

# Complaints Policy

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APP aims to provide a consistently excellent level of service to students. Whilst every care is taken to ensure high quality standards, there may be occasions where we fall short. Where this is the case, we would like the opportunity to improve our service by listening and responding, taking whatever action is needed to put mistakes right and to prevent them from happening again.

## **Policy aim and purpose**

APP is committed to providing individuals directly affected by our services with the opportunity to provide feedback on whether or not standards have been met. Our customers must have confidence that they will be listened to, therefore all feedback received, both positive and negative, will be acknowledged.

The aim of this policy is to provide a clear and structured process which highlights who can make a complaint (the complainant), how they can make a complaint and what APP will do to seek a resolution to the complainant's satisfaction.

Therefore APP aims to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as easy as possible
- An appropriate response is provided e.g. an explanation, apology or action taken
- Complaints are properly documented and reviewed to improve service

## **Definition of a complaint**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by APP, a member of its staff or a representative, affecting a stakeholder or group of stakeholders, especially APP students/candidates.

Dissatisfaction may be associated with the service provided or with the way an individual perceives to have been treated by a APP member of staff or representative, which may or may not be justified or associated with professional misconduct.

## **Equality of access and treatment**

Through publication of this policy on our website, individuals can access information about complaints procedures. We are committed to ensuring all individuals have equal access to this information. The act of filing a complaint will in no way prejudice the complainant. Complainants will be guaranteed confidentiality unless they waive that right, but should be aware that while APP will not divulge their name, the circumstances of the complaint could potentially make them identifiable to other parties involved in the investigation.

## **Who can make a complaint?**

Complaints can be made by an individual stakeholder or group of stakeholders who have been adversely affected by or have witnessed, the cause of dissatisfaction, or someone acting on behalf of the affected stakeholder (referred to as third parties).

Third parties submitting a complaint on behalf of the complainant may only do so with written permission to represent the complainant and their interests. This must be presented to and accepted by us.

Students/candidates wishing to raise dissatisfaction about services we provided must address their concern directly with us, the APP. Only when the APP's full complaints procedure has been followed and the complainant continues to remain dissatisfied with the outcome should they contact WSET Awards.

## **How to make a complaint**

### **Informal process**

We recognise that most individuals who are dissatisfied will want a problem to be addressed as quickly as possible; therefore an informal approach may be appropriate. The informal approach aims to resolve the concern quickly, keep matters low key and enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been directed.

Therefore the complainant should contact APP for an informal discussion; This can happen "face to face" if on the course premises but privately, or by phone or mail (see Contacts). In response

to which we will aim to resolve the concern by providing an explanation, apology or another desirable outcome.

If a concern cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, the formal complaints procedure should be followed. It might be necessary to provide further information to ensure the complaint is fully understood, thoroughly investigated and allow for a comprehensive response to be provided.

### **Formal process**

Formal complaints are submitted in writing a mail to the APP Main contact, for the initial investigation. When submitting a complaint, the complainant must provide the following:

- Name, address and contact information
- Full details of the complaint i.e. the cause of dissatisfaction with operations, actions or behaviour
- All supporting information i.e. relevant documentation, dates, locations, any witnesses
- Details of any previous attempts to resolve the identified dissatisfaction
- What action or response they seek to resolve the dissatisfaction.

APP logs the complaint and will acknowledge the complaint in writing within **3 working days** of receipt.

Complaints will be investigated by the APP responsible who may contact the complainant or any other named parties for further information as required. The complainants name will not be mentioned to third parties or their identity otherwise revealed unless permission to do so has been obtained in advance.

A response, including explanation and resolution, will be provided within **20 working days** of the date of the initial acknowledge of the complaint. However, where the complainant wishes their name to be withheld from an investigation, APP will not be able to provide information on the outcome other than to inform the complainant that it has been completed. Exceptionally (e.g. in especially complex or serious complaints, or where a key party is out of contact for a period of time) it may be necessary to extend the duration of the investigation. In that case, the complainant will be notified and given a revised timescale. The outcome will be recorded and incorporated into APP' Continual Improvement Plan.

If the complainant continues to remain dissatisfied with the response provided by APP in the formal process, the next step will be to file a complaint, directly with WSET Awards, about the APP. Complainant is then referred to WSET's Quality Assurance Team (qa@wsetglobal.com).

**Please note: WSET Awards is only able to action complaints from students if they have been addressed with the APP and the student remains dissatisfied with the level of service and solutions offered .**