

Complaints Policy

At Nisai, we are committed to providing high-quality education, thoughtful pastoral support and a positive experience for every student and family we work with. We value our relationships with parents, carers, students, commissioners and partner organisations, and we want everyone who engages with Nisai to feel listened to, respected and supported. We also recognise that feedback, including complaints, helps us to improve the quality of our courses, the welfare of our students and the service we provide.

From time to time, a concern may arise or someone may feel that we have not met the standard they expected. When this happens, we want people to feel confident that they can tell us, that we will listen carefully, and that their concern will be considered fairly and objectively. This policy explains how concerns and complaints can be raised and how Nisai will respond in an open, timely, fair and non-discriminatory way.

Scope of this Policy

This policy supports anyone who wishes to raise a concern about Nisai's online education provision, online learning platform, live online lessons, student support, communications with staff, face-to-face mentoring sessions, or related administrative services. Complaints may be raised by parents, carers, students where appropriate, commissioners, local authorities, partner schools, or other stakeholders who have experienced dissatisfaction with Nisai's service.

Some concerns are best handled through a different policy or process. This policy does not replace Nisai's safeguarding, child protection, data protection, whistleblowing, staff disciplinary, grievance, or admissions procedures. If a concern falls more appropriately under another policy, Nisai will explain this clearly and help ensure the matter is directed to the right person or process.

Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone involved in handling a complaint has a responsibility to listen carefully, act fairly and keep the student's best interests at the centre of the process. Heads of Department and members of the Leadership Team may help resolve concerns informally, provide information, or contribute to an investigation where appropriate.

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is responsible for overseeing complaints that reach the formal stage, including complaints that have not been resolved through the informal route. The COO will appoint an appropriate investigator and ensure the complainant receives a clear written response.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) provides senior oversight of formal complaints and complaints that reach the panel stage, ensuring the process is fair, transparent and appropriately managed.

Record Keeping

Nisai maintains a complaints log so that concerns are handled carefully, consistently and professionally. The log helps us track the action we have taken, understand the outcome, learn from feedback and identify any themes that may help us improve. It also supports Nisai's ongoing self-evaluation procedures and provides evidence for governance and quality assurance activity, including the online education accreditation scheme where applicable. If you would like further information regarding the number of complaints received, please do not hesitate to contact us. Complaints are also discussed at termly governors' meetings. The log will include complaints made through the formal procedure, including:

- Whether the complaint was resolved during the formal process or moved forward to a panel hearing.
- Any actions taken by the service as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.
- Any recommendations, learning points or service improvements identified, including those relating to online provision, face-to-face mentoring, safeguarding, accessibility or communications.
- The date the complaint was received, the date of each response, whether timescales were met, and the date the matter was closed.

Complaint records will be retained securely in line with Nisai's data protection and retention arrangements. Access will be restricted to those who need it for the purpose of managing the complaint, governance oversight, safeguarding, legal compliance, or quality assurance.

Principles

We will respect confidentiality as far as we reasonably can. However, to understand and resolve a complaint fairly, it may be necessary to share relevant details with members of staff who need to be involved. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will remain confidential. The only exceptions are when access is requested by the Secretary of State or by an organisation conducting a quality assurance review under the online education accreditation scheme.

We want this procedure to be accessible and easy to use. Nisai will make reasonable adjustments to support complainants who may need help to raise or discuss a concern, including students with special educational needs and disabilities, complainants with communication needs, and those who require information in an alternative format. Complaints can be made in writing, by email, by telephone, or through another agreed accessible method where this is reasonable and appropriate.

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is our first priority. Any complaint or concern that indicates a child or young person may be at risk of harm, or that raises an urgent welfare or safeguarding issue, will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and managed in line with Nisai's safeguarding and child protection procedures. Safeguarding concerns will not wait for the timescales in this complaints procedure where immediate action is required.

Where a complaint relates to online safety, access to the learning platform, remote learning arrangements, student attendance, conduct during online lessons, or face-to-face mentoring, Nisai will consider relevant information carefully. This may include digital records, attendance data, communication records, mentor notes, platform information and staff accounts, where lawful and appropriate. Making a formal complaint will not affect the complainant's statutory rights.

The Customer Complaints Procedure

In our experience, most concerns can be resolved positively and quickly through early conversation. Our staff want students to feel happy, safe and supported, and they welcome the opportunity to understand and resolve concerns where they arise. Raising a concern early helps us put things right as soon as possible and continue acting in the best interests of the student.

Stage 1 (Informal)

- In the vast majority of cases, a concern or issue can be resolved by contacting the Customer & Student Support Team. They will listen, help identify the best way forward and involve the relevant Head of Department and members of staff directly involved where needed.
- Concerns should be raised as soon as possible, and not later than ten weeks after the incident.
- At this informal stage, complaints may be made by phone or by email. The complainant will be kept informed of progress, and a written or verbal response will be provided within 10 working days.
- We hope that most complaints can be resolved through this informal procedure. Where a complaint is more serious, or where the matter has not been resolved informally, the complainant will be advised that they can move to the formal written stage of the procedure (Stage 2).

Stage 2 (Formal)

If a complainant has been through Stage 1 and remains dissatisfied, or if the concern is serious and should move straight to the formal stage, they should submit their complaint in writing. This helps us understand the concern fully and respond appropriately. The complaint should include the nature of the concern, relevant dates, the people involved, any supporting evidence, and the outcome sought. This should be sent to the Chief Operating Officer (COO) at the address below:

Nisai Group
4th Floor
28 Clarendon Road
Watford
WD17 1JJ

The Chief Operating Officer will appoint a senior member of staff to support the investigation. The investigator will review the complaint carefully and consider relevant evidence, which may include online lesson records, platform records, communications, mentoring records, attendance information, staff accounts and any information provided

by the complainant. Once the investigation is complete and feedback has been received, the Chief Operating Officer will decide to:

- Not uphold the complaint, explaining the reasons clearly.
- Propose a fair and appropriate resolution.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology where appropriate, take steps to address the issue, and identify any learning to help prevent a similar concern arising in future.

We will deal with all complaints as quickly and carefully as possible. All formal complaints will be acknowledged; an initial response will be given within 10 working days and a further, more detailed response will be provided where appropriate.

All formal complaints will receive a written response explaining the outcome, the reasons for the decision and the right of appeal where appropriate.

Stage 3 (Panel Review)

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the formal response, they can request a Panel Review within 10 working days of receiving the outcome. The request should explain why they remain dissatisfied and what outcome they are seeking, so that the panel can consider the matter fully. The panel will be appointed by Nisai and will include:

- An Independent Chairperson who was not directly involved in matters relating to the original complaint and is not involved in the management of Nisai.
- Two senior staff members who were not directly involved in matters relating to the complaint.

The panel's role is to consider the complaint with care and independence. It will consider whether the complaint was handled fairly, whether relevant evidence was considered, whether Nisai's policy and procedures were followed, and whether any further action is required. The panel may uphold, partially uphold, or not uphold the complaint, and may also make findings and recommendations for service improvement.

The panel's findings and recommendations will:

- Be shared with the complainant and, where appropriate, any person who is the subject of the complaint.
- Be made available to Nisai's proprietor, senior leaders and governance body for oversight, learning and quality assurance purposes.
- Be retained securely and made available where required to the Secretary of State or an organisation undertaking quality assurance activity under the online education accreditation scheme.

The complainant is welcome and encouraged to attend the hearing and may be accompanied if they wish. Where reasonable and appropriate, the panel may take place online to support accessibility and participation. If the complainant is unable to attend, Nisai will make reasonable efforts to agree a suitable alternative date or time. If the complainant does not wish to attend, the panel hearing may still go ahead in line with this policy. Throughout the process, all parties will be treated with respect, courtesy and sensitivity.

The hearing will be scheduled within 20 working days of the request being received, wherever possible. The panel will issue a written decision within 10 working days of the hearing. The written decision will include the panel's findings, the outcome of the complaint, any recommendations, and any actions Nisai will take. The panel decision is final within Nisai's internal complaints procedure.

After the Internal Procedure

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after Nisai's internal complaints procedure has been completed, they may wish to contact the organisation that commissioned the placement, such as a local authority, school, virtual school, or other commissioning body, where applicable. Nisai will cooperate with reasonable requests from commissioners and relevant external bodies, while continuing to protect confidentiality, personal data and safeguarding requirements.

Where Nisai is accredited under, or applying for, the online education accreditation scheme, complaints information may be reviewed as part of quality assurance activity. If a complainant has concerns about an accredited provider after the internal procedure has been completed, those concerns may be considered in line with the Department for Education's published arrangements for the online education accreditation scheme.

Policy review date: September 2027