



COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Introduction

The National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA) is committed to providing a quality service for its members, employees and external users of services, and working in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of all our stakeholders. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our members, employees and training delegates, and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

Therefore we aim to ensure that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
- we respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc;
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly. Our aims are to:

- resolve informal concerns quickly;
- keep matters low-key;
- enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been referred.

An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

NOTE: If your complaint is against another NASMA member or training delegate, this falls outside the remit of NASMA. You should consult the complaints procedure for the organisation or institution concerned.

Preamble

Definition: NASMA defines a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction (with NASMA, with a Company Director, or with a member of staff) that relates to NASMA and that requires a formal response.

Purpose: The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

NASMA's responsibility will be to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing;
- respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint;
- take action where appropriate.

A complainant's responsibility is to:

- bring their complaint, in writing, to NASMA's attention normally within 8 weeks of the issue arising;
- raise concerns promptly and directly with a director of the company;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow NASMA a reasonable period of time to deal with the matter;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond NASMA's control.

Responsibility for Action: All company directors and employees of NASMA.

Confidentiality: Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and NASMA maintain confidentiality. However the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (each complaint will be judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

Monitoring and Reporting: The company directors will receive annually an anonymised report of complaints made and their resolution.

Formal Complaints Procedure

Stage 1

In the first instance, if you are unable to resolve the issue informally, you should write to the company director who has been handling your complaint, so that he or she has a chance to put things right. In your letter you should set out the details of your complaint, the consequences for you as a result, and the remedy you are seeking.

You can expect your complaint to be acknowledged within 4 working days of receipt. You should get a response and an explanation within 15 working days.

Our contact details can be found on the NASMA website or you can request them from the NASMA Administrator (office@nasma.org.uk).

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the initial response to the complaint then you can write to the NASMA Chair and ask for your complaint and the response to be reviewed. If your complaint concerns the NASMA Chair and you are not satisfied with their response at Stage 1, you should write to the NASMA Training Officer (Vice Chair). You can expect the NASMA Chair (or Vice Chair as applicable) to acknowledge your request within 4 working days of receipt and a response within 15 working days.

NASMA's aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, inevitably some issues will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated. Consequently timescales given for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing what is being done to deal with the matter, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

Final Stage

If you are not satisfied with the subsequent reply from the NASMA Chair (or Vice Chair as applicable), then you have the option of writing to the NASMA Secretary. The NASMA Secretary will appoint a suitable person to investigate the complaint. Such persons will be impartial and have no material interest in the outcome of the complaint. Where the complaint concerns the NASMA Secretary you should contact the NASMA Treasurer who will fulfil the role of appointing a suitable person.

Should the complaint reach this Final Stage, the NASMA Secretary (or Treasurer as applicable) will respond normally within 10 working days, to inform you of the action which will be taken to investigate your complaint, and when you can expect to hear the outcome of the investigation.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Last Reviewed: April 2011

With thanks to the Association for Learning Technology (ALT)