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# Complaints Policy

**Complaints Policy of Universal Group**
Universal Group views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

**Our policy is:**
- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at Universal Group knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

**Definition of a Complaint**
A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Universal Group.

**Where Complaints Come From**
Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in Universal Group.
A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing. This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use Universal Group's Discipline and Grievance policies.

**Confidentiality**
All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

**Responsibility & Review**
Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Managing Director. This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

**Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:**

Written complaints may be sent to Universal Group at 1st Floor Ashbrook House, Forest Street, Sutton In Ashfield, NG17 1BE or by e-mail at info@universal-group.uk.
Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 01623 551867 or in person to any of
Universal Group's staff at 1st Floor Ashbrook House, Forest Street, Sutton In Ashfield, NG17 1BE.

**Receiving Complaints**

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded.
The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:
- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Universal Group for example: client, neighbours etc.
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see Appendix 1

**Resolving Complaints**

**Stage One**

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about (if site based this should be driven by the site/works manager). If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.
Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Managing Director within 48 hours.
On receiving the complaint, this is recorded into the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, they delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.
Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.
Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

**Stage Two**
If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Director level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Managing Director.
The request for Directors level review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.
The person who receives Stage Two complaints may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.
If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.
The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.
Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within two weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Directors decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

**Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Directors may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Managing Director should not also have the Managing Director as the person leading a Stage Two review.

**Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

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## Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

 Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
 Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words.
 Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
 Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
 Show an interest in what is being said
 Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
 Ask for clarification wherever necessary
 Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
 Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
 If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise
 Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
 Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
 Don’t promise things you can’t deliver
 Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
 Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
 Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal

Signed
Richard Lowe
Managing Director

Dated 01/11/2026