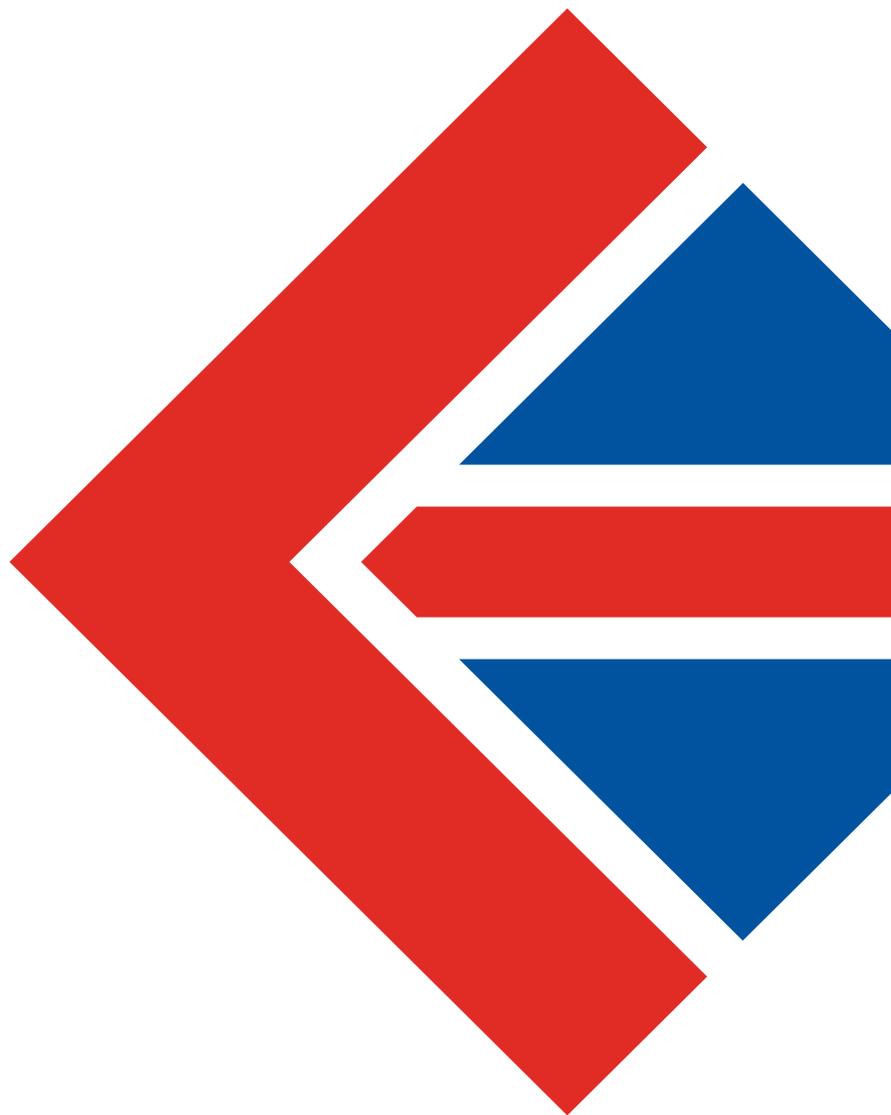


STUDENT COMPLAINTS' PROCEDURE

Information for students

October 2015



Complaints against English UK member centres

This document outlines how English UK handles complaints against its language centre members.

Background

Around 400,000 students a year attend English language courses at English UK member schools, universities or colleges. We receive about 35 complaints a year and of these about three or four cases are referred to the independent Ombudsman for a judgement.

Members of English UK are all accredited by the Accreditation UK scheme, which we run jointly with the British Council. This involves independent inspections every four years, and unannounced interim visits by the inspectors.

Members must maintain the standards required by the Accreditation Scheme at all times. The criteria for the Accreditation Scheme can be found on the British Council website (see www.britishcouncil.org/accreditation-students.htm)

We take all complaints seriously and facilitate communication between the complainant and the member centre in order to resolve the complaint.

Process

The process used for handling your complaint depends upon the type of institution you are studying at – please refer to the appropriate section below:

1. Complaints against private sector schools
2. Complaints against universities/higher education institutions
3. Complaints against further education colleges

1. Complaints against private sector schools

Every member school has an internal complaints process. We cannot accept a complaint until it has gone through the school's own process. If you feel you have a complaint against the school where you are studying, please first arrange a discussion with the Principal or an appropriate member of staff (for example, the Director of Studies, Accommodation Officer, or Student Counsellor).

If the reply you get from the school does not satisfy you, please write in English to English UK via info@englishuk.com.

We cannot accept complaints over the telephone because we need a record of the complaint in case it has to be referred to the Ombudsman.

We can only deal with complaints from international students on an English language course at a member school. We cannot accept complaints:

- from teachers or other staff, agents or host families about problems with schools;
- from people unwilling to give their names;
- about courses such as computing or business studies, or work experience placements, even if these are at member schools; OR,
- about schools which are not full members of English UK.

Unless there are exceptional reasons, we will not normally consider complaints about a course that has ended more than six months ago.

We can only accept complaints made on behalf of a student if it is made by a close family member (parents, brother/sister, uncle or aunt) and if the student has given written authorisation for the family member to pursue the complaint.

In outlining your complaint, keep to the facts and include a copy of any relevant documents which support your case e.g.:

- enrolment form,
- invoice,
- letters and/or email communication with the school

Pay particular attention to the school's terms and conditions, which you accepted when enrolling. Say what you have done to try to resolve the complaint directly with the school.

When English UK receives your complaint, we will write to you to let you know that we have received it, and at the same time we will write to the school concerned to ask for a response within three weeks. We will reply to you based on this response and ask for a response from you within three weeks. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will close a complaint case if we do not receive a response from the complainant within three weeks.

If you are not satisfied, we will refer the complaint to the independent Ombudsman. We will send him/ her all the letters on the case, and s/he can ask to see any other documents that s/he thinks may be helpful. S/he can also ask questions of the school or the complainant, or anyone else, in order to come to a view on the case. S/he will give the decision in writing. This report will be sent to you and the school. This judgement is binding on the school: it must do what the Ombudsman says.

The Ombudsman will take up to six weeks to come to a decision. There is no cost to you, and taking the case to the Ombudsman does not affect your right to take legal action subsequently if you wish to do so. This process is intended to be a relatively fast and cost free way for students to have their complaint heard.

Once the Ombudsman has given his/ her judgement and any required action has been carried out, the English UK complaints process is at an end. The Ombudsman will not engage in subsequent correspondence with either the school or the student, and English UK will regard the Ombudsman's judgement as final.

Please note: if the Ombudsman rules that a refund should be made to the complainant we will contact you and ask for your bank account details. We will pass them on to the school. The school will have two weeks to transfer you the money.

If you decide at any point in the process to start legal proceedings against the member centre, English UK will suspend its consideration of your complaint until the legal proceedings are complete so that no comment by us should prove prejudicial to the legal proceedings.

How to contact us

Write to: English UK, 219 St John Street, London, EC1V 4LY

Or e-mail info@englishuk.com

2. Complaints against universities/higher education institutions

You should first discuss your complaint with your course tutor and then follow the internal complaints procedure of your higher education institution. If you have exhausted the internal complaints procedure and you do not consider that your complaint has been satisfactorily dealt with, you may have the option of taking your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

Please visit their website www.oiahe.org.uk for further information or contact them at:

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Second Floor, Abbey Gate
57–75 Kings Road
Reading RG1 3AB

Or email: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk

3. Complaints against further education colleges

You should first register your complaint within the college's internal complaints process. If you then feel that the complaint has still not been resolved to your satisfaction, and it is regarding an English language course leading to an external qualification, you can take it forward to the relevant Examination Board or qualifications awarding body.

If your concerns are about other non-academic matters, you may be able to complain to the Skills Funding Agency. Please visit their website www.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk for additional information.



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