

Complaints Policy

1 General

- 1.1 This Complaints Policy sets out the Skills and Education Group Awards¹ approach to handling customer complaints.
- 1.2 We are committed to providing a quality service. In order to do this, we will listen and respond to the views of our customers.
- 1.3 Complaints, comments and any other expressions of dissatisfaction are taken seriously and are dealt with promptly and appropriately. We aim to learn from feedback and to improve the quality of service we offer.
- 1.4 All customer complaints received are recorded. Some will be dealt with informally over the telephone others will require a more formal investigation.

2 Scope of Complaints

- 2.1 We will consider complaints regarding our regulated functions and any other service we may provide to stakeholders. This may include but is not limited to the following:
 - The behaviours of either our staff or sub-contractors;
 - Services that would include failure to take action or unreasonable delay.
- 2.2 Complaints about our,
 - independent assessment decisions;
 - external quality assurance decisions;
 - actions taken as a result of confirmed malpractice/maladministration;
 - refusal to grant Special Arrangements;are dealt with under our Enquiries and Appeals Policy.
- 2.3 Where a complaint is about an approved Centre and its provision or assessment decisions, complainants must first go through the Centre's complaints or appeals procedure prior to contacting us. As part of our contractual arrangements with approved Centres, they must all operate a complaint handling and appeals process for learners.

¹ Skills and Education Group Awards is a recognised awarding organisation and part of the Skills and Education Group.

- 2.4 Complaints from learners / whistle blowers about the service provided by our approved Centres which allege malpractice or maladministration will be covered under our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

3 How to complain

- 3.1 Complaints should be made within one month of the occurrence or within two weeks of an unsatisfactory outcome of a complaint to a Centre.
- 3.2 Where possible we would like to deal with your complaint informally and may do so over the telephone. In such cases we will confirm in an email the action we will take.
- 3.3 Sometimes a more formal approach is required and in these cases your complaint must be put in writing directly to complianceandregulation@skillsedugroup.co.uk giving the reason for your complaint and your expectations of the outcome as succinctly as possible.
- 3.4 Please do not submit any additional supporting documentation until requested to do so.

4 Processing your Complaint

- 4.1 Your complaint will be logged as soon as it is received and passed to the appropriate Team for action.
- 4.2 An acknowledgement will be made within five working days of receipt of any written complaint.
- 4.3 If the complaint is excessively long or complex, we may ask you to provide a summary so that we are clear what the issues are.
- 4.4 If the complaint is from a learner who has exhausted the Centre's complaints procedure, we will contact the Centre's Head of Quality for details of their complaints procedure and the outcome of the complaint.
- 4.5 We will endeavour to complete any complaints investigation within one month of the initial written complaint. Where possible complainants will be kept informed during this period and will be informed of the outcome.
- 4.5.1 If your complaint is upheld, we will, subject to the requirements of confidentiality, advise you of the actions we propose to take.
- 4.5.2 If your complaint is not upheld, we will explain why.

- 4.5 If you are not happy with the way your complaint has been handled or the outcome of our investigation you can request that it be escalated to the Deputy Director of Awarding Services.

In such cases,

- this must be done within 10 working days of receipt of our decision;
- only the original complaint and your dissatisfaction with how it was handled will be reviewed;
- further consideration of your complaint will only be made if the review considers the complaint was not handled according to our procedures or failed to take account of some critical evidence;
- any decisions made at this stage will be signed off by the Chief Executive and will be final and the complaint closed.

5 Vexatious and Persistent Correspondence

- 5.1 We offer a transparent complaints procedure and will keep complainants informed throughout any investigation. However, complainants must allow sufficient time to carry out a thorough investigation.
- 5.2 We will not engage with abusive or persistent correspondence from complainants, during our investigation process or once a decision has been reached.
- 5.3 Repeated contact with no new evidence and /or abusive correspondence from a complainant will be considered as vexatious correspondence.
- 5.4 Where correspondence and /or behaviour are deemed to be vexatious, we will refer the complainant to this policy, explaining that if the communication continues in this manner all correspondence will cease.
- 5.5 Customers who remain dissatisfied with an outcome of a complaint may take their complaint to the appropriate Regulator.²

6 Quality Assurance

- 6.1 This policy and guidance is reviewed annually to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our customers and the Regulators.

² Ofqual in England; Qualifications Wales; CCEA Regulation in NI for regulated qualifications; IfATE for Apprenticeships