



Sherpa Online's Complaints and Appeals Procedure

We want to help you resolve your complaint as quickly as possible

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Application Labs Ltd (trading as Sherpa Online) is committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone we deal with. In order to do this, we require comments about the service we provide and for you to tell us when we get things wrong. We want to help resolve the issue as quickly as we can.

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response, whether justified or not. We listen to every complaint, treat them all seriously and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our platform.

Our policy covers complaints about:

- The standard of service we provide.
- The standard of service our tutors provide.
- The behaviour of staff, tutors and students on the platform.

- Any action or lack of action by staff that affects an individual or group.
- Any reputational/PR issues regarding Sherpa

Our complaints policy does not cover:

- Matters that have already been investigated fully through this complaints procedure.
- Anonymous complaints.
- Complaints regarding access to information where procedures and remedies are set out in legislation. (e.g: freedom of information act, data protection act, etc...).

Persistent and/or vexatious complaints

These are becoming an increasing problem in the 21st century for all departments and bodies. The difficulties associated with handling these complaints can place significant strain on time and resources as well as be stressful for staff who have to deal with these complex or challenging issues when they arise. To counter this, we will introduce a policy that deals with persistent or vexatious complaints.

Our standards for handling complaints

- We treat all complaints seriously, whether they are made by letter, email or over the phone.
- You will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times - we would hope that you will also be courteous and fair in your dealings with our staff at all times.
- Your complaint will be treated with confidence within the department.
- We will attempt to deal with your complaint in a prompt manner. Acknowledging receipt of the complaint within 5 working days and a full reply within 10 working days of receipt.
- If we are unable to send a full reply within 5 working days we will provide you with a reason and provide a timeline to you.
- We will publish information in our annual report on the numbers and categories of complaints we receive and the percentage of complaints upheld.

Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

How To Complain

You can make a complaint using the following [online contact form](#).

We have a 2-stage complaints procedure. At each stage, it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including any documents and correspondence stating that you are making a complaint in line with our procedure.

Stage 1

This is the first opportunity for the department to resolve a complainant's dissatisfaction, and the majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage. In the first instance, we will try to get your complaint resolved by the Manager of the area or team against whom the complaint has been made. Upon receipt of your complaint, the relevant team Manager will be contacted to ask them to deal with your complaint.

Stage 2

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request a review by the Manager of the relevant team or unit. Your request should be sent using our [online contact form](#).

Timescales for handling a complaint:

Stage 1

- Acknowledgement within 5 working days.
- Full response within 10 working days.

Stage 2

- Acknowledgement within 5 working days.
- Full response within 10 working days.

Extending time limits

We aim to complete all complaints within the timescales above; however, if a complaint is very complex it may occasionally be necessary to extend the time limit. If this is the case, we will keep the complainant informed of the progress of the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and the new deadline.

Remedies

When we get things wrong we will act to:

- Accept responsibility
- Explain what went wrong and why
- Put things right by making any changes required

The action we take to put matters right (i.e. redress) in response to a complaint, can include any combination of the remedies set out in the list below. The general principle we follow is that a complainant should, as far as possible, be put in the position he or she would have been in, had things not gone wrong.

The remedy chosen needs to be proportionate and appropriate to the failure in service and take into account what people are looking for when they complain. An apology is normally appropriate, but other action/s may also be necessary:

- A sincere and meaningful apology (explaining what happened and or what went wrong) - an apology is not an acceptance of liability under Section 2 of the Compensation Act 2006.
- Remedial action, which may include reviewing or changing a decision on the service given to an individual complainant.
- Service desired by the complainant (immediately, if appropriate).
- Putting things right (for example, change of procedures to prevent future difficulties of a similar kind, either for the complainant or others).
- Training or supervising staff.
- Financial compensation.

In the majority of cases, remedies other than financial compensation will satisfy the complainant. Financial compensation is therefore a final option, and will only apply in cases where the loss or suffering is considered to warrant such payment.

Where it is decided following investigation of a complaint, that a complainant has suffered injustice and or hardship resulting in direct or indirect financial loss, due to maladministration, we will determine whether compensation is an appropriate remedy by looking at all the evidence, including how much the complainant can demonstrate they have lost, or what extra costs they have incurred as a result of our maladministration.

The reason for our decision will be recorded by the decision maker and included in our response.

Recording Complaints

We will log all complaints we receive so that we can monitor the types of problems, the best way to sort them out and how long we are taking to deal with them. This also helps us to take a closer look at how we can improve our own service delivery.

We will handle your information in line with data protection legislation.

Appeals Procedure

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you have the right to appeal. Please follow the steps below to ensure your appeal is handled fairly and efficiently:

Submitting an Appeal

- Appeals must be submitted in writing within 10 working days of receiving the complaint outcome.
- Clearly state the reasons for your appeal and provide any additional evidence to support your case.

Review Process

- Your appeal will be reviewed by a senior Manager who was not involved in the original complaint decision.
- A thorough reassessment of the complaint and response will be conducted.

Outcome Notification

- A final decision will be communicated to you in writing within 15 working days of the appeal submission.
- This decision will be considered final, and no further appeals will be accepted.

We are committed to handling all appeals fairly and transparently. If you have any questions about the process, please contact Angela Winters, Head of Engagement - angela@sherpa-online.com

This policy is reviewed annually by the Sherpa Online Management Team