



Complaints against English UK member centres

Last updated 27 March 2019

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

Background

Members of English UK are accredited by the Accreditation UK scheme, which we run jointly with the British Council. Centres are inspected every four years with to ensure they meet the Accreditation Scheme standards at all times. Read the standards [here](#).

We take all complaints seriously. We help the student who has a complaint and the centre where they are studying to work through the problem.

English UK has over 400 member centres, but we receive only around 35 complaints each year. Most are sorted out in the early stages of our complaints process.

The English UK complaints process

The first stage

Every English UK member centre has an internal complaints process and you must start by using this. We cannot act on a student complaint unless you have done this.

If you want to complain about your ELT centre, start by talking to the Principal/Director or a member of staff connected with your problem, such the Director of Studies, Accommodation Officer, or Student Counsellor. Your student handbook should tell you the best person to contact.

The next stage

If you have talked to your centre about your complaint and are still unhappy, please email us in English to explain your problem. We need to keep a record, so we cannot take your complaint on the phone.



Who can complain to us, and when?

You must be studying English at an English UK member centre to use our complaints process.

We cannot accept complaints:

- from teachers or other staff, homestay hosts or agents (unless about a group, see below)
- from people who won't give their names
- about non-English courses such as computing or business studies, or work experience placements, even if these are at member centres
- about centres which are not full members of English UK
- In very rare cases, where your English course may not be accredited by us although it is in an accredited English UK centre
- About non-English parts of your university or further education college course: go to the end of this document to find out how to complain about these

We will not normally consider complaints about a course which ended more than six months ago unless there are very good reasons.

Close family members (parents, brother/sister, uncle/aunt) can complain for the student if the student has given written permission.

Complaints from agents

We will accept complaints from agents for a group if:

- The complaint is about the group's experience at the language centre, and is about something like accommodation, tuition, transport or activities. Other types of complaint (for instance about visa refunds), must be made by the people who are affected.
- The agent has written permission from the students or their parents/next of kin to complain

The agent can only ask for compensation for the students affected.



How to complain to English UK

When you email English UK to complain, it is important to tell us the facts and include copies of documents which support your case such as your:

- enrolment form
- invoice
- letters and/or emails with the school

It is important to explain how your complaint relates to the terms and conditions of your centre, which you accepted when you enrolled. You also need to explain how you have tried to solve the problem with your centre.

When we receive your complaint, we will let you know that we have received it, and write to the centre to ask for their response within three weeks.

When we get the centre's response, we will contact you again, explain what the centre has said, and ask you to reply within three weeks. In this mediation process, we try to find a solution to the problem that everyone is happy with.

We will close a complaint case if we do not receive a response from the student within three weeks unless there are very good and unusual reasons for this.

Most complaints are solved at this stage.

The final stage of the process

If you are still not happy, we will refer your complaint to the English UK 'Ombudsman'. This is a person who understands how ELT schools work but is independent.

Involving the Ombudsman is a fast and free way for students to have their complaint heard. It will not stop you taking legal action later if you want to.

What will the Ombudsman do?

We will send the Ombudsman all the information we have about your complaint. They can also ask to see any other documents and question you, the school, and anyone else that will help them decide your case.



The Ombudsman will take up to six weeks to make a decision. You and the centre will get the written report on your case, and the school must do whatever the Ombudsman decides.

Once the Ombudsman has given his/ her decision and any action he or she asked for has been taken, the English UK complaints process ends.

The Ombudsman will not communicate with the centre or the student again, and English UK treats the decision as final.

Refunds

If the Ombudsman says the student should get a refund, we will ask for bank account details and pass them on to the centre. The centre will have two weeks to transfer the money.

Legal action

If you decide to start legal proceedings against the member centre, English UK will stop dealing with your complaint until the legal proceedings are complete. This is to make sure that nothing we say can affect your case.

How to contact us

Please send your complaint to: complaints@englishuk.com. You can also send your complaint by post to 'C/o Complaints, English UK, 47 Brunswick Court, Tanner Street, London, SE1 3LH, UK'.

Complaints against universities/higher education institutions

If your complaint is about a non-English part of your university course, you can contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education at www.oiahe.org.uk for further information or:

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 your complaint is about a non-English part of your college course, 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

Purpose and legal basis for processing

In order for us to deal with your complaint as detailed above, we 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.

What we need

We need your full name, the centre where you studied, and the reasons for the complaint. As part of the application, you may need to provide us with additional information such as the name and address of your host family or your bank account details.

Why we need it

We need these details so that we understand your situation. We also need it so that we can pass it to your centre to ensure they have all the information they need to review their decision. We also need the information to pass on to the ombudsman so that he can decide how to resolve your complaint.

What we do with it

We save a copy of your documents onto our computer network, and make a copy available in Dropbox for the ombudsman to access.

We send all the relevant documents by email to the person responsible at the centre.

We may also share some information with our partners, the British Council Accreditation Unit, if you had complained to them in the first place. When requested by the British Council, we share the number of the complaints which they passed on to English UK in a calendar year and the main reasons for the complaints.

We never share your personal information for marketing purposes.

How long we keep it

We keep all the information relating to your case for up to one year after the case has been closed.

We retain your full name, the centre against which you complained and the reason for complaint indefinitely.

Do we use any data processors?

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.

What are your rights?

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	info@englishuk.com	English UK 47 Brunswick Court Tanner Street London, SE1 3LH UK

Our data compliance Officer is Naadiya Rawat. You can contact her by email at dpo@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/>