complaint (in writing)

- Submit to: becs@pace-com.org or by post to the Quality Manager.
- Please provide: your name/contact details; details of the complaint; relevant dates/times; any evidence.
- Acknowledgement within **5 working days**; investigation and written response within **20 working days**.

Stage 3 – Appeal

- If dissatisfied, request an internal appeal to the Managing Director within **10 working days** of the Stage 2 outcome.
- Appeal will be reviewed by a senior manager not previously involved.
- Outcome issued within **20 working days**; this decision is final within PACE Northwest.

Stage 4 – External escalation

If you remain dissatisfied after exhausting internal processes, you may escalate:

- For **ESFA-funded provision**: Education and Skills Funding Agency complaints process.
- For **apprenticeships**: Apprenticeship Service support or ESFA.
- For **qualifications/assessments**: relevant Awarding Organisation.
- For **data protection** issues: the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- For other statutory matters: relevant regulatory or ombudsman body.

3.4 Safeguarding/serious concerns

Complaints relating to safeguarding, health & safety or illegal activity will be prioritised and may be referred directly to statutory authorities (e.g., Local Authority Designated Officer, police, Ofsted, ESFA).

3.5 Record-keeping and monitoring

- All complaints recorded in the **Complaints Register**.
- Monitored by the Quality Manager and reported termly to the Board.
- Trends analysed and actions taken to improve services.
- Records retained for **at least 6 years** in line with funding/legal requirements.

4. Related policies and procedures

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding & Prevent Policy
- Data Protection & Privacy Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Assessment Appeals Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

5. Publication and contact

This Charter & Complaints Procedure is published on our website and made available to all learners and employers at induction.

Contact for complaints:

Quality Manager – becs@pace-com.org

PACE Northwest, 46 Medway, Strand Centre, Bootle, England, L20 4SR

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