

Customer Complaints and Appeal Policy

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2 Aim;

- 2.1 We always try to put our customers first and pride ourselves on delivering reliable and efficient services and the highest standard of care. We recognize however that sometimes things can go wrong. If this happens, we want to make it quick and easy for delegates to get in touch with us so we can put things right and learn from our mistakes.

3 Scope;

- 3.1 This policy sets out our approach towards managing and resolving customer complaints/appeals.
3.2 This policy applies to delegates who attend a training course and sit an examination.
3.3 We are not able to investigate complaints about services, organization and individuals for which Watkins is not responsible.

4 Policy Statement;

- 4.1 We are committed to
- Being approachable and understanding, making it easy for delegates to raise any issues and concerns directly with us.
 - Taking delegates complaints and appeals seriously.
 - Providing delegates with a single point of contact for their complaint/appeal.
 - Investigating complaints and appeals in a confidential and respectful manner, treating each one on a case-by-case basis.
 - Taking responsibility and apologizing when we have failed.
 - Giving clear timescales for fixing the issue and keeping delegate informed throughout the complaints/appeal process.
 - Working hard to try and reach a resolution that the delegate is happy with.
 - Resolving complaints and appeals quickly to get our relationship back on track.
 - Fully and accurately recording details, actions and investigations into all complaints and appeals made by delegates.
 - Learning from our mistake.

5 What is a Complaint and Appeal?

- 5.1 We define a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction made to Watkins, relating to our services or the way we have dealt with a customer complaint.
5.2 We define an appeal as a request for a re-assessment of an examination and/or course of which has been taken by a delegate.

6 Making a Complaint and/or Appeal.

- 6.1 Prior to course commencement, we will hand out our delegate feedback form for them to complete at the end of course completion.
6.2 We will also inform the delegate during the booking procedure how they can make a complaint and appeal and give them all contact information, which are as follows:

Delegate's complaints and appeals will be accepted via any of the following means of communication.

- Telephone – 01843 852277 9am-5pm Monday to Friday
- Email – enquiries@watkins-academy.co.uk
- Or by writing to us at; Watkins House, Leigh Road, Haine Business Park, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 5EU

7 Complaints/Appeal Process.

7.1 There are two stages to this process.

7.2 **Stage 1: Complaint Investigation and Resolution**

- 7.2.1 We aim to respond to stage 1 complaints/appeals as soon as possible and no later than 10 working days from receipt.
- 7.2.2 For complaints/appeals made by telephone, wherever possible, we will always try to resolve the issue there and then with the delegate.
- 7.2.3 We will acknowledge receipt of complaints/appeals within 2 working days and issue a unique reference number to the delegate for the complaint/appeal which will be used throughout the complaint/appeal process.
- 7.2.4 Upon receipt, complaints/appeals will be allocated to a named person who will be responsible for looking into and resolving the complaint/appeal. As far as is possible, this person will be the sole point of contact for the delegate throughout the first stage of the complaints/appeal process.
- 7.2.5 Upon being assigned a complaint/appeal the named person must contact the delegate, using their preferred method of communication, to personally acknowledge the complaint/appeal and make sure that they fully understand the issue and the outcome which the delegate is looking for. The frequency and preferred method of receiving updates should also be agreed.
- 7.2.6 Within 10 working days of having received the complaint/appeal the delegate will be contacted to update them on our findings and propose a solution to the problem.
- 7.2.7 When trying to resolve a delegate complaint/appeal we will provide an explanation of what went wrong, do everything we can to put things right and apologize if we have made a mistake.
- 7.2.8 At no point will any compensation be considered to cover loss of earnings.
- 7.2.9 If we are unable to provide a full response within our target timescales, we will advise the delegate as soon as we are aware that additional time will be required. We will provide an indication of how long we think it will take to complete our investigation and ask the delegate how frequently they would like us to provide them with updates.
- 7.2.10 If the issue can't be resolved immediately the resolution may take the form of an action plan which we will look to agree with the delegate. The action plan should set out the steps we are going to take to resolve the problem with clear timescales.
- 7.2.11 If the delegate is unhappy with the proposed resolution and/or isn't happy with how we have handled their complaint/appeal, they can ask for the investigation to be escalated for senior management review.

7.3 Stage 2: Senior Management Review

- 7.3.1 We aim to resolve all complaints and appeals at stage 1 of the process. Where agreement cannot be reached with the delegate and/or they are dissatisfied with how we have handled the investigation the delegate can request to escalate the investigation for senior management review.
- 7.3.2 If looking to escalate the investigation for senior management review the delegate must be very clear on what aspects of their original complaint/appeal remain outstanding or have not been addressed. The delegate will also need to be clear on their desired outcome.
- 7.3.3 An internal investigation into how the original complaint was handled and the proposed resolution will be carried out by senior management. At this stage the senior manager investigating will be responsible for;
- Engaging with the delegate to understand the issue and the resolution that they are after
 - Reviewing details of the investigation carried out in stage 1 of the complaints/appeal process and any action taken
 - Identifying any additional action that may be required to resolve the matter.
- 7.3.4 Within 10 working days the senior manager will be required to reach a decision and send a written response to the delegate summarizing their findings.
- 7.3.5 If it is found that the complaint/appeal wasn't handled how we would have liked; a new solution may be offered.
- 7.3.6 Where the decision is that no further action is required and it is felt that all reasonable and appropriate measures have been taken, the delegate will be informed they have reached the end of our complaints/appeal process. If the delegate remains unhappy with the outcome, they can ask for a final response or deadlock letter.
- 7.3.7 This is the final stage of our internal complaints/appeal process.
- 7.4 We will work with delegates to try and resolve all matters to the customer's satisfaction within 8 weeks.

8 Complaint Review

- 8.1 If after we have made a final decision and we have done everything that we can possibly do and the delegate still isn't satisfied or if their investigation has not been fully resolved in eight weeks, then the delegate can ask for a final response or deadlock letter. In this, we'll explain that we haven't been able to resolve the issue to the delegate satisfaction, recap what's happened and what we've suggested, and provide the delegate with contact details of relevant external bodies who will be able to review the complaint and advise (this is in a last case scenario).

9 Monitoring, Review and Evaluation;

- 9.1 At Watkins we treat complaints as an opportunity to learn from our mistakes and improve the services we provide to our customers.
- 9.2 All complaints are recorded, and senior management meet quarterly to review the volume and nature of complaints. This allows us to identify any trends and immediate areas for improvement.
- 9.3 As a minimum this policy will be reviewed once a year or in response to changes in regulation

10 Diversity and Inclusion;

- 10.1 We are committed to valuing and promoting equality and diversity and will treat all customers fairly and with respect.