Form Title: Complaints Policy
Form Ref: TPOL_008
Author: Lisa Edwards
Date: August 2025
Version: 1.0

NIS Group complaints policy

Version	Reviewed by	Date
Version 1.0	Dave Sargent	August 2025

Review date: August 2026

Contents

Contents 2

1. Purpose 3

2. Scope 3

3. Definition of a Complaint 3

4. Principles 4

5. Roles and Responsibilities 5

6. Complaints procedure 6

Annex A - Complaints Procedure Flowchart 9

Annex B - Complaints Form Template 10

1. Purpose

NIS Group is committed to delivering a high-quality learning experience for all learners, employers and stakeholders. We value feedback and recognise the importance of resolving concerns promptly, fairly and transparently.

This policy sets out the process for raising, handling and resolving complaints, in line with:

- Ofqual General Conditions of Recognitions (Condition D4 – Responding to enquiries and complaints).
- ESFA Funding Rules and associated contract requirements
- Good practice expectations of awarding organisations and regulatory bodies.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All learners registered with NIS Group
- Employers and clients engaging NIS Group services
- Subcontractors and delivery partners
- All NIS Group staff, contractors and associates

This policy does **not** cover:

- Appeals against assessment decisions (See TPOL 004 – Appealing against assessment decisions)
- Allegations of malpractice or maladministration (See TPOL 005 – Malpractice and maladministration policy)
- Safeguarding or Prevent concerns (See TPOL 013 – Safeguarding policy)
- Whistleblowing disclosures (See POL 016 – Whistleblowing policy)

3. Definition of a Complaint

For the purpose of this policy, a complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction about a significant aspect of NIS Group's services, provision, or conduct, where the matter has not been resolved through informal discussion and where a formal response or action is required.

We encourage all stakeholders to raise concerns promptly with the relevant staff member so that they can be addressed and resolved informally wherever possible. Many issues can be resolved quickly without needing to enter the formal complaints process.

An example of a complaint may relate to (not exhaustive):

- **Quality or delivery of training, assessment, or support** – e.g., sessions not delivered as agreed, or delivery not in line with published course information.
- **Professional conduct** – e.g., inappropriate behaviour, language, or attitude from a staff member, trainer, associate or delivery partner.
- **Access to agreed facilities, resources or adjustments** – e.g., delays in processing reasonable adjustments which has led to delay or failure of qualifications, accessibility arrangements not being met.

Not every concern will be considered a formal complaint. Feedback, suggestions, and minor day-to-day issues should be directed through normal communication channels or via learner feedback mechanisms. The formal complaints process is reserved for issues that could not be resolved informally, or where the matter is serious enough to warrant formal investigation.

Note for malicious or false complaints:

NIS Group takes all complaints seriously and will investigate them thoroughly. However, malicious, or knowingly false complaints will not be accepted. Where evidence indicates that complaint has been made in bad faith, the matter may be referred for further investigation under the malpractice and maladministration policy, the safeguarding policy of the staff disciplinary policy as appropriate. For staff, such conduct may be treated as misconduct or gross misconduct and could result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

4. Principles

Our approach is designed to resolve concerns effectively, maintain trust, and contribute to continuous improvement across our provision. The following principles apply to all complaints:

4.1 Fairness and consistency:

- All complaints will be considered objectively, using the same process for all stakeholders.
- Decisions will be based on evidence, not opinion or prior history.
- Where possible the person investigating the complaint will be independent of the issue raised.

4.2 No disadvantage for raising concerns:

- Stakeholders can raise a complaint in good faith without fear of disadvantage or negative consequences.
- “Good faith” means the concern is raised honestly; with the belief it is genuine.

4.3 Timely acknowledgement and response:

- All complaints will be acknowledged within three working days of receipt.
- A full written response will be provided within 20 working days.
- If more time is required (due to evidence gathering), the complainant will be informed and provided with a revised timescale.

4.4 Corrective and preventative action:

- Where a complaint is upheld, immediate corrective action will be taken to address the issue.
- Preventative measures will be implemented to reduce the likelihood of recurrence, which may include policy or procedural changes, additional training or improved communication channels.
- Actions will be added to the Risk Register and recorded within the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and monitored for effectiveness.

4.5 Alignment with NIS Group Policies:

- The complaints process will be conducted in line with the Quality Excellence and Continuous Improvement Policy and the Internal Quality Assurance Strategy.
- Lessons learned from complaints will feed directly into continuous improvement activities, ensuring the contribute to the ongoing enhancement of our provision.

4.6 Transparency and record-keeping:

- All stages of the complaints process will be documented, with an auditable trail maintained in line with data protection requirements.
- Outcomes and learning points will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team (SMT) to identify trends, risks and opportunities for improvement.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Clear roles and responsibilities ensure that complaints are handled promptly, fairly and in line with NIS Group policy and regulatory requirements.

5.1 Senior Management Team (SMT)

- Holds overall accountability for the effective operation of the complaints process.
- Reviews complaints data, trends and lessons learners to inform strategic decision-making and continuous improvement.
- Ensures corrective and preventative actions are implemented and monitored.

5.2 Quality Team

- Acts as the central point for receipt of all complaints via quality@nisgroup.co.uk.
- Acknowledges all complaints within three working days.

- Logs all complaints in the complaints register and ensures records are retained in line with data protection requirements.
- Allocates an appropriate investigating manager, ensuring impartiality and no conflict of interest.
- Monitors investigation timelines and ensures updates are provided to complainants.
- Ensures links to related processes (e.g., malpractice, appeals, safeguarding) are identified and managed.

5.3 Investigating Manager

- Conducts a fair, evidence-based investigation within agreed timescales.
- Gathers statements, documents and other relevant evidence.
- Makes finding and recommendations for resolution, corrective action, and preventative measures.
- Provides a written outcome to the Quality Team for communication to the complainant.
- Investigations must be conducted in line with recognised good practice. Managers should refer to the SafeHR Management Guide: "How to Carry Out an Investigation" to ensure processes are consistent, impartial and legally compliant.

5.4 All Stakeholders

- Take ownership of resolving minor concerns informally in the first incidence wherever possible.
- Refer any matter that meets the definition of a complaint to the Quality Team immediately.
- Cooperate fully and honestly with any complaint investigation.
- Implement corrective actions promptly when required.

5.5 Complainants

- Raise concerns promptly and in good faith, providing as much detail and supporting evidence as possible.
- Engage constructively with the complaints process and respect the rights of other involved.

6. Complaints procedure

6.1 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- Wherever possible, concerns should be raised directly with the person responsible for the matter, at the earliest opportunity.

- Many issues can be resolved quickly without the need for a formal complaint.
- If the issue is resolved at this stage, no further action will be taken, although the feedback may still be recorded for quality monitoring.
- Any safeguarding, malpractice or assessment appeal must be referred directly to the relevant policy and procedure.

6.2 Stage 2 – Submitting a Formal Complaint

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, or is sufficiently serious to require formal action:

- Submit the complaint in writing to **quality@nisgroup.co.uk**
- Include the following details:
    - Your full name and contact details
    - Details of the complaint, including dates, names and any supporting evidence.
    - Any informal steps already taken to resolve the matter.
- The Quality Team will:
    - Acknowledge the complaint within three working days.
    - Log it in the Complaints Register.
    - Allocate an impartial investigating manager.

6.3 Stage 3 – Investigation

- The investigating manager will gather relevant evidence, which may include:
    - Interviews with the complainant, staff or witnesses.
    - Review of relevant documents, records or systems.
    - The investigation will normally be complete within 20 working days.
    - If additional time is needed, the complainant will be notified with a revised timescale.

6.4 Stage 4 – Outcome and resolution

- The investigating manager will make findings and recommendations.
- A written outcome will be sent to the complainant by the Quality Team, including:
    - Whether the complaint was upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.
    - Any corrective or preventative actions to be taken.
    - Details of how the matter will be monitored to prevent recurrence.

6.5 Escalation

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome:

- They may request a review by a member of the Senior Management Team not previously involved in the complaint. This could include the Group Managing Director, Chief Education Officer, Chief Executive Officer

- The request must be made within 10 working days of the outcome being issued, stating the grounds for escalation.
- SMT reviewer will consider if the process was correctly followed, and if the outcome was reasonable considering the evidence.
- Response will be provided to the complainant within 15 working days.
- This is the final stage of the NIS Group's internal complaints process.

6.6 Stage 6 – External Referral

If the complaint remains unresolved after exhausting NIS Group's internal process:

- Learners on funded provision may contact the West Midlands Combined Authority
- If the complaint relates to an awarding organisations qualification, the complainant may contact the awarding organisation directly. The Quality Team will provide the correct contact information on request.

6.7 Record keeping and Continuous Improvement

- All complaints, actions and outcomes will be recorded in the Complaints Register.
- Trends and themes will be reported to the SMT quarterly.
- Lessons learners will feed into the QIP and Risk Register.

Annex A - Complaints Procedure Flowchart

Step 1 - Informal resolution Raise concern directly with relevant person ⬇ If resolved → **End process** If not resolved → Proceed to Step 2
Step 2 – Formal submission Complaint submitted in writing to quality@nisgroup.co.uk (See Template at Annex B) ⬇
Step 3 – Investigation Quality logs complaint and assigns impartial investigator ⬇ Investigator gathers evidence and interviews relevant parties ⬇
Step 4 – Outcome Written response issued within 20 working days ⬇ Corrective action taken (if upheld) ⬇
Step 5 – Escalation Request SMT review (final stage) ⬇ External referral if still unresolved

Annex B - Complaints Form Template

NIS Group Complaints Form

Please complete all sections to help us process your complaint effectively. If you need support completing this form, contact: quality@nisgroup.co.uk.

1. Your Details:

Full Name: _____

Role / Relationship to NIS Group: _____

Contact Number: _____

Email Address: _____

1. **Complaint Details:**
   (Please give as much information as possible)

Date of Incident / Issue:
_____

Location / Centre (if applicable):
_____
_____

Staff Member (s) involved (if applicable):
_____
_____
_____
_____

Description of complaint:
(Please provide full details, including what happened, when, and who was involved. Continue a separate sheet if needed.)
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Evidence

(List any evidence you are providing, such as emails, letters, photographs, or witness statements.)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Informal Resolution Attempt

(Please outline any steps already taken to resolve the matter informally, and the outcome.)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Desired Outcome

(What would you like to see happen as a result of your complaint?)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Declaration I confirm that the information provided in this complaint form is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. **Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

For NIS Group Office Use Only:

- **Date Received:** _____
- **Complaint Reference Number:** _____
- **Acknowledged by:** _____
- **Investigator Assigned:** _____
- **Target Response Date:** _____