

## Ufton Court Educational Trust/UCL Complaints Policy and Procedure

Ufton Court Educational Trust (UCET) and Ufton Court Limited (UCL) take complaints very seriously and view them as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair and clear complaints procedure
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure, including signposting how to make a complaint
- To ensure all staff are aware and familiar with the Company's policy and procedure. complaint is received
- To investigate all complaints thoroughly, fairly and in a timely way
- To endeavour, wherever possible, to resolve all complaints and ensure that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve our approach to our work

### Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of UCET/UCL.

### Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation which has a legitimate interest in UCET/UCL including clients, donors, and the local community.

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff and volunteers who should use our internal Discipline and Grievance policies.

### Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled with sensitivity and in line with GDPR obligations

### Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Managing Director.

### Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Last reviewed: 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022

## Complaints Procedure of UCET and UCL

### Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to Ufton Court, Green Lane, Ufton Nervet, Berkshire RG7 4HD or by e-mail at [enquiries@uftoncourt.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@uftoncourt.co.uk)

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 0118 983 2099 or in person to any member staff, or Trustees at any of our events or activities.

### Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through the channels publicised or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person must be recorded and the person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to UCET/UCL (for example: customer, supplier)
- Advise the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long the process might take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see **Appendix 1**

### Resolving Complaints

#### **Stage One**

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about or the Manager of that Team. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be logged and passed to the Managing Director.

A complaint should be registered in the complaints log and all the information passed onto the relevant manager. If it has not already been resolved, the team manager can delegate the investigation to the member of staff or if appropriate deal with the complaint themselves.

Where possible, members of staff should be informed if a complaint has been made about them or actions for which they were responsible; The Company has a duty of care to staff complained about as well as to complainants. We should ensure members of staff have an opportunity to respond to the allegations made. Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 4 weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, we should acknowledge if things have gone wrong and take proportionate action to put things right, including apologising where appropriate. This should also include telling the complainant about the lessons learnt and any changes made to services, guidance or policy as a result of the complaint.

### ***Stage Two***

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that their complaint is reviewed by the Managing Director and if the complainant still feels dissatisfied with the response, the complaint will be passed to the Chair of the Trustees

The request for this review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Chair of the Trustees may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of the process.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 4 weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

### ***External Stage***

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage.

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: [www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx)

### **Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage Two review.

### **Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.



## Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words, sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told