**Learner Complaint and Grievance Policy**

**Purpose of this Policy**

Studyonline seeks to create a positive learning atmosphere for its learners. As part of our Quality Assurance process, it is important to ensure that any learner complaints are dealt with in a manner that is fair and equitable. This policy seeks to ensure that a prompt and fair resolution is sought for any learner complaint. Furthermore through both formal and informal procedures it seeks to ensure that the resolution is resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both the complainant and the respondent.

**Scope of this policy**

The Learner grievance policy shall apply to all learners in Studyonline who wish to have a grievance addressed. A complaint under this Policy must relate to a specific concern or issue related to an academic programme and / or the actions of a member of the academic or academic support staff.

**Policy Statement**

Under this policy the following will apply:

* The learner is entitled to a fair and impartial hearing taking into account any evidence that supports the claim.
* The learner is entitled to be accompanied by another Studyonline learner for the hearing.
* The learner will not be penalised in any way for bringing forth this complaint – regardless of the outcome.
* All parties to the complaint are entitled to view the relevant documentation
* The learner may withdraw the complaint at any stage of the process.

**Learner Complaint Process**

Studyonline operates two processes for complaints and grievances. The first one is informal and it is expected that most complaints will be resolved at this level. Should the complaint not be resolved at this level it will be escalated to the formal complaint process.

The learner (complainant) must raise the complaint within one month of the event occurring. Compliance is made at all stages to Data Protection laws.

Stage 1: Informal Process

Studyonline would normally expect that the complainant would have made some effort to resolve the grievance with the respondent. Measures undertaken to do so include:

* Contacted the respondent by telephone to discuss the grievance
* Asked to meet with the respondent to discuss the grievance
* Or written to the respondent outlining the grievance

The complainant should outline the date and time of the event and give clear detail as to how the grievance occurred and the expect outcome that is expected.

The grievance needs to be raised within five working days of the occurrence of the issue that gave rise to the grievance.

Should the complainant and the respondent meet to discuss the matter, the terms and conditions of the meeting should be mutually agreeable. They may also seek to have the program manager present to act as a facilitator/mediator. In such cases as the complainant feels they cannot approach the respondent then they make seek informal advice from the program manager as to how to informally resolve the grievance.

Should the learner feel that the informal process cannot resolve the grievance then the learner can opt to move the process to the next stage, which is the formal complaints process.

Stage 2: Formal Process

A formal complaint must be made using the learner complaint form to the Program Manager. On this form the learner must outline the nature of the grievance, the date the incident occurred and the name of the parties to the grievance. The learner must also state their expected outcome from this process.

The Program Manager must acknowledge the receipt of the complaint form within 5 working days via email.

A copy of the learner complaint form will be sent to all parties to the complaint. All parties must acknowledge receipt of this within 5 working days via email to the Program Manager. The original will be retained by Studyonline, and scanned into our system. Original documents will be held on file for up to one year.

The Program Manager will investigate the matter, as follows:

* Meeting with the respondent
* Meeting with the complainant
* A possible further meeting with both parties.

Once the investigation has concluded the Program Manager having given due consideration to both sides of the matter, will decide whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint. The complainant has the right to withdraw the complaint at any stage in the process. The Program manager however had the right to continue investigating the complaint. The outcome of the complaint will be communicated in writing to both parties. Such an outcome may include the following:

* Resultative actions from the conclusion of the investigation may include:
* Requesting the respondent to apologise to the complainant
* Request the complaint to be withdrawn
* Request the complainant to apologise to the respondent for bringing an erroneous complaint against them.
* Should both parties be found culpable a warning to both parties of action being taken for future bad conduct
* Recommend that Studyonline take recommended steps to resolve the complaint.

The Program Manager will make every effort to resolve the complaint within 10 working days of having received the complaint form. The result of action taken will be recorded in the Learner complaint form.

**Appeals procedures for grievances and complaints**

If either the complainant or the respondent are unhappy with the outcome of the complaint process they are entitled to appeal the outcome to the Training Manager. The appeal must be made in writing with 10 working days of the receipt of written response to the outcome of the formal complaint process. This must include the nature of the appeal.

The Training Manager will acknowledge receipt of the appeal letter within 10 working days of its receipt.

The learner complaint and grievance panel which is made up of three impartial members will complete its review of the process within 20 working days of receipt of the appeals letter. This panel can uphold the outcome of the formal complaint process, modify it or overturn it.



***Figure 1. Learner Complaints and Grievance Process***

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| **LEARNER COMPLAINT FORM** |
| **Learner Name:**  |  |
| **Contact Address:**  |  |
| **Telephone Number:**  |  |
| **E-‐Mail Address:**  |  |
| **Course attending:** |  |
| **Course Location:** |  |
| **Date:** |  |

**Nature of the Complaint:**

Please ensure that you record the Date and Time of the issue that gave rise to the complaint along with the location and any witnesses that were present. Please record your complaint as clearly as you can – outlining the steps involved in the incident and what your complaint is.

Where members of the Studyonline staff or other learners are named in the complaint it may be necessary to share the nature of the complaint with them.

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**Outline the steps you have already taken to resolve this grievance. Please include dates where possible.**

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**Your expected outcome of this complaint process. What are you seeking?**

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I agree that all details in this complaint are true and accurate. Additionally I understand that it may be necessary to share this document with any member of staff who is the subject of this complaint.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Completed forms should be returned to the Program Manager.**

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| **FOR OFFICE USE ONLY** |
| **Received by Program Manager:** | **Name: Date:** |
| **Acknowledgement of Receipt** | **Date:** |
| **Letter sent to all Parties** | **Name of Parties:** | **Date:** |
| **Acknowledged by all Parties** | **Name of Parties:** | **Date:** |
| **Decision Made** | **Date:** |
| **Parties informed of decision** | **Date:** |
| **Action Taken** |