

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

This document sets out our complaints policy and procedure and is aimed at our Centres, learners and all interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from CQ.

We value all the Centres delivering our qualifications and the learners who undertake them and our aim every day is to exceed the expectations of our customers.

We are confident of providing a high quality service and would be extremely disappointed if this is not the case.

Therefore, it is important should you feel you have encountered a level of service that is below both yours and our expectations that you raise any concerns you may have with us immediately so that we may address them and learn lessons.

Scope

This policy covers complaints learners, members of the public or Centres may wish to make in relation to the qualifications and associated services offered by CQ.

It is not to be used to cover appeals in relation to decisions made by CQ. These areas are covered by our Appeals Policy. Should a complaint be submitted which is in fact an enquiry or an appeal we will respond to inform the relevant party that the issue is being considered, where appropriate, in accordance with the approach outlined in our Customer Service statement or Appeals policy.

If you are unhappy about the way an examination or assessment was delivered and conducted and you suspect malpractice or maladministration may have occurred you should send your concern to us in accordance with the arrangements in our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

Centre's responsibility

Centres should take all responsible steps to ensure that their staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications, and your learners, are aware of the contents of this policy and that your Centre has a complaints handling procedure and appeals process in place to deal with complaints from learners about the services they provide from your Centre. If an individual is unhappy about a service or activity being delivered by a Centre it must first of all go through the Centre's complaints process before bringing the matter to CQ.

Review arrangements

We'll review the policy and its associated procedures annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer, learner or regulatory feedback (e.g. to align with any appeals and complaints process established by the regulators) and any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received.

If you would like to feedback any views please contact us via the details provided at below.

How should I complain?

All of our staff like to help, so you should first try to sort out any problem at the earliest opportunity by speaking to the person who dealt with you.

If this is not possible, or if you are not satisfied with the help provided, please send a written complaint, normally within one month of the event you are complaining about, and address it to us at the contact details outlined at the end of policy.

Learners and/or members of the public who wish to complain about a level of service provided by the Centre at which they have taken a CQ qualification should have exhausted their Centre's own complaints process before bringing the complaint to us. However, learners can make the complaint directly to us in exceptional circumstances where they feel there was a significant breach by the Centre of our various procedures (contact details are contained at the end of this policy).

If I complain what details do I have to give?

When you contact us, please give us your full name, contact details including a daytime telephone number along with:

- a full description of your complaint (including the subject matter and dates and times if known);
- any names of the people you have dealt with so far;
- copies of any papers or letters to do with the complaint

Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. However, it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us, and if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences please inform us that you do not wish for us to divulge your identity.

While we are prepared to investigate issues which are reported to us anonymously we shall always try to confirm an allegation by means of a separate investigation before taking up the matter with those the complaint/allegation relates.

Complaints brought to our attention by the regulators

Where the regulators notify us about failures that have been discovered in the assessment process or other activities of another awarding organisation, these will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints in accordance with the procedures below to ascertain if the same issue could affect the CQ qualifications.

What will happen to my complaint?

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 working days, letting you know who is investigating your complaint.

Our Quality Assurance Manager will be responsible for ensuring the investigation is carried out in a prompt and effective manner and in accordance with the procedures in this policy and will allocate a relevant member of staff to lead the investigation and establish whether or not issues relating to the complaint have occurred.

At all times we will ensure that CQ personnel assigned to the investigation have the appropriate level of competence and they have had no previous involvement or personal interest in the matter. If the Quality Assurance Manager has an involvement in the complaint matter they will not be responsible for allocating a member of staff to carry out the investigation or for overseeing and managing the investigation.

We aim to investigate the complaint within 10 working days. If your complaint is more complex, or involves people who are not available at the time, we may extend this to 15 working days. We may contact you within this period to seek further information or clarification (in some instances we may recommend a meeting). At the end of the investigation we shall write/email to inform you of our decision.

Successful complaints and/or issues brought to our attention by Ofqual

If any part of your complaint is upheld we will of course respond to the complainant accordingly and give due consideration to how we can improve our service and arrangements. For example, by reviewing our procedures to assess the impact on our qualification development, delivery or awarding arrangements and assessment process (if relevant) or arranging for staff training. In extreme circumstances, internal disciplinary procedures may be exercised where the performance or behaviour of our staff is deemed inappropriate.

In situations where a complaint has been successful, or where an investigation following notification from the regulators indicates a failure in our processes, we will give due consideration to the outcome and will take appropriate actions such as:

- identify any other learner and/or Centre who has been affected by that failure,
- correct, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure, and
- review and amend our arrangements, where appropriate, to reduce the likelihood that the failure will reoccur in the future.
- start internal disciplinary procedures against a member of our staff if we found their behaviour was not appropriate in accordance with our internal procedures and arrangements

What if I am not happy with the reply?

If you disagree with the decision the first point of call is our Quality Assurance Manager.

If you are still unhappy with the decision taken by the CQ in reviewing the complaint you can, where relevant, take the matter through our Appeal arrangements which are outlined in our Appeals Policy. If after you have exhausted our Appeals arrangements and you are still unsatisfied with the outcomes, you can complain/appeal directly to the relevant regulatory authority for the qualification (eg Ofqual in England or SQA in Scotland). In the case of Scottish based complaints to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) if you feel that matter has not been appropriately addressed and considered by CQ and then the regulator in Scotland the SQA – although please note SPSO will not consider complaints about academic decisions, such as the outcome of an assessment. These types of complaints are considered by the SPSO as an appeal and would therefore be considered through CQ's appeals processes (see our Appeals Policy for further details).

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our admin team on 01359 245316 or email them at enquiries@cqual.org or write to us at Central Qualifications, Elmtree Business Park, Elmswell, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP30 9HR.