

Academic Regulations Policy

Document Code	TA-ACA-03: Complaints and Appeals Policy
Principal Contact	
Date Effective from	03.08.2025
Review Date	Every 3 years or earlier when required
Version	V1.0 2025
External Reference Points	• Office of the Independent Adjudicator Good Practice Framework (September 2015) Data Protection Act 2018 • GDPR Article 51 • OfS Condition C1: Protecting student interests with due regard to consumer law. • UK Quality Code 2024 Principle 12: Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes – Robust, fair processes reviewed regularly. • Added: Consumer Rights Act 2015 for transparency in resolutions; Apprenticeship Standards (for employer complaints).
Summary/Description	
The Complaints and Appeals Policy at Trafalgar Academy, establishes a fair and transparent mechanism for students, applicants, and groups to address non-academic issues such as service deficiencies, facilities problems, or staff conduct, excluding academic judgments which are handled separately. Aligned with OIA guidelines, OfS Condition C1, and the UK Quality Code 2024, it emphasises accessibility, timeliness, and service improvement, incorporating provisions for employer complaints in apprenticeships and accommodations for diverse needs like translation and virtual participation. The process includes three stages: informal resolution within 10 working days, formal investigation by an independent officer within 20 days with remedies like apologies or enhancements, and a senior panel appeal within 15 days leading to a Completion of Procedures letter for OIA escalation. Responsibilities ensure impartiality and good faith, while annual monitoring tracks metrics such as resolution times and equality impacts to foster continuous enhancement, with related documents including the Academic Appeals Policy and Data Protection Policy.	

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1. Policy Statement

1.1 This policy provides a mechanism for raising and resolving non-academic complaints and appeals, covering students, applicants, and groups. It applies to issues like service provision, facilities, or staff actions, but not academic judgments (see Academic Appeals Policy). It now includes employer complaints for apprenticeship programs and provisions for distance learning issues, such as access to online resources.

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1 To handle issues fairly and improve services. Objectives align with OIA principles: accessible, timely, enhancement-focused, and inclusive of group complaints, while protecting consumer rights. Added objective: Ensure processes accommodate diverse needs, including translation for non-English speakers and adjustments for online learners.

3. Definitions

- **3.1 Complaint:** Expression of dissatisfaction with services, facilities, or staff actions (excluding academic judgments).
- **3.2 Appeal:** Request to review a complaint outcome.
- **3.3 Group Complaint:** Raised by multiple individuals affected similarly.
- **3.4 Vexatious Complaint:** Made without merit or in bad faith, which may be dismissed.
- **3.5 Added:** Employer Complaint: Issues raised by employers in apprenticeship contexts, e.g., training quality.

4. Procedures

4.1 Stage 1: Informal Resolution: Raise verbally or in writing with relevant staff (e.g., tutor) within 3 months of the incident. Aim for resolution within 10 working days via discussion or mediation. If resolved, record the outcome for monitoring. Added: Template form for informal submissions; employer complaints start here with program leads.

4.2 Stage 2: Formal Complaint: Submit form with evidence; investigated by an independent officer within 20 working days. For group complaints, a lead complainant is appointed with a standardized template for consents. Outcome includes remedies (e.g., apology, service improvement). Investigations may involve interviews or evidence gathering. Added: For employer complaints, joint meetings with academy and employer; virtual options for distance learners.

4.3 Stage 3: Appeal: Review by senior panel if new evidence or procedural error; decision within 15 working days. COP letter issued for OIA referral. Appeals must be submitted within 10 days of Stage 2 outcome.

4.4 External Referral: To OIA or partner university if applicable. Timeframes are strictly enforced; extensions granted only for good cause.

4.5 Timeframes and Support: Acknowledgment within 5 days; students may have a companion. Anonymous complaints considered if evidence-based, but limited investigation possible. Reasonable adjustments for disabilities. Added: Translation services available; OIA referral tracking with KPIs for timeliness.

4.6 Examples: A complaint about inadequate facilities might result in improvements; a group complaint on course resources could lead to policy changes. Added example: Employer complaint on apprenticeship delivery leads to enhanced training plans.

5. Responsibilities

- **5.1 Complainants:** Provide details and evidence promptly, act in good faith.
- **5.2 Investigating Officer:** Conduct impartial, thorough reviews, recommend remedies.
- **5.3 Leadership:** Monitor trends, implement improvements, and ensure consumer protection compliance.
- **5.4 Added:** Program leads handle employer integrations.

6. Monitoring and Review

6.1 Annual report on complaints volume, themes, and resolutions to the Governing Body. Metrics include resolution times, satisfaction rates, equality impacts, and OIA referral rates (enhanced KPI). Policy reviewed every three years, with OIA alignment checks.

7. Related Documents

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Dignity at Work and Study Policy
- Consumer Protection Guidance
- Data Protection Policy