

Compliments & Complaints Policy



INTRODUCTION

Step Ahead and its delivery partners are committed to providing a high-quality service to all of our customers. Our approach to quality is centred around meeting the individual needs of our learners, partner organisations, funders, employees and any other customers, ensuring that they are satisfied with the service they receive. Through the implementation of our comprehensive Quality Improvement Policy we continually monitor and adjust our services as we strive to be the best.

We are dedicated to:

- continually improve the quality of our products and service delivery to meet the needs of our customers,
- continually developing the effectiveness of the systems and processes that support our delivery,
- developing our staff to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to provide a quality service,
- creating a culture of continuous improvement across our organisation and within our subcontractors,
- listening to our customers and focussing on their needs,
- complying with recognised quality standards and best practice within the industry.

This policy is underpinned by our mission of being seen as a provider of high-quality services to clients, suppliers, funders, agents and partners in the delivery of educational services, empowering people to create a better future for themselves.

Step Ahead welcomes all feedback both positive and negative as this helps to identify how we continually need to improve.

Step Ahead is always pleased to receive compliments as it is nice to know that our service has made a positive contribution to someone and that we are appreciated. This is a good way of measuring our performance and allows us to praise our delivery team as we work to improve our service.

However, we fully recognise that on occasions an individual or organisation may feel dissatisfied with some aspect of the service/support they have received from Step Ahead. When this happens, it is important that you have the opportunity to raise this issue with us to enable us to respond and address this as quickly as possible.

POLICY

If you wish to make a compliment or a complaint please follow the process detailed below.

Compliments

In our commitment to providing a high-quality service we like to hear that this is being achieved. If you feel you have received a first-class service or a positive outcome from your engagement with Step Ahead, we encourage you to let us know by providing feedback as to what we did well that supported you in meeting your goals.

Compliments & Complaints policy



You can pay Step Ahead a compliment either by:

- e-mailing to info@stepahead.co.uk
- by completing the attached feedback form (see Appendix 1) and returning to the address provided

We will use your feedback to:

- Inform Step Ahead continuous improvement monitoring that we are meeting our high- quality standards
- To support the evidence in our annual self-assessment process where we notify the educational Skills Funding Agency and Ofsted how we are meeting these external quality assurance regimes
- To cascade this good practice across all areas of our business operation
- To identify ways in which we might change our policies and procedures
- To provide feedback to our staff how their work is being appreciated by our customers

Complaints

There will be occasions where you as an individual or an organisation may feel that the service, we have provided has not met your expectations. A complaint can be made about a Step Ahead process or policy, or about the behaviour or actions carried out by Step Ahead staff, an assessment decision, the actions of other learners and or employers towards you or other individuals that is deemed to have caused significant disadvantage.

This includes staff, contractors, or representatives acting on behalf of Step Ahead, whether based in the UK or offshore, including subcontracted delivery partners.

In these circumstances you might want to raise a complaint.

You can make a complaint to Step Ahead either by:

- e-mailing info@stepahead.co.uk
- by completing the attached feedback form (see Appendix 1) and returning to the address provided

Social media and public feedback

We recognise that individuals may sometimes choose to share feedback, comments or concerns about Step Ahead via social media platforms or public review sites.

While we monitor our public presence, social media is not part of our formal complaints procedure, as we may not be able to fully investigate issues raised through public channels or maintain confidentiality.

Where concerns are raised publicly, we may:

- acknowledge the feedback where appropriate
- invite the individual to submit a formal complaint so the issue can be properly investigated
- follow this procedure to ensure a fair, consistent and documented resolution

Compliments & Complaints policy



Informal complaints

The most satisfactory way to resolve a complaint is often by direct discussion between the person who feels aggrieved and the person who seems to have given offence. Step Ahead will always try to resolve a complaint through informal methods in the first instance. As many complaints often arise from a misunderstanding leading to dissatisfaction, the best place to start, is to discuss with the person/manager or department whose actions have led to you not being happy with our service.

Once you explain to the person concerned what the problem is there is often a simple explanation which can provide an answer or solution to the problem identified.

Formal complaints

Where it becomes apparent that your complaint can not be resolved through an informal process, then it is important that you raise a formal complaint as soon as possible.

Even though the procedure is formal and may result in serious action against an offender if upheld, formal complaints will be dealt with in a sympathetic way, respecting the dignity of all concerned.

When making a complaint please refer to any Step Ahead relevant policies and procedures.

If you wish to make a complaint but are unsure about the process, please discuss with any Step Ahead member of staff who will be able to advise you of the exact procedure to follow.

What will happen next?

1. We will send you a letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint within three days of receiving it, enclosing a copy of this procedure.
2. We will then investigate your complaint. This will normally involve passing your complaint to the Operations Manager, who will review your complaint and speak to the member of staff involved.

Where relevant, complaints may involve information held by subcontracted or offshore delivery teams, and liaison with those parties may be required as part of the investigation process.

The Operations Manager will then invite you to a meeting to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint within 14 days of the acknowledgement letter.

3. Within three working days of the meeting, the Operations Manager will write to you confirming what was discussed and any agreed outcomes or actions.
4. If a meeting is not required or cannot take place, the Operations Manager will provide a detailed written response to your complaint, including proposed resolutions, within 21 days of the acknowledgement letter.
5. If you remain dissatisfied at this stage, you may contact us to request a review. We will appoint an independent adviser, not previously involved in the complaint, to review the decision.

Compliments & Complaints policy



6. We will respond within 14 days of receiving your request for a review, confirming our final decision and the reasons for it.
7. We record all complaints and use them as part of our quality assurance process to identify and implement service improvements.

If we have to change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.


Tips for staff dealing with complaints for staff and customers

To be effective in a resolution discussion should be:

- Calm, with no raised voices or inflammatory language
- Specific, with the grounds for complaint clearly stated
- Un-confrontational, it may be that the offence, whilst real, was unintentional and a simple apology would suffice to lay matters to rest
- Constructive, seeking ways to avoid future difficulties
- An informal approach is most likely to work where the people concerned are of broadly equal status (for example, they are both learners) or they know each other well (for example, learner and tutor). The presence of a third person who is neutral in the dispute may help in its resolution. Where a complaint concerns a serious matter – violent bullying, racial abuse or discrimination by a member of staff against a candidate/learner, for example – it should always be dealt with formally.
- Even though the procedure is formal and may result in serious action against an offender if upheld, formal complaints will be dealt with in a sympathetic way, respecting the dignity of all concerned
- Discussions with those under the age of 18 must comply with the relevant Safeguarding Policy

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Quality improvement policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy
- Safeguarding policy
- GDPR policy

Document Control	
Document Title: Compliments & Complaints Policy	
Version Number: 1.5	Document Owner: Jackie Bedford, CEO
Date Approved: 1 July 2025	Approved By: Jackie Bedford, CEO
Effective Date: 1 July 2025	
Superseded Version: 1.4	
Date of Last Review: 16 April 2026	Date of Next Review: 1 April 2027

Compliments & Complaints policy



Appendix 1

Step Ahead Feedback Form

Compliment / Complaint (please delete as appropriate)

Step Ahead is committed to providing high quality services for our learners, employers, employees and any other customers. We welcome this feedback to help us to improve Quality. Please complete this form, including as much information as possible.

Please note that staff are under an obligation not to allow a complaint by to have any bearing on the way that the complainant is treated.

Name:	Date:
Address:	
Postcode:	
Contact Telephone Number:	
Contact Email:	
Course:	
Please clearly set out the nature and origin of your compliment/complaint	
Please continue overleaf if necessary	
If you have a complaint, please describe the steps you have taken to resolve your complaint informally. If this has not been possible, or the outcome is not satisfactory, please explain why.	
Please continue overleaf if necessary	
Signature of person making compliment/complaint:	

Please return this form by email to:

info@stepahead.co.uk

The information provided on this form will be stored and processed under the Data Protection Act 2018