



LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY

Degree Apprenticeship Issue Escalation

Policy

Version 2 – July 2025

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1. Introduction

Leeds Beckett University is committed to providing high quality education and services to all its learners and client organisations. As a provider of higher and degree apprenticeships, the University seeks to resolve any risk to an apprentice's successful completion in a timely manner for the benefit of all concerned. An apprenticeship is a three-way partnership between the Employer, the Apprentice and the University, as such, we welcome the opportunity to work with these stakeholders to resolve any issues that may arise as quickly as is practicable.

The Department for Education (DfE) sets out the regulations that all parties must meet for the continued eligibility for [Apprenticeship funding](#). The University implements its own methods to evidence compliance to these requirements; these are set out in the Apprentice / Employer contractual documentation that all parties have agreed.

This policy sets out a standardised way in which Leeds Beckett University will address any identified risk or breach of apprenticeship requirements (or any other issue that is deemed to pose a risk to the successful completion of an Apprentice's programme). However, there may be occasions where the University may be required to deviate from this policy. These occurrences will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and deviation from this policy will only occur if deemed necessary and appropriate by either the School Head of Degree Apprenticeships or the Associate Director of Apprenticeships.

2. Scope and Purpose

This policy applies to all apprentices and employers engaged by the University in its role as a training provider for apprenticeships. While any individual is able to raise an issue, the policy is to be used by University staff responsible for ensuring the progress of apprentices through their programme.

This policy is aligned with the University's [Academic Engagement Policy](#), but is designed to recognise that there are additional requirements for apprenticeships, over and above standard course engagement. And also provide an apprenticeship specific framework for action and escalation to support apprentice's progression.

This process can be used for most apprentice / employer issues arising from non-compliance with the funding rules and / or the terms of the apprenticeship contractual documentation. Apprentices must familiarise themselves with their Course Handbook for information about the processes and policies that may apply to their programme – for example in relation to fitness to practice concerns. Where an issue is raised relating to a fitness to practice or placement learning issue, as this also affects the progress of an apprentice through their programme, the Escalation Referral form must be completed as well as the necessary processes detailed by the [Fitness to Practice Policy](#).

Should an apprentice or employer be dissatisfied with this process, or outcome of the process, they should refer to the University's [Student and Stakeholder Complaints Policy](#) and the right to appeal process found within the [Academic Engagement Policy](#).

The desired objectives of the policy are:

- to resolve issues impacting the Apprentice's eligibility or ability to successfully complete their programme at the earliest opportunity
- to ensure that the escalation processes are fair and transparent to all parties
- to give all parties a clear procedure for escalating issues that cannot be resolved at the level where they arise.
- to ensure the University remains compliant with quality and funding regulations and policies

3. Issue Escalation Procedure

Issues Requiring Escalation

The Issue Escalation Policy is designed to be closely aligned with the University's 'RAG' rating process for apprentices. Degree Apprentice Assessors (DAAs) and course teams are required to allocate a Red, Amber, Green rating to all apprentices using the set RAG criteria. This RAG rating should be recorded in the apprentice's record in Aptem. RAG ratings are reviewed following each Tripartite Review (TPR) and at regular course team review meetings. Course teams are expected to agree actions for Amber and Red apprentices to resolve the relevant issues.

Issues that are to be escalated using this procedure may be classified as either a **cause for escalation** or **critical cause for escalation**. It is normally when course level actions have not resolved the risks or when an apprentice or their employer has not engaged with the actions in the required timescale that a cause for escalation is required. This is also likely to be required when an apprentice has had a 'Red' rating for more than two course review meetings, or there has been no change in their RAG status since their previous TPR.

A critical cause for escalation is required when a risk has occurred which requires more immediate action, or as the next stage of escalation when the actions agreed in an initial cause for escalation have not been met (see stage 2 below).

The classification of the risk will be discussed and agreed by the course team when completing the referral form, and at the relevant escalation panel meeting. Please note, this list is not exhaustive – and any issue that is deemed to pose a risk to apprentice eligibility or progression must be raised through this process.

Note that some issues may be dependent on investigations that an employer may initiate, and the outcome dependent on their findings. However, in all cases where there is an impact on the progress of an apprentice, this process will still apply.

Issue Escalation Procedure

In the event that an 'cause for escalation' is identified the following procedure will be followed from Stage 1 below, for issues immediately classified as 'critical' once the referral form has been completed the process starts at Stage 3, with a requirement for an employer meeting and referral straight to the University Escalation Panel as described below.

Stage 1 – Escalation Referral Form

Where a cause for escalation has been identified, the Escalation Referral form appended to this policy will be completed, normally as an agreed action following a course RAG review meeting, but the form may be initiated at any time. The Course Director and Degree Apprentice Assessor (DAA) and/or any other relevant course team member will liaise to agree a provisional course of action to detail on the form. The form must be sent to the School DA Coordinator who will return it to the Central Apprenticeship Team so that it may be logged, the DAA should also save the form to the apprentice's Aptem record under 'documents'. It is important that there is clear evidence of the steps taken leading up to the escalation to resolve risks and support the apprentice, and of the actions taken once the escalation process is initiated – the form allows space for this to be documented.

The Course Director or other relevant course team lead will share the form with the Apprentice, the Apprentice's Line Manager and / or Mentor/ Practice Assessor (as appropriate) and the named Apprenticeship lead at the employing organisation within 3 working days. A meeting should be arranged with all the relevant parties, who should use their best efforts to find a resolution to the issue at this stage. During the meeting all parties should use the actions laid out in Escalation Referral Form to either;

- Agree to resolve the issue within 10 working days or
- Agree a final resolution action plan and alternative timeframe for resolution if needed (the form should be updated to reflect the final plan and timescales agreed and be re-circulated to all parties).

Stage 2 – Referral to School Escalation Panel

In the event that the issue is not resolved within 10 working days OR as per the agreed timeline within the final resolution action plan, the issue will be escalated to the next School Escalation Panel. Following which the Panel's Chair will send a formal letter detailing the outcomes of the panel to the Apprentice (cc line manager and Apprenticeship lead at the employing organisation). A template letter will include as a minimum:

- Sufficient details regarding the nature of the problem
- The reason that action is required
- Details of any previous attempt at resolving the issue
- The desired outcome of the notification
- Deadline for desired resolution
- Next steps in the event of non-compliance.

If the issue is not resolved within the specified timeframe within the letter at Stage 2, the issue will be reclassified as a 'critical cause for escalation' and will follow the process at Stage 3.

If a 'critical cause for escalation' is identified, and the Apprentice / Employer have not previously been notified (i.e. the issue has immediately been classified as 'critical' and has not followed any prior escalation procedures in Stage 1 & 2) the Course Director or Head of Subject will notify the Employer and Apprentice within 3 working days and arrange for a meeting to be held with the employer. This meeting should outline the risk to the apprentice's programme as a result of the critical cause for escalation. It should be clearly outlined to the employer that failure to resolve the

issue will result in the apprentice's removal from the programme. The issue will then follow the process from Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Referral to University Escalation Panel

The critical cause for escalation will be escalated to the next University Escalation Panel who will decide after a full review of the circumstances, to either;

- issue a formal written **notification of intent to terminate the programme**, in line with the Apprenticeship contract. This written notification will give the Apprentice / Employer 30 working days in which to correct the issue before the termination clause is enacted. Where the parties cannot reach a satisfactory resolution within 30 working days, the Chair of the Escalation panel in conjunction the School Head of Apprenticeships may choose to terminate the Apprenticeship contract and remove the Apprentice from their programme of study.

or, in exceptional circumstances where it is felt warranted due to the nature of the issue;

- issue a formal **notification of immediate termination of the programme**, in line with the Apprenticeship contractual terms that apply. At this point the Chair of the Issue Escalation Panel in conjunction the School Head of Apprenticeships Lead will terminate the apprenticeship contract and remove the Apprentice from their programme of study.

Please note; to allow the Chair to terminate the apprenticeship, evidence must be provided that the Course Director or other University representative has engaged with the employer and worked to resolve the issue prior.

Apprentices and employers have the right to appeal a decision to withdraw them from the apprenticeship, an appeal must be submitted within 10 working days from the date of your outcome letter unless there is a specific reason for a late appeal. More details of this appeals process can be found within the [Academic Engagement Policy](#).

Nothing in this procedure is intended to replace or repeal any rights of the employer or the University in accordance with the contractual agreements signed by the parties in connection with the apprenticeship and this procedure is intended to supplement the contractual arrangements between the parties. If there is any conflict between the terms of this procedure and the contractual documentation between the Parties, the contractual documentation shall take precedence over the terms of this procedure.

School Escalation Panel meetings

The School Escalation Panel meetings are held monthly by each School (if there are no issues to be discussed that month the meeting may be cancelled). The function of the panel is to provide the first stage of escalation and to discuss existing and new risks relating the progress of apprentices. The panel also agrees any actions that are to be taken in order to resolve these risks and will issue formal letters detailing the steps required to avoid further escalation. The panel is chaired by the School Head of Apprenticeships and there is an expectation that the Course Director and Degree Apprentice Assessor attend the panel where their apprentice/s are in scope.

University Escalation Panel meetings

The University Escalation Panel meetings are held monthly, scheduled to allow referrals from the Schools' Panels in month (if there are no issues to be discussed that month the meeting may be cancelled). The function of the panel is to form the final stage of the escalation process and discuss existing and new risks relating the progress of apprentices. The panel also agrees any final actions that can to be taken in order to resolve these risks to avoid possible withdrawal from the programme, and will make and communicate any final decisions relating to the apprentice's programme. The panel is chaired by either the Associate Director of Apprenticeships or the Director of Academic Quality Enhancements, there is an expectation that School Head of Apprenticeships and Course Director will attend the panel where their apprentice/s are in scope.