



Complaints Policy

2023 - 2024

Policy issue and updates

Pages	Issue No.	Date
Whole document – annual review	1	August 2020
Whole Document – annual review	2	August 2021
Whole Document – annual review	3	August 2022
Whole document – annual review	4	August 2023

The following policy has been approved by the Leadership Team at Progress Careers.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis unless circumstances arise requiring the policy to be reviewed earlier.

Approved by Managing Director: August 2023

Managing Director signatory:



Mrs Paula M Thompson

Planned review: August 2024 (or as necessary)

1. Policy overview

- 1.1 The majority of issues raised by stakeholder schools, parents/carers, members of the public, employers, advisers or students, are concerns rather than complaints. We are committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the company's formal complaints procedure. To enable us to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within one year of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than 1 year it will not be investigated.

We aim to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by Progress Careers

All complaints are upheld and the policy revised where necessary based on the review of the complaints tracker. Any outcomes which require Progress Careers to review additional policies and/or procedures will be completed swiftly with notification to all staff/advisers.

2. Process for complaints

- 2.1 The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

The Complaints Policy has four main stages:

- Stage 1 – A concern is raised informally with a Progress Careers staff member.
- Stage 2 – Formal complaint is heard by the Operations Manager.
- Stage 3 – Formal complaint is passed to the Managing Director who will either respond or recruit an external to carry out an investigation
- Stage 4 – Complaint is heard by a member of the wider Senior Leadership Team (external to Progress Careers)
- Stage 5 – Complaint is heard by the CEO of The Progress Group

- 2.2 Stage 1 - Raising a concern:

Concerns can be raised with the company at any time and will often generate an immediate response, usually by telephone or email, which will resolve the concern. We request that the complainant make their first contact with a member of staff or

the Operations Manager. If the complaint is in relation to the Operations Manager, we request that the Managing Director is contacted.

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within 5 working days. The majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1, please write to or call the Operations Manager / Managing Director within 10 working days. We will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Any staff member that takes responsibility for dealing with a concern will ensure the Operations Manager is aware, even if resolution is achieved. Complaints from stage 2 onwards are logged on the complaint's log.

2.3 Stage 2 - Complaint heard by the Operations Manager:

The member of staff receiving and logging the complaint will report it to the Operations Manager to follow up or the Operations Manager will investigate if the complainant has contacted them directly. If the complainant is not satisfied, they can be advised to write a formal complaint, addressed to the Managing Director at the company address.

The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. We will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action that we have taken to resolve the issue. Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting will normally take place within 10 working days. The aim will be to resolve the matter as speedily as possible. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 please write to or call the company within 10 working days of getting our response. You will need to tell us why you are still not satisfied and what you would like us to do.

2.4 Stage 3 - Formal complaint is passed to the wider Senior Leadership Team who will instruct an external source to carry out an investigation or respond.

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2, the complaint will be passed on to the wider Senior Leadership Team by the Managing Director at your request. The wider SLT will (if appropriate) then instruct an external partner/source to complete a full, unbiased investigation. Following the investigation, the external partner/source will normally give a written response within 10 working days. If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 3, you should let Progress Careers know within 10 working days of getting the response.

2.5 Stage 4 - Complaint heard by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, then you should write to or request the complaint is passed to the Wider SLT of The Progress Group giving details of the complaint. The wider SLT will go over all evidence and investigation outcomes before providing a response and/or additional actions carried out to resolve the complaint. The further investigation will normally take place within 7 working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 4 investigation. Any letter addressed to the Senior Leadership Team should be addressed to: The Progress Group Head Office, Switch House, Northern Perimeter Road, Bootle, Liverpool, L30 7PT.

2.6 Stage 5 – Complaint heard by the CEO of The Progress Group

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 4, then you should write to or request the complaint is passed to the CEO of The Progress Group giving details of why you are not happy with previous outcomes. The CEO will convene a complaints panel hearing with at least 1 Director and an external if it cannot be resolved by the CEO alone. The hearing will normally take place within 10 working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 5 investigation.

The aim of the appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between Progress Careers and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the panel's decision in writing within 3 working days after the date of the panel hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

2.7 Panel Hearings:

Where it has been necessary to convene a panel hearing for a complaint, a person independent of the management and running of the company will be appointed to the panel (usually drawn from the relevant referring agency of the complainant) to act as an independent advisor and mediator if required. The other members of the panel will be appointed by the CEO and consist of at least 1 member from the Progress Careers management team who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

The panel hearing allows for the complainant to be in attendance (if they wish) and to be accompanied by another person for supportive purposes only.

2.8 Findings & Recommendations:

The panel hearings are intended to make findings and recommendations that will be sent using electronic mail or given to the complainant in the form of a letter and where relevant, to the person(s) complained about.

2.9 Written Records:

A written record will be kept of all complaints made at all stages of the complaints process (from the preliminary stage to panel hearing). Records and the complaints log will indicate whether complaints have been resolved at the preliminary stages or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidentially secured electronically and available for inspection during and necessary inspections / assessments (Matrix etc.) and governmental bodies (Secretary of State) who require access to them.

N.B. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Operations Manager, they will be informed of the complaint. The Managing Director will arrange for the matter to be investigated. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Managing Director, the Director will be informed of the complaint by the Progress Group CEO.

2 Process for safeguarding complaints/concerns about a member of staff

- 3.1 Further details regarding safeguarding complaints against staff are explained in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- 3.2 Any complaint received regarding a member of staff in relation to safeguarding is to be passed to the Managing Director for investigation who will liaise with the Local Authority Designated Officer.
- 3.3 Human Resources (HR) will be informed of the investigation. Dependent on the outcome, HR may follow the capability or disciplinary procedures once the complaint has been satisfied with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

3 Process for general complaints about a member of staff

- 4.1 Any other form of complaint lodged about a member of staff must be passed to HR.
- 4.2 HR will work with the line manager to determine the best course of action to provide a satisfactory outcome for all.
- 4.3 Further details of this process and accompanying appeals process can be found in the capability, disciplinary and grievance policies.