



# **Cambridge Education complaints policy**

January 2017



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January 2017



# Issue and Revision Record

Revision	Date	Originator	Checker	Approver	Description
1	January 2017	SH	FG	DS	Guidance

**Document reference:** 381800 | 1 | A

**Information class:** Standard

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# Contents

1	Our approach to customer care	1
2	Cambridge Education complaints procedures	2
	Step 1. Initial contact	2
	Step 2. Informal complaint	2
	Step 3. Formal complaint	3
	Step 4. Appeal to the Independent Complaints Adjudicator	6
3	Policy review	7

# 1 Our approach to customer care



Customer care – working effectively and efficiently to deliver real value for our customers aiming to exceed their expectations – is the cornerstone of Cambridge Education’s culture.

We are proud to be an employee-owned company and we live by our values, also known as PRIDE. Our values reflect the principle that we derive our professional fulfilment, and nurture our business for future generations of owners, by doing the very best we can for all our customers within the constraints of available time and budget.

Cambridge Education is committed to the provision of the highest quality service to its customers. Customer care is the process by which we achieve a sustained improvement in our relations with customers, and in our response to customers’ needs before, during and after assignments. It is our aim that our customers are not only pleased with our ‘finished product’ but also with our performance during the entire delivery process.

In line with the approach we have taken across all our projects, we are seeking systematic feedback from all our customers. We value feedback as a useful component of our quality assurance toolkit.

We recognise that our customers may from time to time have complaints about an aspect of our work and we aim to address any such complaints quickly and effectively. We take complaints very seriously. We raise inspectors’ awareness of the complaints process and policy through general training events and expect inspectors to try to resolve concerns amicably and informally during the inspection. Similarly, our operational staff receive training in the difficult task of responding to customer dissatisfaction.

Whilst complaints are always uncomfortable, they help alert us to difficulties, uncertainties, or problems. This then enables us to address issues relating to the performance of individuals and/or the overall inspection process.

## 2 Cambridge Education complaints procedures

All customer complaints will be handled according to the procedure outlined below.

### Step 1. Initial contact

If you have a concern please contact us on +44 (0)1223 577442 or by email [events@camb-ed.com](mailto:events@camb-ed.com). Lines are open Monday to Friday 08.30 to 17.00 UK time.

We have found that this is usually the quickest and most satisfactory way of resolving any concerns. If your concern is not dealt with effectively at this stage, please ask to speak to the Quality Assurance Manager.

A detailed complaints policy and procedures are available from Cambridge Education by writing to:

The Quality Assurance Manager

Cambridge Education Ltd

22 Station Road

Cambridge

CB1 2JD

### Step 2. Informal complaint

Complaints are best resolved as soon as possible. Therefore, as soon as concerns arise on an inspection, the complainant should talk to the Lead Inspector (LI), giving as much detail as possible about the issue. A parent or teacher with concerns about an aspect of the inspection should normally raise the issue with the head of the school who will speak to the LI. Wherever possible the LI will seek to resolve the matter while the inspection is in progress.

You can complain about any failure on the part of an inspection team or an individual inspector to comply with the Code of Conduct or to meet the requirements of the relevant BSO inspection framework. All documents are to be found in the CE BSO inspector's handbook and CE BSO inspection framework located on the website at [www.camb-ed.co.uk](http://www.camb-ed.co.uk).

For example, complaints might involve:

- the way the inspection team or individual inspectors have conducted themselves towards pupils, students, staff, trustees or managers at the school



- the degree to which one or more of the inspection findings lack validity because evidence available at the time of the inspection has not been considered
- that inspectors have not followed the relevant BSO inspection framework, criteria or grade descriptors so that their judgements lack reliability.

Complainants may not appeal against the judgements agreed by the inspection team in accordance with the criteria of the inspection framework or rely on new evidence which was not presented to inspectors at the time of the inspection.

### Step 3. Formal complaint

Where Step 2 has failed to resolve the matter, or if the concern arises at or towards the end of the inspection leaving insufficient time for resolution, complainants may make a formal complaint through its official representative, setting out the issues clearly in writing and providing all necessary evidence to support the complaint. Formal complaints should be made within 10 working days of the end of the inspection, or of the publication of the report, where the complaint concerns the inspection report.

A formal complaint will be made in writing to the Quality Assurance Manager via email at [events@camb-ed.com](mailto:events@camb-ed.com) or post, who will:

- log the complaint in Administrate and follow the Cambridge Education internal BMS procedures
- write a letter of acknowledgement to the complainant within **two working days**
- where the complaint involves the service given by an inspector or consultant, immediately inform the Chief Inspector
- where the complaint involves the content of a delegate or in-school course, immediately inform the Professional Lead
- where the complaint involves the service given by any of the other teams involved, immediately inform the relevant line manager.

The Project Director and Project Manager will institute a review, with the aim of providing a full response to the complainant within **15 working days**.

The complaint investigator will ask for a response from the relevant inspectors, examine the relevant inspection evidence base in its entirety, evaluate the substance and validity of the complaint and finally, formulate a comprehensive response.

The Quality Assurance Manager will 'sign off' each complaint response before it is sent to the complainant, checking that it:

- is written in a moderate, professional tone, maintaining confidentiality
- references evidence, with an explanation of where it can be found
- is detailed yet avoids unnecessary description.

Where a complaint cannot be resolved by the Quality Assurance Manager, the independent adjudicator, who is a member of the Managing Board, will have responsibility for monitoring the complaints process. The Operations Team, the inspector/consultant/associate's line manager and/or other relevant staff may be called upon to assist in the review. The review will involve seeking evidence from the inspector/consultant/associate about whose performance the complaint has been made, and from any other relevant sources (such as feedback forms).

It may also, where necessary and appropriate, involve contacting the complainant to discuss the issues in more detail. In the case of complaints about the conduct of an inspector/consultant/associate, the Code of Conduct will be the fundamental reference point.

This process will normally be completed within **15 working days** of receipt of the complaint. In exceptional circumstances (for example, where the issues involved are particularly complex and/or the relevant personnel are not readily available for reasons beyond our control), it may be necessary to extend the period of the investigation. Where this proves necessary, the complainant will be kept fully informed of progress.

### **Formal complaints about the conduct of inspectors**

CE inspectors are bound by the Code of Conduct which is set out in the Cambridge Education BSO inspection framework. If a school, setting, college or an individual believes that the inspection team or an individual inspector has failed to abide by the Code of Conduct, then they have the right to complain through the relevant nominated representative to the Chief Inspector. The complaint must clearly indicate the areas of concern, must specify which element of the Code of Conduct has been breached and must be backed up by appropriate evidence.

### **Formal complaints about the findings of an inspection or report**

Inspections must be conducted and reports must comply with the BSO inspection framework which is published on the Cambridge Education website. If a complainant feels that any finding fails to meet this requirement, they can address an appeal to the Chief Inspector/Professional Lead via their nominated representative, or directly in the case of colleges and BSO. The complainant must clearly state the grounds for appeal and provide all the appropriate evidence to support their view. It is important to realise that disagreement with the inspectors' judgements is not a sufficient ground to request an internal review: this can only be done if the complainant can show either that the inspection team has failed to consider material evidence that was in existence at the time of the inspection and was presented to the inspectors, or that in arriving at the disputed finding, the inspectors have not applied the inspection framework properly and

correctly. It is essential that any such complaint is clearly linked to the judgement which the inspection team has made and which the complainant feels is wrong.

The Chief Inspector/Professional Lead will consider the complaint seriously and will consult with the Lead Inspector for the inspection, any other inspector(s) concerned and with any other relevant parties. In reaching a view, the Chief Inspector will review the complaint in the light of all the inspection evidence including information sought from individual inspectors where the complaint concerns their conduct.

The Chief Inspector's findings and the reasons for them will be reported to the complainant, the inspectors, the association's nominated representative and any other interested parties wherever possible.

Cambridge Education's complaint investigators are trained in handling complaints. The skills involved are common to all aspects of the inspection process. They are:

**Timeliness** adhering to deadlines and keeping people informed;

**Consistency** treating people equitably;

**Objectivity** investigating fairly;

**Thoroughness** investigating all aspects of an issue;

**Confidentiality** respecting all those involved;

**Responsibility** acknowledging when things are right or mistakes have been made;

**Impartiality** drawing conclusions that are just, even if unpopular;

**Plausibility** giving convincing reasons for judgements;

**Style** writing in clear, succinct, unambiguous, plain English

Where the Chief Inspector is the subject of the complaint or has been personally involved in the inspection, the complaint will be considered by the Project Principal who may, if appropriate, request professional advice from other members of the team of inspectors.

If a complaint is upheld, then the investigating officer will consider, in consultation as appropriate with other members of the project team, what if any corrective and/or disciplinary action should be taken in respect of an individual. For example, an errant associate might be the subject of escalated QA monitoring or, in the case of a serious complaint, immediate removal from the pool of associates available for deployment. For a not upheld or not proven complaint, the investigating officer will nonetheless consider, in consultation as appropriate with other members of the project team, whether there are minor issues for improvement that the individual should consider. These will be addressed as part of the normal quality assurance process.

#### Step 4. Appeal to the Independent Complaints Adjudicator

If, when all the procedures above have been followed, a school, setting, college or individual remains dissatisfied with the responses and considers that the complaint has not been handled properly or fairly, they may make an appeal to the Independent Managing Board (IMB) which will act as the Complaints Adjudicator. Cambridge Education has recourse to an independent adjudicator who is not connected with CE and is independent of its management. While the adjudicator provides an external and independent view, they can only accept a case once all internal procedures have been exhausted. Schools should note that the IMB can only rule on the handling of the complaints procedure and not on the validity of the original judgements by inspectors.

This appeal must be made within 10 working days of the response from the Quality Assurance Manager to Step 3.

The IMB's response will be made within 30 working days of receipt of the appeal.

The decision of the IMB is final.

### **3 Policy review**

This policy is reviewed annually, unless changes in circumstances require an earlier review. Its next review is due in January 2018.

