

FE05/HE20

**Stakeholder Feedback,
Complaint Resolution
and Service
Improvement Policy**



**TEC
Partnership**

Changing lives every day

Change Control

Policy Name and Reference	Stakeholder Feedback, Complaint Resolution and Service Improvement (FE05/HE20)
Version	V1.4
Name of Responsible Committee	ELT
Job Title of Responsible Author	Chief Education and Training Officer
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Revision History

Version	Date	Type of Amendment	Amendment Details
V1.0	July 2023	New	New to replace previous complaints policies.
V1.1	January 2024	Minor Amendment	Minor amendment to add the word Complaints into the title.
V1.2	March 2024	Minor Amendment	Front & Back sheets/Change control amended
V1.3	February 2025	Minor Amendment	Changes to process and timelines where issue involves investigation under other policies. ESFA changed to DFE.
V1.4	February 2026	Minor Amendment	Factual review Removal Of Huddersfield

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1.0 Introduction

The objective of the TEC Partnership is to provide the highest quality services and facilities to all its learners and stakeholders. However, if there are areas of our provision which concern you, about which you wish to provide feedback on, or to raise a concern or compliment this policy details how to do so. This policy does not cover academic appeals which are detailed in separate policies, for copies of these or advice please email quality@tecpartnership.ac.uk.

This Policy is based on the following principles:

- Active promotion of equality of opportunity throughout all TEC Partnership activities and the learning experience.
- Provision of an open and transparent process.
- Resolution of complaints in a fair and equitable way within agreed timescales.
- Absence of victimisation once a complaint has been reported.
- Continuous service improvement.
- Highlighting through good practice identified through compliments.

1.1 Purpose

It is in the context of a comment, concern, complaint that this policy applies. The Partnership is committed to monitoring and evaluating standards of education and wider services. The Partnership uses feedback from learners and stakeholders to drive improvements and enhancements. An important part of the outcome of each complaint, whether it is upheld or not, is the action taken and recommendations to prevent the recurrence of a complaint in the future.

1.2 Types of Feedback

Three types of feedback to the organization exists. The following table shows which stakeholders can engage with each type:

Type	Activity	Who can engage
Comment	Positive or negative review(s) of a service provided by any part of TEC Partnership can complete our online feedback form. Those giving feedback will normally receive a response within 14 days.	Any stakeholder of TEC Partnership.
Concern	An interaction with the manager from the relevant service to informally attempt to resolve the issue raised. A concern should be dealt with in a timely manner usually within 14 working days or receipt.	Learners on Further Education programmes (or their parents where the learner is under 18), students on higher education programmes (up to 7 months after their final transcript is given or withdrawal from their programme).

	The person raising the concern has the right to escalate to complaint.	Employers of apprenticeships or placement providers for our students (up to 7 months after the placement has completed).
Formal Complaint	<p>A formal process in which an investigation officer is allocated to investigate the complaint.</p> <p>There are three stages which have different time periods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal Complaint Investigation; • Formal Complaint Appeal; • Completion of procedures; 	<p>Learners on Further Education programmes, or their parents where they are under 18 (up to 1 month after completion of the course or withdrawal).</p> <p>Students on higher education programmes (up to 7 months after their final transcript is given or withdrawal from their programme).</p> <p>Employers of apprenticeships or placement providers for our students (up to 7 months after the placement has completed).</p>

1.3 Key members of staff

Overall responsibility for managing this policy and actions associated with the policy lie with the quality team. Oversight is provided by the Chief Education and Training Officer. The policy is managed by the Head of Quality: FE and Skills and the Group Academic Registrar. Operational actions are taken by the Quality Administrator and Feedback and Complaints Officer. Please email quality@tecpartnership.ac.uk if you have further questions.

2.0 Comment from stakeholders

TEC Partnership welcomes feedback from members of our community on all aspects of our work. All stakeholders have the right to give comments on the service. This is treated by TEC Partnership as feedback, and it can be positive about an experience or negative. TEC Partnership will use these comments to improve services or provide reward. Any comments provided that are anonymous, abusive in nature, language or tone will not receive a response.

Detail	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Action	Online form is completed by the stakeholder.	Feedback and Complaints Officer acknowledges receipt and allocates information	Department manager / staff member provides response to feedback officer.	Feedback officer logs the communication and sends response to the person making comment.
By whom	Stakeholder	Feedback Officer	Department manager / Staff	Feedback Officer

			member	
Timeframe	Day 1	3 working days	5 working days (May differ during holiday periods)	2 working days

3.0 Concerns

It is expected that, where a learner, student or employer is dissatisfied with the general provision of a service, they will normally first raise their concern through one of the mechanisms referred to in Appendix 2.

If a concern relates primarily to minor aspects of the behaviour of one or more members of staff, it is expected that the complainant will normally and informally approach the person(s) directly concerned.

In response to a minor concern raised with a member of staff, if a complainant remains dissatisfied, then the complainant should raise the matter with a person with immediate line management for the area of work, for example: a manager from curriculum. If a complainant is unsure of the identity of the person with immediate line management for the area of work concerned, advice can be obtained from the appropriate Faculty or by emailing quality@tecpartnership.ac.uk. The person approached should respond either orally or in writing, normally within 14 days.

If a concern has yet to be resolved through normal means or the concern is of a serious nature, staff members should advise the student as appropriate. It is expected that the concern then becomes raised as a complaint through the complaints procedure. If a member of staff is unsure about when it is appropriate to do this, advice can be obtained from the relevant member of the Quality Team (Head of Quality: FE and Skills quality@tecpartnership.ac.uk or the Group Academic Registrar heqa@tecpartnership.ac.uk).

Concerns raised with managers must be logged within the Concern Register by using the online Concern Logging Form. These will be used for reflection about our early resolution of complaints and for reports as necessary.

Where a concern is about a member of staff and there is a potential serious breach of professional standards, health and safety or human resources policy any staff member must inform the Employee Relations team to discuss the best way to proceed with the investigation.

4.0 Formal Complaints

A formal complaint applies only to acts or omissions which take place at a time when the complainant is an enrolled learner of the Partnership or an employer of an apprentice/employer providing a work placement. It does not, therefore, apply to applicants prior to admission with the Partnership, or to former learners of the Partnership whose complaint refers to an act or omission which took place after their enrolment has ended. For learners on Further Education programmes this applies for up to 1 month after completion of the course or withdrawal and for students on higher education programmes this applies up to 7 months after their final transcript is given or withdrawal from their programme.

The formal complaint stage can be initiated if -

- Following the raising of a concern, the learner does not feel satisfied with the early resolution and initiates the formal stage of the process;
- The issue has not previously been raised as a concern but the learner wishes to raise a formal complaint based on the seriousness of the issue;
- The issues raised are complex and will require detailed investigation, for example where a complaint relates to the conduct of staff members or covers a number of different incidents.

A complaint must be raised by the individual complainant using the complaints form.

[TEC Partnership Feedback Form](#)

Or alternatively a Word form can be provided upon request by emailing quality@tecpartnership.ac.uk.

4.0.1 Appropriateness

Any individual who thinks that they have a justified cause for complaint should feel able to raise the matter without fear of subsequent victimisation, as should any individual providing supporting evidence or representation. Whether the complaint is eventually upheld or not, the learner has a right to raise it as long as they do so in good faith.

Students and Learners should note that raising a vexatious or malicious complaint may lead to disciplinary action. A complaint that is categorised as vexatious may be rejected by the Partnership; in such instances the learner will be notified in writing 14 days after the decision to reject has been made, with reasons as to why the decision has been made.

Complaints may be raised individually or collectively. In the case of a group complaint, each complainant must complete a separate form although these may refer to a common statement of the matter(s) complained of. The Partnership may clarify which individuals are associating themselves with a submitted complaint before responding to it. Individuals who have not associated themselves with the complaint at that point will not normally be permitted to do so subsequently. The Partnership may ask the group to nominate one learner to act as a group representative.

It is expected that all individuals will exhaust this policy before taking legal action, although this cannot and does not purport to remove the right of any individual or the Partnership to seek a legal remedy for their dispute.

4.0.2 Support for Complainants

At all the stages of the process following the submission of a formal complaint, the complainant has a right to be accompanied to any meeting called by TEC Partnership as part of the complaint process by a friend, who may not be a lawyer acting in a professional capacity or by advocates from the learner services department. The friend may not speak on behalf of or otherwise represent the interests of the individual concerned unless invited to do so by TEC Partnership.

4.1.1 Formal Complaint Allocation and Assessment

Stage 1a – Triage by the Head of Quality: FE and Skills or for Higher Education the Group Academic Registrar.

Upon receipt of a complaint the Feedback and Complaints Officer will seek advice from the relevant organisational complaints lead. If the complaint details are such that there is a potential serious breach of professional standards, Safeguarding, Health and Safety or Code of Conduct by a staff member then the Complaints Officer must inform Safeguarding and/or People and Culture team and follow Stage 1b of this policy.

If it is judged that there is no need to inform People and Culture, then the Complaints Officer follows Stage 1c of this policy.

Stage 1b – People and Culture

The People and Culture team who will review the case and decide whether to lead on the investigation following a fact-finding investigation. The Feedback and Complaints Officer will write to the complainant and inform them that a fact-finding exercise is occurring and that this may result in a longer timeframe for the investigation.

- If the fact-finding shows, there is need to investigate under People and Culture policies then People and Culture will lead on the investigation including all communication with any investigating officers.
- If the fact-finding shows, that there is no need to investigate the complaint under People and Culture Policies then People and Culture will communicate back to the Complaints Officer who will continue the investigations under Stage 1c of this policy.

People and Culture should instruct the Complaints Officer about timeframes of the investigation which should be communicated back to the complainant regularly.

Where an investigation has been led by People and Culture there may be limits on the information that can be shared back to the complainant due to data protection legislation.

Stage 1c – Complaints Officer

TEC Partnership Feedback and Complaints Officer will acknowledge by email within 7 days of its receipt, stating the name of the Investigating Officer and will include the text provided by the student on their complaint form. They will then move to Stage 2 of this policy.

Stage 2 - The nominated Investigating Officer should acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the Feedback and Complaints Officer. They should initially respond to the complainant within 7 days of receipt of the referral. This communication may include a request to meet with the complainant.

This response may or may not confirm the decision of the officer and will consider the following:

- If the complaint is an academic appeal and therefore to be referred to the academic appeals procedure
- Has an early concern been raised and a resolution attempted? Should the complaint be referred to the concerns stage?
- Is there clarity about what the complaint concerns and to whom/what it refers

- What is the resolution that the student is seeking and is this possible?
- What support the student may need to continue with the complaint procedure?

The Investigating Officer may decide to:

- Refer the complaint due to procedural failure, evidence or lack of clarity.
- Refer to 'concern' stage with recommendations for remedial action such as mediation
- Proceed with a formal investigation
- Seek rejection of complaint by contacting the Chief Education and Training officer to review the case.

4.1.2 Formal Complaint Investigation

The formal investigation will consider the context of the complaint and the evidence provided by the student. The complainant may be asked to meet with the Investigating Officer at the start or during the investigation to clarify aspects of the complaint and to consider the student's expectations of the possible outcome. Unrealistic expectations should be explained to the student at this meeting. Other meetings may be required to gather further evidence to consider the complaint. The initial period for investigation of the complaint should be 21 days.

In cases that are complex and/or require further investigation, this initial response may state the necessity of a longer period to ensure that a formal investigation is thoroughly complete before a final response can be given. This extension would usually be up to a further 28 days. The Investigating Officer is expected to be open and transparent with the complainant about the timeframe of the investigation.

If the complaint is rejected through non-compliance by the complainant, then a letter will be issued by the Feedback and Complaints Officer, detailing the reasons that the case will not be investigated further and the actions the complainant needs to take to proceed.

If the complaint pertains to one of the following areas, to minimise further impact, the timeframe for the investigation is expected to be as short as possible:

- Complaints involving threats of serious harm
- The impact of the issues in the complaint has serious consequences for the complainant's mental health
- Complaints regarding disability support
- Highly sensitive issues

Following a formal investigation, the complainant will receive a report which outlines the purpose and scope of the investigation, the sources of information used in the process of the investigation, the conclusions drawn from the investigation and the recommendations of the officer. If a complaint is upheld, or partially upheld, the response will determine the remedy offered, including for example, an apology and when the remedy can be expected.

The complainant will also receive information on their right to appeal, the grounds on which an appeal can be requested, the timeframe and procedure for an appeal and how to access support.

4.2.1 Formal Appeal Stage

A formal appeal must be made writing to the Feedback and Complaints Officer quality@tecpartnership.ac.uk within 21 days of receipt of the formal investigation report. acknowledgement of receipt will be provided within 7 days of its receipt.

Any appeal should be based on:

- i. a review of the procedures followed at the formal complaints stage;
- ii. the reasons why they believe that the outcome was not reasonable;
- iii. the availability of new evidence which could not reasonably have been provided earlier in the process;
- iv. Where a complaint was upheld or partially upheld the remedy being offered by the organisation.

The appeal will be considered by a member of the Senior Leadership Team as the Appeal Officer. If in the view of the Appeal Officer, there are issues still being pursued that are wholly without substance or merit, or the complaint has become frivolous or vexatious, they shall refer it directly to the Group Vice Principal Curriculum, Quality and Standards who shall obtain such additional information as they feel necessary and then either dismiss the appeal summarily and inform the complainant in writing of their reasons for so doing so.

The appeal will not usually involve a further investigation or reconsideration of the initial complaint afresh.

The Appeal Officer may request to meet with the complainant to confirm the scope and the possible outcomes of the appeal to ensure that the complainant's expectations are managed.

The appeal may consider-

- The application of the complaints procedure during the formal stage and whether the outcome was communicated
- How reasonable was the outcome and the remedy in the context of the circumstances
- The validity of new evidence and the reason for its late submission

There are three possible outcomes from the appeal:

- 1) If the appeal is upheld the Appeal Officer will write a report and the Feedback and Complaints Officer will send it to the complainant and explain the conclusion and how the issue will be remedied.
- 2) If the conclusion is that the formal stage has not been completed effectively, the timeframe for the new formal stage investigation will be stated and a new investigation will commence.
- 3) If the appeal is not upheld, the Appeal Officer will write a report and the Feedback and Complaints Officer will send it to the complainant and explain the conclusion.

5.0 Completion of Procedures

There are no further stages of investigation by the TEC Partnership. If the complainant remains dissatisfied they may request a completion of procedures letter by writing to the Feedback and Complaints Officer (quality@tecpartnership.ac.uk). They will then be sent a letter detailing the

appropriate route for further escalation.

5.1a Completion of Procedures: Further Education Students and Apprentices and Apprenticeship Employers

If the appeal is not upheld or the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complainant will be informed of their rights to complain to the Department for Education.

Details of the process can be found at [Complain about a further education college or apprenticeship - GOV.UK](#)

Where a complaint specifically relates to a National Examination Board in Occupational Health (NEBOSH) qualification, and the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Partnership's investigation, they may escalate their complaint directly to NEBOSH. Further information can be found on the NEBOSH website or is available on request from learner services.

At the conclusion of the NEBOSH complaints process, if the NEBOSH qualification is accredited by SQA Accreditation and the assessment took place within the UK, the student may also seek regulatory advice from SQA Accreditation.

5.1b Completion of Procedures: Higher Education Students

For students on TEC Partnership awards and students on Higher National Programmes:

Once the formal appeal stage has been completed, the student is entitled to request a completion of procedures letter and then ask the OIA, the independent ombudsman service, to review his or her complaint about the outcome of the provider's complaints process. The complaint should be submitted to the OIA within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures letter.

To make a complaint to the OIA, information can be found here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/how-to-complain-to-us/>

For Students on University of Hull Programmes:

For students on partner university validated courses once TEC Partnerships have made their final determination, they have the right request a Final Determination of TEC Partnership letter. They then have the right to appeal through relevant university. For University of Hull Students this must be completed within 15 working days of receipt of the Final Determination of TEC Partnership letter. Once the University of Hull have reviewed the complaint they will issue a completion of procedures letter allowing review by the OIA.

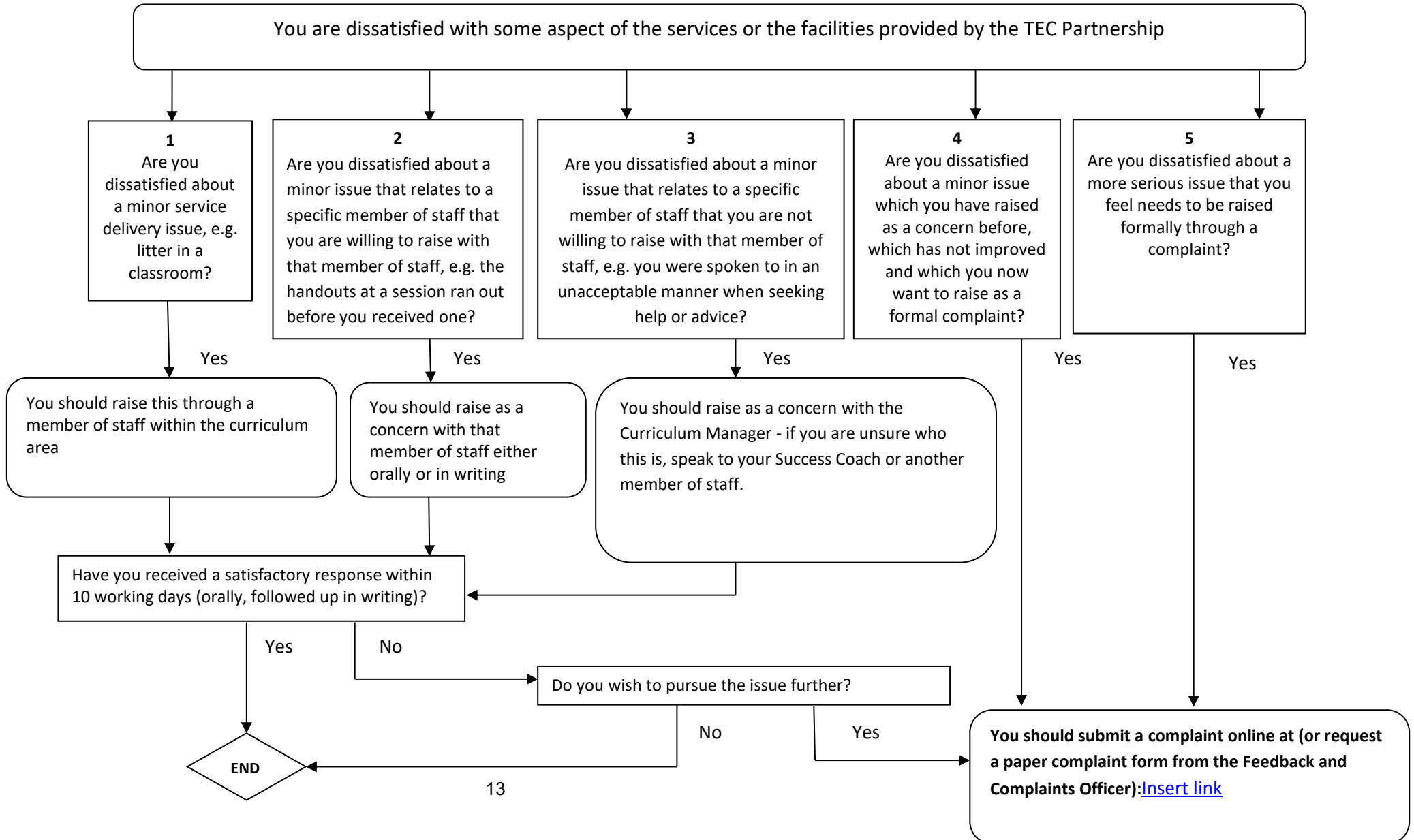
APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Complaints Form

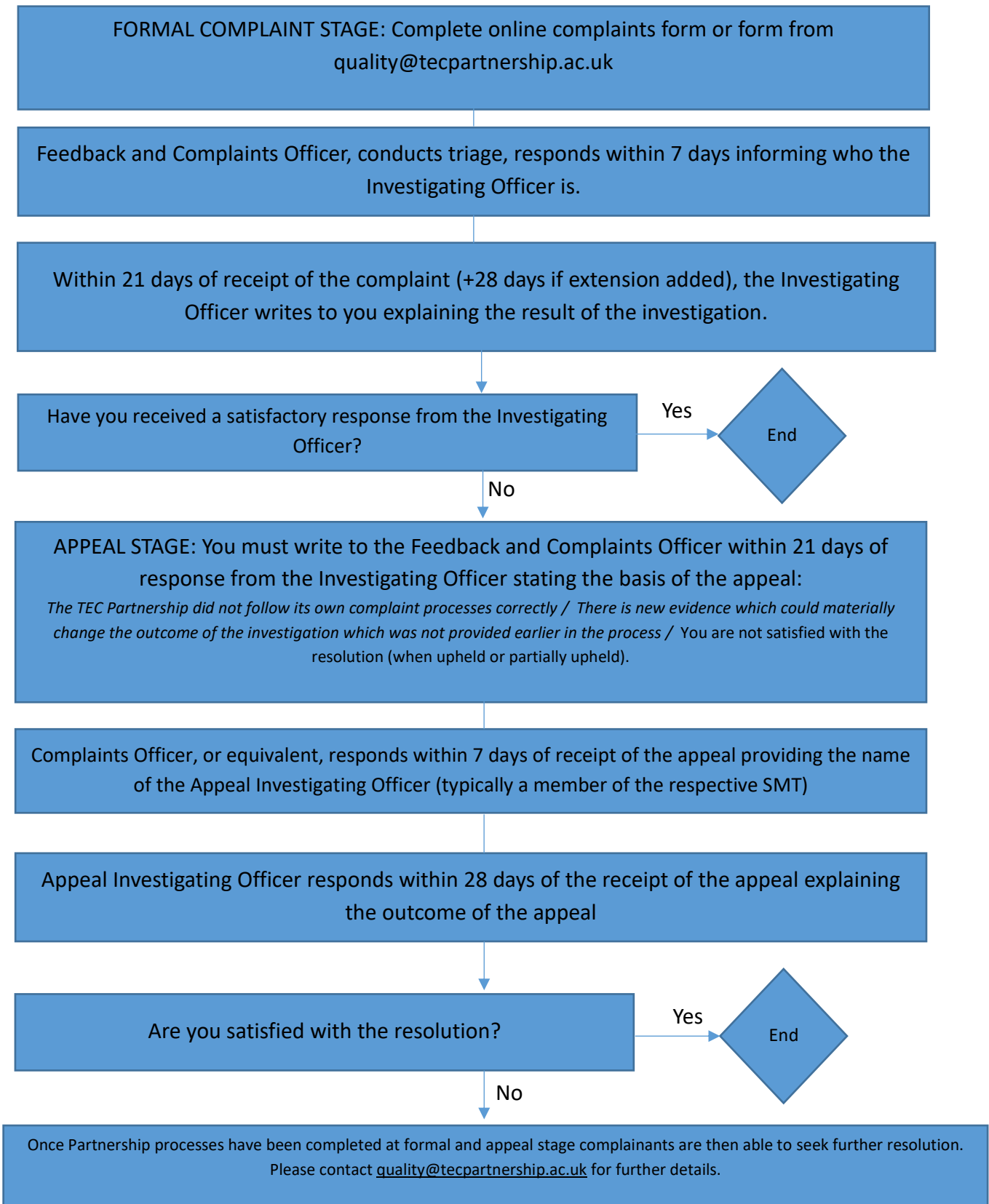
The complaints form can be found at the below link:

[TEC Partnership Feedback Form](#)

APPENDIX 2 - Raising a Concern



APPENDIX 3 - Formal Complaint Process Timeline



APPENDIX 4 – Investigation Report Template



Complaint Investigation Report

Investigating Officer:

Initial Complaint Details

Decision of Investigating Officer

Recommendation of Investigating Officer:

Complaint was {**upheld/not upheld/partially upheld**} for the following reasons:

Summary of Complaint Investigation

Signed {Investigating Officer}: _____

Date: _____

Appendices

Appendix No

Document

When completed the Investigating Officer should forward the report to the Feedback and Complaints Officer, or equivalent, who is supporting the process.

APPENDIX 5 – Investigation Timeline Template



Complaint Investigation Timeline

To be completed by Investigating Officer

Provide dates and details of the investigation, and reference any accompanying evidence

Receipt

Date:

Received complaint from **{name of complainant}** on in relation to **{nature of complaint}**

Investigation

Date(s):

Identify dates of meetings held and any statements taken

Meeting 1 – meeting with complainant

Meeting 2 – meeting with **{relevant member of staff}**

Response

Date:

Identify when response letter sent to complainant.

APPENDIX 6 – Investigation Meeting Template



Complaint Investigation Meeting

Complainant:

Date:

1) Introductions and process

Explain complaint process

2) Investigating Officer to give a brief summary of complaint received:

3) Complainant to provide any further information in relation to complaint:

4) Next steps explained by Investigating Officer:

APPENDIX 7 - Formal Response Letter Template

Date:

Address of complainant:

Dear **{name of complainant}**

Thank you for contacting the college with the complaint regarding **{description of complaint}**.

I have investigated your complaint and have identified the findings below for each aspect of your complaint.

- Description of each complaint issue and findings.

Overall as Investigating Officer I have **{upheld/not upheld/partially upheld}** your complaint and we will be taking the following actions:

{List the actions}

Thank you for bring this issue to our attention and we hope that you find the outcome satisfactory. If we have not been able to resolve the issue to your satisfaction, please note the following grounds for appeal:

- *The TEC Partnership did not follow its own complaint processes correctly,*
- *There is new evidence which could materially change the outcome of the investigation which was not provided earlier in the process.*
- *Where the complaint is upheld or partially upheld you are not satisfied with the proposed resolution*

If you do wish to appeal, please ensure you provide details of your grounds for appeal.

More details can be found in the Complaints Policy or by contacting the Feedback and Complaints Officer **by emailing quality@tecpartnership.ac.uk**

Yours sincerely,

{Name of Investigating Officer}

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