



Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

Updated 28.11.2023

Unitas defines an **appeal** as ‘a request for a review of a decision within the control of Unitas’.

Unitas defines a **complaint** as ‘a verbal or oral notice made by an individual to communicate their dissatisfaction with the provision of any course or award by Unitas or a related administrative service’.

This document covers:

1. **Appeals procedure** – see page 2
2. **Complaints procedure** – see page 4
3. **Apprenticeship End Point Assessment Appeal Procedures** – see page 6

Rights and responsibilities

At each stage of your complaint or appeal Unitas will:

- deal with queries, complaints, appeals and reviews within the time limits set out in this document
- explain the grounds on which you must base your appeal if it is to be considered
- make sure that all the points you raise are properly and impartially considered, and there is no potential conflict of interest
- explain the outcome clearly, and ensure you understand what options/pathways are open to you
- allow a friend to accompany you to any meeting or provide advice and representation on your behalf
- respect confidentiality by disclosing only the information that is necessary to consider and respond to your appeal, and only to staff who need it for those purposes
- make sure that no appeal or complaint you have made in good faith will be used to disadvantage you in the future
- treat you with respect.

If you want to appeal against a Unitas decision or make a complaint you should:

- if making an appeal, check if the decision is covered by separate procedures or regulations, and has a time limit within which a query or appeal must be submitted

- make your appeal in writing; - state the decision you are concerned about, give full details of your appeal or complaint and refer to any earlier communication
- deal sensitively with issues that involve other students or staff, and not name them unless it is necessary; and - be respectful.

Unitas does not accept appeals or complaints made by third parties on behalf of a student unless the student provides written confirmation that they are happy for the third party to make an appeal on their behalf.

1. Appeals procedure

- Unitas may occasionally take decisions that affect you personally. If you think that your case has not been properly considered or that a decision is unfair, you have the right to query and then to appeal against it.
- You should ensure you have followed any specific procedures with respect to the cause of your appeal, for example, the Assessment appeal procedure in the Course Handbook or Student Handbook supplied at the beginning of your course.
- If you are unsure of whether to use the appeals or complaints procedure, please ask your Learning Coach or a member of Unitas staff for advice.

Stage 1- Query the decision

- When you first query a decision, it is usually referred back to the individual that conveyed the decision to you.
- Within **28 days** from the decision, which you are querying, write to the individual who conveyed the original decision to you and say that you want to query it. If you are not sure who to contact, your Learning Coach or a member of Unitas will be able to advise you. If you do not have the details of who to write to, you should send your query to the email address or postal address shown on the last page of this document and it will be referred to the appropriate person.
- Queries must be made by post or email to ensure an accurate account of your concerns is recorded. Concise numbered points can be a helpful way to set the situation out clearly and you should provide any additional supporting evidence available to you.
- If your query relates to an assessment decision you should provide electronic copies of the assignment and all correspondence between you and your Learning Coach/assessor, with all the documents as attachments
- If you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to put your query in writing, please contact your Learning Coach or Unitas staff so that alternative arrangements can be discussed.
- Unitas will confirm that they have received your query within **3 working days** and will send a full response to your query within **20 working days** of the date of receipt of your query. If a full reply cannot be provided within that time, you will be informed of when you will receive a full response.

- If, when you receive a full answer you remain dissatisfied, and either you have additional information which has not previously been taken into consideration, or you have evidence that there has been a procedural irregularity you might want to make an appeal.

Stage 2- Lodge a formal appeal

- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your query and you think that you have grounds, you can make a formal appeal to the Business Manager, by post or via email marked 'Appeal' and send this to contact@unitas.uk.net
- To make a formal appeal you should write to the Business Manager within **28 days** of the date of the response to your query. You should explain the grounds for your appeal and attach any information or correspondence that you consider relevant. Unitas will send an acknowledgement of receipt of your appeal.
- You must base your case for appeal on more than a simple statement of disagreement with the decision taken: you should explain why you feel that the original decision, or your query of that decision, was not dealt with fairly or explain what additional evidence you have that was not previously available when the decision about which you are appealing was taken.
- The person who is asked to consider your appeal will look at:
 - whether the decision was taken fairly and correctly in accordance with Unitas' policy and procedures.
 - whether all the appropriate information was taken into account; and whether there are grounds for upholding your appeal.
- Once your appeal has been considered you will be sent a reply directly from the Business Manager. You should expect to receive a full reply within **20 working days** of receiving your appeal. If we can't give you a full reply within that time, we will tell you when we will be able to do so. Unitas may rule that there are no grounds for the appeal to be considered, and you will then be advised accordingly.

Stage 3- Review by the Chief Executive

- Following the outcome of your appeal, if you remain dissatisfied, you can ask the Chief Executive of Unitas to review your case. The Chief Executive has power to act as the final authority on student-related matters, but he or she cannot overturn an academic decision.
- If, following the outcome of your stage 2 appeal, you have evidence that has not previously been considered or that there has been a procedural irregularity you may ask the Chief Executive to review your case. If you wish to request a review, you should write to Unitas at the address shown on the last page of this document within **28 days** of the date of the response to your appeal.
- The request should be submitted in writing by post or email, to ensure that we record your appeal accurately. Unitas will acknowledge receipt within **3 working days** of receiving it and will then refer your appeal to the Chief Executive to investigate on behalf of Unitas.

- The Chief Executive will investigate whether the matter has been handled fairly in line with policy and procedures, and whether Unitas should take any further action. The Chief Executive will reply to your appeal within **20 working days** of the date of Unitas' acknowledgement of receipt of your request or, if that is not possible, contact you again to let you know when you can expect a full reply. This stage may take longer because the investigation will cover earlier correspondence and may seek advice from several individuals.
- The reply from the Chief Executive will explain how the decision has been reached. This decision is the final decision of Unitas.
- There is no right of appeal against the decision of the Chief Executive.
- If you consider that the appeal procedures have not been properly carried out, you can appeal directly to the Awarding Organisation.

2. Complaints procedure

Unitas is committed to providing a high-quality service and will seek to resolve any problems in our services as quickly as possible. We intend that students should have the best possible learning experience, and therefore would hope to resolve problems quickly and to use complaints to inform improvement of our service.

If you experience problems with any aspect of your course, you should contact the appropriate person in Unitas as soon as possible so that we can act quickly to put things right. It is important that you act immediately so that your studies are not hampered. In most cases, an email or phone call with your Learning Coach or to a member of the Unitas staff, will get you the help and advice you need.

Please recognise that we cannot accept responsibility for problems that affect the outcome of your studies if you delay telling us about them until it is too late for us to

Stage 1

- You must make your complaint within a reasonable time following the matter that prompted your complaint. This should be no more than **28 days** from the cause of the complaint being identified or the point at which informal resolution has failed, after which your complaint will be considered to be 'out of time', save in exceptional circumstances that prevented you from submitting it.
- The complaint should be marked 'Complaint' and submitted in writing by post or email, to ensure that we record your complaint accurately. Concise numbered points can be a helpful way to set the situation out clearly and you should provide any supporting evidence available to you.
- If you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to send a written complaint, please contact your Learning Coach to discuss alternatives.
- Send your complaint to: complaints@unitas.uk.net or to the postal address provided at the end of page 6. The complaint will be referred to the appropriate person to investigate and respond.
- Unitas will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and you should expect to receive a reply within **20 working days**. If we can't give you a full reply within that time, we will tell you

when we will be able to do so. We will normally reply using the same method you used when sending your complaint to us, i.e., letter or email.

Stage 2

- If, when you receive the response to your complaint, you are not satisfied with the response, you can ask the Business Manager to review your case. You must put your complaint in writing by post or email and send it to the address/email address shown at the end of this section marked for the attention of the Business Manager. This must be within 28 days of the date of our response to your stage 1 complaint.
- You should include: - full details of your complaint and all matters related to it; - details of staff of Unitas that you have had contact with in relation to your complaint; - copies of any previous correspondence with Unitas related to your complaint, or enough information to help trace relevant correspondence quickly; and - an explanation of why the response you have received at stage 1 has not answered your complaint and enclose any additional evidence in support of your complaint. You should also tell us what you think should be done to resolve your complaint.
- The Business Manager will reply within **20 working days** of the date of Unitas' acknowledgement letter or, if that is not possible, contact you again to let you know when you can expect a full reply.

Stage 3

- If, when you have a full reply from the Business Manager, you are still not satisfied that we have done everything possible to answer your complaint, you can ask Unitas to refer it to the Chief Executive.
- The complaint should be submitted in writing by post or email marked for the attention of the Chief Executive, to ensure that we record your complaint accurately. You must clearly set out the reasons for requesting a further review and enclose any additional evidence in support of your complaint. You should also explain what you would like to happen to resolve your complaint. This request should be sent within **28 days** of the date of the response to your stage 2 complaint.
- Unitas will acknowledge your request within **3 working days**. An investigation will consider whether Unitas has handled the matter fairly in line with stated policy and procedures, and whether Unitas should do anything else. The Chief Executive will send a reply to your complaint within **20 working days** of the date of Unitas' acknowledgement or, if that is not possible, contact you again to let you know when you can expect a full reply. This stage may take longer because the Chief Executive will need to see previous correspondence and may get advice from several individuals. The reply from the Chief Executive will explain the basis of his or her decision. The Chief Executive's decision is the final decision on behalf of Unitas.

3. Apprenticeship End Point Assessment Appeal Procedures

Overview of appeals:

- The purpose of an appeal is to ascertain if the End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) has applied the correct processes, procedures and policies in a fair and consistent manner. Each EPAO will have slightly different appeal processes and therefore it is always necessary to follow the guidelines of the individual EPAO with the support of the Learning Coach Assessor or Apprenticeship manager for advice and guidance on the correct procedure relating to that EPAO.
- There will be a cost associated with each appeal which will be covered by the learner or their employer.
- The list below details what types of appeals will be accepted by EPAO's.
- Outcome of an enquiry about results and an assessment decision
- Outcome of an application for reasonable adjustments or a special consideration
- Outcome of a maladministration or malpractice investigation
- Outcome of a decision to impose a sanction resulting from a malpractice or maladministration investigation.
- Outcome of a review of an appeal (stage 1) decision
- Termination of product and/or centre approval status for maladministration or malpractice, or termination for breach of the centre agreement.
- Each EPAO has different timescales for results of appeals. This needs to be reviewed on a one-to-one basis before completing the relevant forms for that EPAO.
- Further information on appeals with regards to Awarding Bodies and EPAO's can be found at <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/appeals/>

Sources of Advice/Contact details


If you require advice or assistance with any issue, you should contact your Learning Coach or the Unitas Student Support Team. The Student Support team can be contacted at the email address or postal address shown below:

Unitas
Diamond House
Vulcan Road North
Norwich NR6 6AQ

Email: contact@unitas.uk.net

Tel: 01603 570365

Any correspondence to the Business Manager or the Chief Executive should be marked for their attention but posted to the same address (above) or emailed to the Student Support team.

Name:	Jayne Cowley
Position:	Chief Executive
Date:	28.11.2023
Signature:	 Policy to be reviewed by 31.12.2024 or when there is a change in circumstances, in work practices or the introduction of new legislation.