

020 7269 6000

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Mary Ward Centre expects that any person dealing with the Centre will have an efficient, courteous and helpful encounter. Any user of our services has a right to expect quality of service and value for money.

A complaint is defined as the sharing of a negative experience by a user of the Centre's services which in the complainant's opinion was as a result of the Centre's failure to meet an expected level of efficiency, courtesy, helpfulness or quality.

The Centre takes complaints seriously and wants to resolve them as quickly as possible. Any complaint will be treated with courtesy, impartiality and in confidence.

In addition to a general complaints procedure we have a complaints policy covering admissions to accredited courses, see section 2 below.

General Complaints Procedure

To whom do you complain?

Normally complaints should be raised on the spot at the point of delivery with any party concerned and be dealt with immediately. If this is not possible and you do not have a named person with whom you wish to raise the matter, the initial person to contact at the above address is the Head of the Department to which the complaint relates. If the complaint is about the Warden of the Settlement or the Head of Adult and Community Education, complaints should be addressed to the clerk at the above address or at clerk@marywardcentre.ac.uk.

Complaints must be made in writing within 21 days of the incident that causes complaint

1. Formal Procedure

- 1.1 Full details of the complaint should be given in writing within 21 days of the incident that gives rise to the complaint.
- 1.2 Once the complaint has been received you will receive an acknowledgement within seven working days.
- 1.3 The Head of Department or the clerk will have initial authority to investigate a complaint and will seek information from any other party concerned. If the complaint is found reasonable, s/he will ensure that the complainant receives a

courteous apology and any redress that is required. If the complaint is rejected, the reasons why will be clearly stated.

- 1.4 A response will be sent within 21 working days (not including holidays) following an acknowledgement. If your complaint is upheld you will receive an apology or any redress due. If your complaint is rejected you can expect full reasons as to why.
- 1.5 If a complainant considers the response to be unsatisfactory, s/he can request that the matter be passed to the Head of Adult and Community Education for consideration. Such a request must be made within 7 days of receipt of the initial response. The Head of Adult and Community Education will reconsider the complaint, consulting all involved and seeking further information if necessary, and will issue a decision within 21 days of referral.
- 1.6 If the decision is not accepted, there is a right of appeal to the Warden of the Mary Ward Settlement. Any such appeal must be received by the Warden no later than 10 working days after the date of issue of decision of the Head of Adult and Community Learning. A decision on the appeal will be issued within 15 working days.

A complainant who has followed the procedure above and is still not satisfied has the right of a final appeal to the Board of Trustees. This must be done in writing via the Clerk to the Board within 14 days of the date of the Warden's decision.

The Board of Trustees' standing Complaints/Disciplinary Committee (comprising the Vice-Chair of the Board, a student member and a staff member) will act as an independent review body in order to ensure impartiality. In the event of one or more of its members being the subject of a complaint, or being seen to have had an involvement in earlier stages of the complaints procedure, they will stand down and be replaced by another member or other members of the Board.

The Standing Committee should meet within 15 working days, excluding holidays, of receipt of a final appeal and its decision will be final. It will be provided with all correspondence and documentation and can call witnesses if necessary. If the complaint is upheld, the committee will make an appropriate response and recommend to the Board of Trustees any redress or compensation.

2. Admissions complaint and appeal procedure for accredited courses

- 2.1 If an applicant has not been accepted for admission to an accredited course of study and is unhappy with this decision, s/he must put the complaint in writing within 14 days to the relevant Head of Department, who will respond in writing to the complainant also normally within 14 days although a longer response time may be required during academic holidays. If, in the opinion of the applicant, the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved at this stage, an appeal may be made. A copy of this complaints procedure will be sent with the Head of Department's response.

2.2 Appeals

- 2.2.1 An applicant who has not been given a place on an accredited Mary Ward course may appeal either on grounds relevant to the Centre's guidance for admission to accredited courses or on grounds relevant to the specific criteria stated for the particular course. Allegations of discrimination on grounds such as race or gender will also be dealt with under this procedure, with reference to the Centre's Equal Opportunities Policy, a copy of which will be sent to the complainant on request.
- 2.2.2 An appeal should be made in writing to the Head of Adult and Community Education within fourteen days of receiving the response of the Head of Department. In making the appeal, the applicant should set out the ground(s) for appeal, as given above, together with any supporting evidence. The Head of Adult and Community Education will determine whether the appeal meets the criteria as stated above.
- 2.2.3 Where the appeal is allowed to proceed the Head of Department will be asked to respond in writing within 14 working days of receiving the request. The response of the Head of Department will be forwarded to the applicant, who will have the opportunity to comment. Comments will normally be required within 14 days of receipt of the response.
- 2.2.4 On receipt of any comments from the applicant, or after the 14 day period given to reply, the Head of Adult and Community Education will convene a panel to discuss the written evidence.
- 2.2.5 The Head of Adult and Community Education will provide the Appeal Panel with a copy of the original appeal and any supporting material submitted by the applicant, the response made by the Head of Department, and any further comments on that response from the applicant.
- 2.2.6 The Appeal Panel will be constituted as follows:
- The Head of Adult and Community Education
 - A Head of Department from a department other than that to which the application was made
 - The Chair of the Standing Complaints Committee or their nominee (who will chair the Appeal Panel)
 - The panel may co-opt an additional member if it feels particular expertise is required, e.g. an academic member of staff or member of the governing body who has subject expertise but has not been involved in the disputed application.
- 2.2.7 It is expected that the information provided to the Appeal Panel will be sufficient for a recommendation to be reached. However, should the panel deem it necessary, it may invite the applicant or a representative of the Department to be present at the meeting of the Appeal Panel.

3. Decision

- 3.1 It shall be open to the Panel to uphold the appeal or to reject it. The Head of Adult and Community Education will notify the appellant and the relevant Head of Department of the decision in writing within seven working days of the panel meeting.
- 3.2 If the appeal is upheld, the Chair of the Panel will write to the Head of Department to which the appellant applied, stating the grounds for the decision, and directing the Department to consider the application again. This does not, however, commit the Department to reversing its initial decision, as there may be other reasons for rejecting the application.
- 3.3 The outcome of the appeal process will be final and no further appeal will be permitted.

Further appeal on complaints regarding general matters or admission to an accredited course

If you are still unhappy and think the Centre has been unreasonable or is not doing its job properly, a complaint may be addressed, within three months of the Centre concluding its own complaints procedure, to:

Skills Funding Agency
 Cheylesmore House
 Quinton Road
 Coventry
 CV1 2WT

The Secretary of State
 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
 Kingsgate House
 Victoria St
 Westminster
 London
 SW1E 6SW

Outcomes

1. The Centre commits itself to addressing all points of issue in any complaint. Redress will be appropriate to the complaint.
2. Appropriate redress will be determined by the Head of Adult and Community Education, or by the Board of Trustees following the recommendations of the Complaints/Disciplinary Standing Committee if the matter has been referred to the Complaints Committee.

3. Apologies/redress will be extended, where appropriate, to others who may have suffered in the same way as a person who complains, but who may not have made a formal complaint.

Using complaints to improve the quality of our service

1. All complaints will be recorded and will provide information to assist the Centre in improving its service. Trends in complaints will be analysed to identify areas where appropriate action is needed.
2. It will be the responsibility of the Head of Adult and Community Education to monitor the recording system and to provide an annual report to the Centre's Board of Trustees.
3. Any implications for service delivery will be recorded and circulated to all staff.
4. Handling complaints will be covered in all new staff induction and will feature in staff training.

Note to Complaints Policy

All references to "working days" in the document above are presumed to refer only to term times.