



# Direct Claims Policy

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# 1 Purpose

The policy sets out SFJ Awards' approach to giving Direct Claims Status (DCS) to eligible approved centres.

## 2 Definitions

Direct Claim Status (DCS) is a method widely used by awarding organisations, allowing eligible centres to claim for learners' certificates when they are ready and are satisfied their learners have fully met the qualification criteria, without the need for External Quality Assurance.

## 3 Roles and Responsibilities

### Centre Assessors:

- The named assessor confirms that all learners requested for certification have fully met the assessment requirements for the units being claimed in accordance with the unit specification.

### Centre Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs):

- Ensure that consistent robust delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance systems and procedures are maintained.
- Take the lead in ensuring that assessment and internal quality assurance is well planned and meets SFJ Awards requirements.
- Ensure the appointed assessor(s) have confirmed that all learners requested for certification have fully met the assessment requirements for the units being claimed in accordance with the unit specification.
- The named IQA confirms that the learners being claimed have been subjected to appropriate internal quality assurance in accordance with SFJ Awards guidelines.
- Confirms the claim for certification is correct.
- Understands that claims made incorrectly are maladministration and will be investigated in accordance with SFJ Awards' Maladministration Policy.
- Understands that false claims will be investigated in accordance with SFJ Awards' Malpractice Policy.

### Heads of Centre:

- Ensure SFJ Awards are promptly notified when a nominated IQA leaves the centre.
- Ensure that where the removal of a nominated IQA causes the centre to be non-compliant, they nominate another suitably experienced IQA to ensure the centre has a minimum of one IQA at all times, as detailed in the relevant Qualifications Handbook, QA (Internal and External) Guidance and SFJ Awards' Centre Handbook.

### **SFJ Awards' External Quality Assurers (EQAs):**

- Make recommendations for DCS to SFJ Awards' Quality Assurance Officer, in accordance with this policy.
- Continues to monitor the ongoing compliance of the centre to ensure that standards are being maintained.
- Alert the Quality Assurance Officer to concerns with centre activity which may lead to the suspension/withdrawn of DCS.

### **SFJ Awards' Quality Assurance Officer:**

- Considers DCS recommendations made by EQAs.
- Confirms appropriate DCS to the Centre.
- Takes action to suspend/withdraw DCS, where necessary.

### **SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager:**

- Ensures that DCS is granted to/withdrawn from SFJ Awards' Approved Centres in accordance with this policy and SFJ Awards' Sanctions policy.

## **4 Direct Claims Status (DCS) – General Principles**

### **General Principles**

DCS is based on quality criteria measured and reported on through external quality assurance, carried out by an SFJ Awards External Quality Assurer (EQA).

A centre with DCS is judged by SFJ Awards to have appropriate occupationally competent, skilled and knowledgeable internal quality assurer(s) and reliable, robust internal quality assurance systems in place. These aspects enable the centre to make consistent, accurate decisions about certificates awarded to learners.

DCS is built on demonstrated trust and confidence, based on the centre ensuring it continues to operate to the consistent high standards identified as already in place.

Based on evidence of consistent robust internal quality assurance systems, SFJ Awards' EQAs may recommend DCS. Confirmation of DCS, and the final decision, is at SFJ Awards' discretion.

Where DCS has been approved, centres must continue to deliver the qualification to learners, assess the work and make sure it is internally quality assured. If your centre is granted DCS status, your centre's IQA/IQA Coordinator will be able to approve your own certificate claims for that qualification without waiting for the need for final sign-off by an SFJ Awards EQA.

DCS is awarded on an individual qualification-by-qualification basis, not across the centre as a whole. A centre may hold DCS for more than one qualification, as long as all the criteria are met in full for each qualification.

Centres will continue to receive EQA scrutiny for qualifications they do not have DCS approval for.

Centres will also continue to receive at least one SFJ Awards EQA event per year to ensure standards are being upheld.

Whilst active centres approved for DCS are only required to have one EQA visit every 12 months, they may request additional visits if they wish (additional visits may be charged to the centre, at the discretion of SFJ Awards).

To retain DCS, centres must keep all evidence and retain all associated records of assessment and internal quality assurance activity for the next EQA activity, for all qualifications/units for which DCS has been granted. This is so the EQA can review completed portfolios for a sample of learners who have been directly certificated since their previous activity, as part of the centre's ongoing compliance monitoring against SFJ Awards' centre approval and centre agreement requirements. These checks ensure that standards are being consistently maintained, allowing SFJ Awards to take action if they are not.

### **Unregulated Courses**

SFJ Awards' unregulated ALP (Accrediting Learning Professionally) Courses are subjected to a thorough approval process. ALP Courses are granted DCS automatically at the point of ALP approval being confirmed.

### **Regulated Qualifications**

In the case of SFJ Awards' regulated qualifications, eligible centres must have demonstrated consistency and quality in the delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance, achieved consistent good quality assurance reports and demonstrate 'low risk' status to qualify for DCS.

## **5 Direct Claims Status Approval**

DCS cannot be transferred from another awarding organisation for a qualification that is also offered by SFJ Awards, it must be achieved.

There is no exact timescale to achieving DCS.

Centres may be granted DCS, based on the recommendation of an EQA, having demonstrated the following quality criteria (*the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only*):

- the centre has an experienced internal quality assurer
- the centre has had two successful consecutive monitoring EQA events for the qualification for which DCS is being sought
- the centre's internal quality assurance policy is being effectively implemented and covers all aspects of internal quality assurance
- the centre's standardisation activity is satisfactory
- the centre has no sanctions above Level 1\* and no unaddressed action plans relating to both successful monitoring EQA events
- the centre has 'low risk' status as identified within the centre's ongoing compliance report, based on SFJ Awards' centre approval and centre agreement criteria.

*\*please refer to SFJ Awards' Sanctions Policy*

SFJ Awards will inform the centre in writing by email when their DCS is confirmed, clearly stating for which qualification(s) the DCS has been approved and the terms and conditions of DCS. If there are any conditions attached to the DCS approval, those will also be stated at this time. The centre must comply with the terms and conditions of the Direct Claims Policy under which DCS has been awarded.

The centre must advise SFJ Awards **immediately** of any changes that may affect the centre's DCS approval, for example, changes to resources, particularly within the assessment and IQA team by submitting a completed Centre Details Change Form to [gateam@sfiawards.com](mailto:gateam@sfiawards.com).

Continuation of Direct Claims Status will also be dependent on a centre IQA representative attending at least **one** SFJ Awards external standardisation event every two years. Where a centre representative does not attend external standardisation events, SFJ Awards reserve the right to charge centres for subsequent EQA activities relating to qualifications for which DCS has been granted.

## 6 Making a Direct Claim

Direct claims are made via SFJ Awards' Odyssey Online Learner Management System via Direct Entry of Results or uploading and submitting a class Marksheet. Odyssey Online will forward your claim directly for processing.

Certificates will then be printed, and dispatched by SFJ Awards

Where direct claims include requests for credit transfer or exemption, the assessor and IQA must confirm that original certificates have been verified as current, authentic and valid.

All evidence and records must be retained for EQA purposes.

Centres should submit a completed Odyssey User ID Request Form to [info@sfjawards.com](mailto:info@sfjawards.com) to authorise users from their centre to use the Odyssey Online Learner Management System.

## 7 Direct Claims Status Withdrawal

To ensure the integrity of the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of a qualification, SFJ Awards will withdraw DCS where the centre no longer meets the criteria for eligibility.

SFJ Awards adopts a risk based approach, considered against their Compliance Monitoring Criteria. DCS may be suspended/withdrawn upon the recommendation of the EQA if they report concerns about the quality of work being carried out during their EQA activities, and in particular, about the internal quality assurance processes in place.

Centres that have DCS and incur actions at sanction Level 1\* will not necessarily have their DCS removed for that qualification, where all actions are satisfactorily completed within the set timescales specified by SFJ Awards within the EQA report.

Centres that have DCS and incur a sanction at Level 2\* or above, will have their DCS promptly removed for those qualifications that are under threat.

*\*please refer to SFJ Awards' Sanctions Policy for the tariff of sanctions.* You can download copies of the policy from our website: <http://sfjawards.com/policies/>

Higher level sanctions imposed may affect the DCS of more than one qualification.

DCS will be withdrawn where the centre stops delivering the qualification(s) or does not make direct certification claims for the qualification(s) for 12 months.

DCS will be automatically suspended where malpractice is alleged, where persistent maladministration occurs, or where the centre is under compliance investigation, whilst SFJ Awards explore the allegations.

## 8 Appeals

Centres who wish to appeal against a decision regarding withdrawal of DCS/Sanctions imposed should do so using SFJ Awards Enquiries and Appeals Policy. You can download copies of the policy from our website: <http://sfjawards.com/policies/>

## 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: <http://sfjawards.com/policies/>