

QA 5.2 Learner Complaints Policy

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1 Learner Complaints

In accordance with the QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) and the guidelines of other awarding bodies, Cenit College has a learner complaints policy.

1.1 Policy Ownership

This policy will be owned by the Academic Committee. The responsibility for delivering the policy will be tasked to the Academic Committee, Management Board, Training Manager, and the QA Manager.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process for learners to initiate a complaint.

1.3 Scope

This policy applies to all learners that enrol on Cenit College programmes and utilise Cenit College services.

1.4 Roles and Responsibilities

QA Manager: Ongoing review and updates to this policy along with organisation wide implementations

Training Manager: Oversees the complaint process.

Complainant: The person who makes the complaint

Complainees: The person against whom the complaint is made.

1.5 Policy Statement

Cenit College is committed to ensuring that complaints are taken seriously and are considered a constructive part of the Colleges' feedback and continuous improvement process. All complaints are handled in confidence and with an understanding of the sensitivity to both the complainant and the complainees. Learners are entitled to make an informal and/or a formal complaint.

An **informal complaint** is where Cenit College will try and resolve the issue at hand informally through meetings or phone calls between the complainant and the complainees. Cenit College will make every effort to resolve complaints using the informal mechanisms.

A **formal** complaint is initiated when the informal complaint process does not resolve the issue at hand or where learners decide that they wish to make a formal complaint without having gone through the informal complaint process. The formal complaint has a defined process to follow.

The process for making a learner complaint will be detailed in the learner handbook.

1.6 Informal Complaint Procedure

The procedure for the learner making an informal complaint is as follows:

1. The learner must inform Cenit College in writing or in person within 5 working days of the incident occurring. This complaint can be communicated with the tutor, the programme leads or directly to the Training Manager or nominated deputy.
2. The relevant member of Cenit College staff will try and resolve the complaint informally through a meeting between the learner and complainees **within 10 working days**. If a meeting cannot be set up, a call (telephone or virtual) will take place.
3. Where the complaint is not resolved through the informal mechanism, the learner can.
 - a. Decide not to pursue the complaint further or
 - b. Lodge a formal complaint.

1.7 Formal Complaint Procedure

The procedure for dealing with formal complaints is as follows:

1. The learner will submit a complaint on the **Learner Complaints Form** to complaints@cenitcollege.ie within 5 working days of the incident occurring or within 5 working days of the outcome of the informal process. Where complaints are made outside of this window the learner must produce a valid reason for the delay. Cenit College will not deal with complaints made after 21 working days of the incident occurring. Learners must support their complaint with evidence. Cenit College will endeavour to resolve any complaints within **14 working days**.
2. The complaint will be directed to the Training Manager or nominated deputy who will within two working days appoint a competent member of staff to investigate the complaint. The Training Manager or nominated deputy may decide to investigate the complaint themselves.
3. The Training Manager or nominated deputy will advise the complainee of the nature of the complaint within two working days of receipt of the complaint and give the complainee the opportunity to respond to the complaint. The complainee has two working days to respond to the complaint.
4. The investigating officer will consider the response and can request a meeting with the complainee to discuss this further.
5. The investigating officer will at this point consider if there are grounds for a complaint or not. If there are no grounds for complaint, then the complainant will be informed in writing within two working days of the decision being made.
6. Where the investigator considers that the complaint was warranted, the training manager or nominated deputy will be informed on the same day that the decision has been made.
7. The training manager or nominated deputy will communicate in writing to all parties involved and inform them of the findings of the investigation, what decisions were made and the reasons for those decisions. This will be completed within two working days of the decision being made. If there are any further actions required by Cenit College or any of the parties involved this will also be communicated. All parties are informed of the right to appeal. The appeal must be made within five working days of receipt of that communication.

1.8 Formal Complaint Appeal

The learner has the right to appeal the outcome of the complaints process. The process for appeal is as follows:

1. Appeals should be submitted to the Training Manager using the *Appeals form*, within 5 working days. The appeal submission should include:
 - a. A completed appeals application form (Appeals Form).
 - b. Verifiable evidence which addresses the appeal criteria.
 - c. A fee of €50. In the event of a successful appeal, the fee will be refunded.
2. The Training Manager assesses the application for appeal to establish if it is complete and meets the grounds for an appeal. The learner will be notified if there are grounds for appeal or not.
3. Where the appeal is considered valid the appeal will be heard by the Appeals Committee. It is at the Chairperson of the Appeals Committee discretion, for learners to be in attendance. See QA1 Governance and Management Structures (Section 1.6.7) for details of the membership, roles and responsibilities of the Appeals Committee.
4. The appeal will be considered impartially, (i.e. those reviewing the appeal will not have been directly involved in the original decision), and based on the written submission of the applicant:
5. The outcome of an appeal should be communicated in writing to an applicant within **10** working days unless exceptional circumstances arise.

6. A record will be maintained of the appeal which details, the decision, the rational for that decision and any supporting evidence.
7. The outcome of the appeal is reported to the Academic Committee.
8. The applicant may communicate dissatisfaction with an outcome to the Managing Director whereupon any communication from the Managing Director is final.

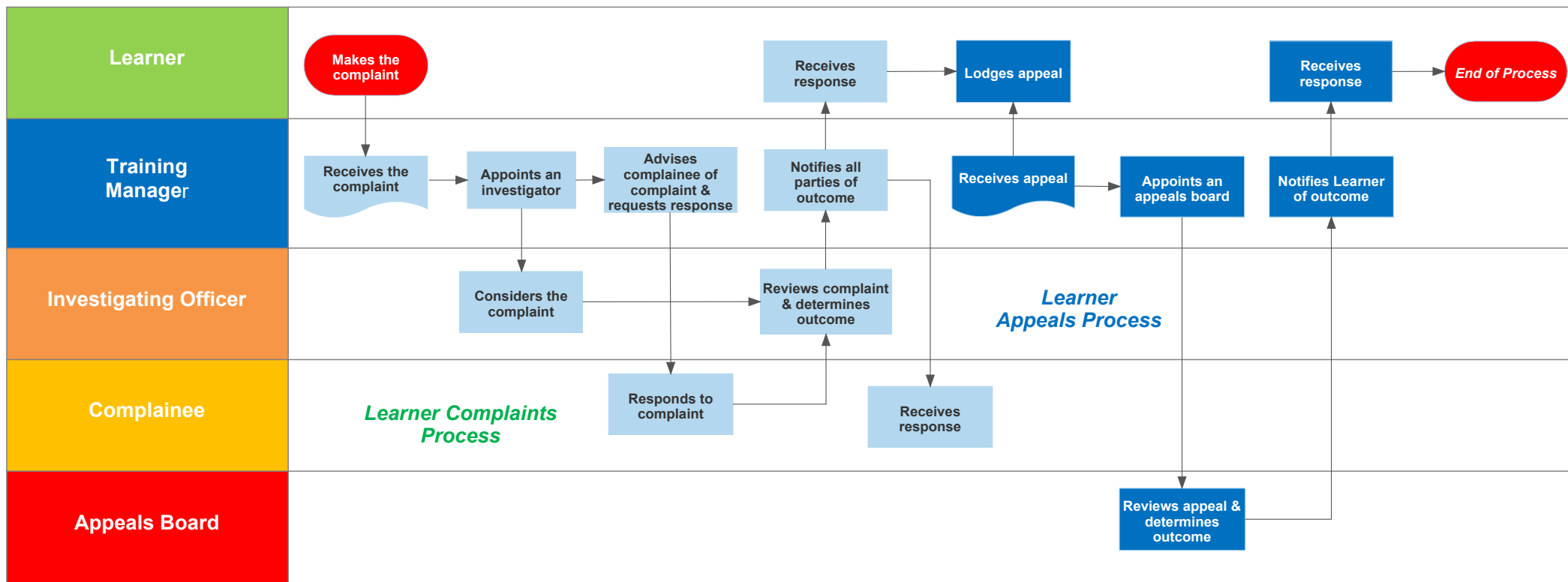


Figure 1.1 Learner Complaint and Appeals Process

1.9 Monitoring of this policy

The QA manager and the Training Manager will monitor this policy. The mechanism for monitoring this policy includes:

- All the complaint applications made in the year.
- Copy of Investigators advice to complainee and request for response.
- Response from complainant.
- Copy of notification sent to all parties of outcome of complaint consideration.
- Copy of appeal as lodged.
- All appeal committee meeting minutes.
- Copy of notification of outcome of appeal.

1.10 Version Control

Version	Date	Description	Originator	Approved by
Version 1	20/01/2022	Approval of Policy	QA	Academic Committee
Version 1.1	21/11/2023	Updated 1.8 Formal Complaint Appeal process.	QA	Academic Committee
Version 1.2	30/09/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated 1.6 #2 to add a timeline of 10 working days• Updated 1.7 to add a timeline of 14 working days• Updated 1.7 #2 - #7 to include the following: Nominated deputy and the inclusion of timelines with each task.• Updated 1.8 #5 to change the timeline from 15 to 10 working days	QA	Academic Committee