

Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy

Re-approved	August 2024
Review by	August 2025
Authorised by	C Gavaghan (CEO)

1. INTRODUCTION

Derwent Training Association (Derwent Training) aims constantly to improve the quality and relevance of all its services. Feedback from learners, customers, staff, and stakeholders, partners is welcome and is a central part of this improvement process. We recognise that when people take the trouble to make a complaint, it is sometimes because they believe something affecting them has gone wrong, and they wish this to be looked into.

2. PURPOSE

This policy aims to set out our over-arching statement on complaints, comments, and compliments. Derwent Training has five channels through which complaints can be made. Therefore, this policy deals with overriding principles in terms of:

- the aims of our various feedback and complaints policies and procedures;
- lead responsibilities for various types of complaints;
- common principles for the handling of all types of complaints;
- the policy on anonymous complaints; *and*
- the ways in which we monitor and learn from the feedback we are given.

3. AIMS

- **Derwent Training aims to use feedback to improve the quality of its services.**

Complaints are a valuable resource for service improvement. Therefore, Derwent Training welcomes complaints, from all sources. Our primary concern is for our learners and employers, our staff, and stakeholders in our work. We aim to put employer interests first in everything we do, and thereby improve our services more quickly and in the right direction. We will treat feedback from other sources very seriously but in formulating our response, we will always be guided by our customer focus. Complaints will in general be used to learn from and improve our customer focus; to get things right in the future if we have not already done so; improve accountability and openness (where this is possible and appropriate); be seen to act fairly and proportionately; and to promote continuous quality improvement.

- **Derwent Training aims to provide a response to complaints as quickly and effectively as possible.**

All complaints will be recorded, and their progress monitored. It will sometimes be necessary to vary the timescale, but the complainant will be kept informed of the reason why and of progress.

- **Derwent Training aims to accept responsibility when it gets things wrong, to put matters right as far as possible, or otherwise suggest a remedy, where Derwent Training's services fall short of its stated standards.**

When the Company gets things wrong it will:

- accept responsibility and apologise (an apology is not an acceptance of liability under Section 2 of the Compensation Act 2006);
- if possible, explain what went wrong and why; and put things right by making any changes required.
- learn lessons from mistakes and change policies and practices where proportionate and sensible to do so.

In general, Derwent Training does not offer compensation payments. However, it may make, in exceptional circumstances, a payment without prejudice.

- **Derwent Training aims to uphold its standing and reputation as a publicly funded institution and provider of opportunities to achieve nationally recognised qualifications. This requires high standards of probity, and rigour in its handling of both complaints, particularly where the matter complained of concerns qualifications.**

Derwent Training utilises public funding from various Government sources. This, and the fact that we offer the opportunity to achieve nationally approved qualifications, means that we are also subject to Governmental regulation. The principal regulator for the Company is the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Derwent Training will, therefore, always co-operate fully with the ESFA in dealing with any complaints made to them that concern the Company. However, as the ESFA will normally ask complainants if they have first used the Company's complaints procedure, it is strongly recommended that complaints are made firstly direct to Derwent Training.

- **Derwent Training aims to deal with complaints fairly, and not to victimise, discriminate against or penalise those who make complaints in the proper manner. However, the Company will not tolerate vexatious or defamatory complaints against its learners, staff, or governors, and reserves the right to act to stop such behaviour where it believes this is the case.**

Derwent Training does not victimise, discriminate against, or otherwise seek to penalise in any way those who have a complaint, information, or concern about the Company's conduct; indeed, as noted above, we welcome this type of feedback. The only limitations placed on this are that those making complaints must not seek to use these policies and procedures in a vexatious, hostile, unreasonable or abusive manner (e.g., serial complaints about the same or similar issues or college personnel which have been previously investigated); or attempt to use the complaints procedure to make a protected disclosure.

Vexatious and repetitive complaints can place strain on the Company's resources and can be stressful for the staff that have to deal with these. Therefore, the Company reserves the right not to deal with such complaints and to take appropriate action to safeguard the interests of Derwent Training. Further details are set out at Annex 1.

4. Complaints, comments, and compliments

The Derwent Training feedback form can be collected from Reception and is available via the website. All feedback is recorded by the Business Support Team. Complaints are investigated, responded to within a stated timescale, and reported in outline to and monitored by the Senior Leadership Team.

Anonymous complaints of any kind will be coordinated by the Business Support Manager, who will agree with the CEO the nature of the Company's response.

5. Timescales

- On receipt of feedback, it is entered into the complaints, comments, and compliment system.
- A prompt acknowledgement will be sent to the author by the Business Support Team.
- Managers are given a deadline of eight working days for a response.
- Managers will be reminded after six working days that a response is due in two days in order to meet the ten working day response deadline.
- If the Manager cannot meet the response deadline the author of the complaint will be notified with a reason why and new deadline.
- Further action/discussion/correspondence will be recorded as appropriate, aiming for a prompt and satisfactory resolution to any problems highlighted.

Derwent Training will treat those making complaints with courtesy, respect, and fairness at all times. We expect those making complaints will also treat the Company and any of our staff dealing with the complaint with the same courtesy, respect, and fairness.

6. Appeals

Appeals are heard by the Chair of Directors. On receipt of an appeal against a judgement made on a complaint, a response to an appeal is released within 10 working days. Appeals should be sent to Nichola.zanda@derwenttraining.co.uk

Annex 1

Unreasonable or Abusive Complaints

Abusive, aggressive, threatening, or vexatious complaints are in the very small minority, but the Company sometimes finds itself in the position where it needs to restrict or end communication, or access to our premises, staff, or other representatives. Our staff have the right to undertake their work free from abuse, threats and harassment, or vexatious and repetitive complaints. We expect our staff to be treated with courtesy and respect. Staff are also expected to treat complainants with courtesy, respect, and fairness.

Complainants who harass, or have been abusive, aggressive, or threatening on one or more occasions towards our staff - or their families or associates - directly or indirectly, will be considered unreasonable. Any threats or acts of violence will cause direct contact with the complainant to be discontinued. Violence includes behaviour or language (written, oral, or in tone or otherwise) that may cause people to feel afraid, threatened or abused. Examples of unacceptable behaviour includes but not exclusively threats, verbal abuse, derogatory remarks, rudeness, racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist, or other harassment based on personal characteristic or obscene remarks, and where complainants are known to have recorded meetings or telephone conversations without consent.

We also consider that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can amount to abusive behaviour.

Where unreasonable or abusive behaviour is determined, the complainant will be notified in writing that no further contact will be undertaken, and this will apply to all Company contacts.