



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY

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King Stage Learning Centre (hereafter referred to as the organization) aims to provide all its students, teachers and clients with a high-quality service. However, from time to time problems do occur. You have the right to pursue the resolution of any difficulties and King Stage will undertake to respond to your complaint fairly and impartially, with care and concern. King Stage will also seek to learn from complaints which are upheld and make changes where necessary.

1. General Principles of Complaints

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS - INITIAL CONCERNS

1.1 The organization needs to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

1.2 These key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS - FORMAL PROCEDURES

1.3 The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

1.4 The organization might wish to nominate a member of staff to have responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure.

FRAMEWORK OF PRINCIPLES

1.5 An effective Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to understand and use
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- respect people's desire for confidentiality
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provide information to the organization's senior management team so that services can be improved



INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

1.6 It is suggested that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint, makes sure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary)
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of the interview.

RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

1.7 At each stage in the procedure King Stage will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- an undertaking to review organizations policies in light of the complaint

1.8 It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that King Stage could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

1.9 An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

VEXTIOUS COMPLAINTS

1.10 If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the director of King Stage is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

TIME-LIMITS

1.11 Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. An effective complaints procedure will have realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.



2. The Formal Complaints Procedure

THE STAGES OF COMPLAINTS

2.1 The complaints procedure has well-defined stages. A flow chart of stages can be found in Appendix 1. At each stage it would be helpful to clarify exactly who will be involved, what will happen, and how long it will take. There may, on occasion, be the need for some flexibility; for example, the possibility of further meetings between the complainant and the member of staff directly involved and further investigations may be required by the Academic Manager after a meeting with the complainant. Both of these stages could be included.

2.2 Two stages are likely to be sufficient:

- Stage one: complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the complaint)
- Stage two: complaint heard by Academic Manager

2.3 Regardless of how many stages King Stage chooses, an unsatisfied complainant can always take a complaint to the next stage.

3. Managing and Recording Complaints

RECORDING COMPLAINTS

3.1 It would be useful for school to record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. An example of a complaint form can be found in Annex 1. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, it would be helpful if the member of staff ensured that the complainant and King Stage have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls can be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

3.2 The complaints co-ordinator will be responsible for the records and hold them centrally.

ACADEMIC MANAGER REVIEW

3.3 The Managing Director /Academic manager can monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

3.4 As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to, and resolving complaints will contribute to King Stage improvement. When individual complaints are heard, King Stage may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the King Stage director and academic manager can be a useful tool in evaluating a school's performance.

PUBLICISING THE PROCEDURE

3.5 There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedures to be publicised. It is up to the Academic Manager and Managing Director to decide how to fulfil this requirement.



Flowchart of the Complaint Procedure

