

Complaints against English UK member centres

This document outlines how English UK handles complaints against its member centres.

Background

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.

English UK has over 400 accredited member centres. We receive about 35 complaints a year and of these only a small percentage are referred to the independent Ombudsman for a final judgement.

Process

Every member centre has an internal complaints process. We cannot accept a complaint until it has gone through the centre's own process.

If you feel you have a complaint against the centre where you are studying, please first arrange a discussion with the Principal/Director 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 by emailing complaints@englishuk.com or by post to English UK, 47 Brunswick Court, Tanner Street, London, SE1 3LH.

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 accredited English language course at a member centre. We cannot accept complaints:

- from teachers or other staff, agents (unless relating to a group, see below) or homestay hosts about problems with their centre;
- 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 centres; OR,
- about centres 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.

Complaints from agents on behalf of a group

We can accept complaints from agents on behalf of a group if the following circumstances are met:

- The complaint refers to an aspect or aspects of the group's experience at the language centre - e.g. accommodation, tuition, transport, activities. Other types of complaint, such as those relating to visa refunds, would need to be raised by the individual(s) affected
- The agent would need to identify those members of the group (only) who wish to raise the complaint and must obtain written permission from those students or their parents/next of kin to raise the complaint on their behalf
- The agent can only ask for compensation for the students affected and cannot propose some other form of resolution such as a discounted course for another student or group

We reserve the right to ask for individual complaints – e.g. if the group members' complaints are too diverse to be treated meaningfully as whole

Making 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 centre's terms and conditions, which you accepted when enrolling. Say what you have done to try to resolve the complaint directly with the centre.

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 centre 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 centre: 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 centre 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 centre 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.

Complaints against universities/higher education institutions

Once you have exhausted the internal complaints procedure (see above for details) and you do not consider that your complaint has been satisfactorily dealt with, you have the option of taking your complaint either to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education or to English UK.

Please visit 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

Complaints against further education colleges

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the internal complaints process (see above for details) and your complaint relates to an English language course, you can refer it to English UK.

If your concerns are about other courses and other non-academic matters, you may be able to complain to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Please visit their website (<https://www.gov.uk/complainfurthereducationapprenticeship>) for additional information.

Privacy

In order for us to deal with your complaint as detailed above, we will process the personal information that you provide to us when you complete the complaint form. The legal basis for processing your personal information is consent.

As described above, we will share the complaint form and any other relevant information that you send us with the centre where you studied and with the ombudsman. We may also share some information with our partners, the British Council Accreditation Unit, if you had complained to them in the first place. We also share with them a tally of the complaints received in a calendar year and the main reasons.

We never share your personal information for marketing purposes.

We keep all the information relating to your case for up to one year after the ombudsman has submitted this report. We retain your full name, the centre against which you complained and the reason for complaint indefinitely.

The ombudsman is a data processor. They will not do anything with your personal data other than what they have been instructed to do. They will not share your personal information with any organisation apart from us. They will hold it securely and retain it only for the period we instruct.

Under data protection law, we must inform you of the rights that you have. Not all rights may be available to you if you want us to complete the complaints process.

- i. The right to be informed: this privacy section sets out how and why we collect, store and use your personal data
- ii. The right of access: you have the right to access the data and information we hold about you.
Please see below for details on how to request this information
- iii. The right to rectification: You may ask us to correct or remove any information you think is inaccurate by contacting us using the contact details below
- iv. The right to erasure: you can request that we delete the information we hold on you by contacting us using the contact details below.
- v. The right to restrict processing: you can let us know how you want us to use your data by getting in touch with us using the contact details below.
- vi. The right to object to processing: you can opt out of hearing from us at any point by contacting us using the contact details below.
- vii. The right to data portability: you have the right to request the data that you have provided us be given to you or transferred to another organisation

You can contact us by phone, email or post.

Phone	Email	Post
+44 20 7608 7960	complaints@englishuk.com	English UK 47 Brunswick Court Tanner Street

		London, SE1 3LH UK
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Our Data Compliance Officer is Naadiya Rawat. You can contact her by email at datacompliance@englishuk.com or by post. Please address the envelope to the Data Compliance Officer.

If you are not satisfied with our response you can make a complaint about the way we process your personal information to the Information Commissioner's Office, the UK's supervisory authority. You can find out more at <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/your-personal-information-concerns/>