

# Complaints Policy



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# 1 Purpose

All SFJ Awards approved centres must have appropriate policies in place for approval to be granted. By accepting SFJ Awards' Approved Centre Contract, the centre confirms they will adhere to the policies they have in place.

This policy is based on the knowledge that a centre's own policies and procedures have met the centre approval criteria.

It is expected that a centre's own policies and procedures have been followed before referring a complaint to SFJ Awards.

The policy outlines how SFJ Awards will respond to complaints received from Qualification Users and follow up with corrective action, where appropriate.

# 2 Definitions

A complaint is a statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.

**Complaints** are defined as any issue raised by Qualification Users or the Qualifications Regulators with regard to an actual or potential failure in SFJ Awards' qualifications or associated services which is not covered by other policies in place.

**Qualification Users** are defined as persons who have a legitimate interest in the qualification or type of qualification made available by SFJ Awards and may include:

- learners and learners' representatives
- SFJ Awards approved centres
- employers and employer's representatives
- Further and Higher Education Establishments
- Government departments and agencies
- Professional Bodies.

**Please Note:** SFJ Awards do not arbitrate in cases of dispute between learners and centres. All centres are required to have complaints and appeals policies and procedures in place in order to meet the terms of the centre approval criteria, and SFJ Awards expect that all learners are informed of them by the centre as part of their induction. Where complaints between learners and centres are not satisfactorily resolved, learners can contact SFJ Awards.

## 3 Roles and Responsibilities

### Learners:

- Must familiarise themselves with the centre's complaints policy.

### Centre Staff:

- Must familiarise themselves with the centre's complaints policy and procedure.

### Heads of Centre:

- Ensure the centre has a complaints policy in place to meet centre approval requirements.
- Ensure centre staff and learners are aware of the centre's complaints policy.
- Ensure complaints are investigated and handled consistently, in accordance with this policy and the centre's own complaints policy.

### The Awarding Organisation Manager (Responsible Officer):

- Ensure that complaints are investigated and processed in accordance with this policy.
- Identify weaknesses and implement new processes as a result of lessons learnt.

## 4 Making a complaint

In dealing with our customers, staff at SFJ Awards endeavour to provide a service which is, courteous and quick to respond to customer needs. Nevertheless, at times, there may be situations where a customer is dissatisfied with the service they have received and wish to make a complaint.

Complaints received by SFJ Awards will be dealt with openly, fairly and efficiently.

Qualification users can submit complaints to SFJ Awards by:

- E-mail to [info@sfjawards.com](mailto:info@sfjawards.com)
- Telephone on 0114 231 7379
- Post to:

The Awarding Organisation Manager  
SFJ Awards  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Unit C  
Meadowcourt Business Park  
4 Hayland Street  
Sheffield  
S9 1BY

## 5 Responding to complaints

### Complaints from a Centre

If a centre has a complaint, SFJ Awards will aim to resolve it informally. An informal complaint can frequently be put right immediately and therefore in the first instance the complainant should contact SFJ Awards who will seek to rectify the matter as soon as possible.

Should the complaint remain unresolved then formal procedures may be followed. SFJ Awards will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within 2 working days. SFJ Awards will then appoint an Investigating Officer.

### Complaints from a Learner

Learners must follow and exhaust the centre's complaints procedure **fully** before making a direct formal complaint to SFJ Awards.

Should the complaint remain unresolved, the learner may make a formal complaint to SFJ Awards.

SFJ Awards will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within 2 working days. SFJ Awards will then appoint an Investigating Officer.

As part of their investigation, SFJ Awards will examine the procedures used by the centre to investigate the original complaint submitted by the learner.

### Complaints from a Third Party

A formal complaint may be made by someone other than a centre or a learner. SFJ Awards will investigate complaints received by a third party within their scope.

SFJ Awards will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within 2 working days. SFJ Awards will then appoint an Investigating Officer.

Should a complaint fall outside the scope of SFJ Awards, the complainant will be informed of this in writing within 2 working days of receiving the complaint.

Once we are satisfied that all information and documentation is available to us, it will be considered and a conclusion will be reached. A response will normally be issued in writing to the complainant within 10 working days of receiving the initial complaint. (If the process is expected to take longer, you will be advised of this, the reasons, and the likely amended timescale).

Complainants have 20 working days to respond to SFJ Awards' response. Should no further comment be received from the complainant, the conclusion will be confirmed as final.

## 6 Mitigation and corrective action

Following the investigation and resolution of any complaint (or potential failure identified by a Qualification User, the Qualifications Regulators or any another Awarding Organisation/Stakeholder), SFJ Awards will take all practicable steps to mitigate the effect of the complaint and prevent any recurrence of the failure.

Where a complaint leads to the discovery of a failure in the assessment process, SFJ Awards will take all reasonable steps to:

- identify any other learner(s) who has been affected by the failure
- correct or, where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure, and
- ensure that the failure does not recur.

Where the outcome of a complaint questions the validity of results at a centre, SFJ Awards will take action to protect the interests of other learners and the integrity of the award of units/qualifications. This may involve a further/independent review of learner work. Where an independent review is necessary, this may be at the centre's expense.

This may include, as appropriate (*the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only*):

- a further review of learners' work by an External Quality Assurer not involved in the final verification of the awards (up to a 100% sample may be requested for verification purposes);
- a review of the unit(s) of assessment through its review process;
- a review of the rules of combination for the qualification(s).

The Awarding Organisation Manager will take responsibility for initiating the most appropriate course of action.

If a complaint received has the potential to lead to an Adverse Effect, SFJ Awards' Awarding Organisation Manager will notify the Qualifications Regulators and keep them fully informed.

SFJ Awards are required to notify other awarding organisations/stakeholders where cases are likely to impact on them.

Where the Qualifications Regulators notifies SFJ Awards of failures that have been discovered in the process of another awarding organisation, SFJ Awards will review whether or not a similar failure could affect its own assessment process and take action to mitigate the failure and prevent an occurrence.

## 7 Monitoring

Investigated complaints will be monitored by SFJ Awards.

Complaints will be reported to the SFJ Awards Quality & Standards Committee. A summary report will be submitted to the Committee, allowing the Committee to monitor complaint investigations and outcomes over time.

The number and nature of complaints and their outcomes will be considered by the Quality & Standards Committee and any necessary changes as a result will be agreed, as appropriate.

## 8 Appeal

Appeals against conclusions can be made through SFJ Awards' Enquiries and Appeals Policy available on [www.sfjawards.com/appeals](http://www.sfjawards.com/appeals)

## 9 Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Quality and Assessment Manager on a regular basis as part of SFJ Awards' self-evaluation arrangements and revised as necessary in response to lessons learnt, customer feedback, changes in legislation and guidance from the Qualifications Regulators.

Our review of the policy will ensure that SFJ Awards procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied appropriately and equitably.

Policies and formal amendments to policies are approved at the next meeting by the Quality & Standards Committee.

If you have any queries about the content of the policy or you wish to give feedback then please contact SFJ Awards Tel: 01142 841970 or email [info@sfjawards.com](mailto:info@sfjawards.com)

## 10 Location of the Policy

You can download copies of the policy from our website: [www.sfjawards.com/complaints](http://www.sfjawards.com/complaints)