



Enquiries and Appeals Policy



Revisions and Amendment Register

Date of Issue	Page No	Revision	Version
May 2024		New updated issue following policy review	24/1
November 2025		Changes across document to make clearer the differentiation between an enquiry/appeal and a complaint, as outlined in Section 1 'Scope'.	25/1
August 2026		Changes to make activity at stages 1 and 2 clearer	26/1

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1. Scope

Throughout this policy the term 'Centres' is used. This term has been used for brevity and includes both Centres delivering qualifications and Training Providers or Employers delivering apprenticeship assessments (otherwise known as End-Point Assessment).

This policy sets out how SFJ Awards will handle enquiries and appeals. SFJ Awards Approved Centres and Learners may make enquiries and appeals against the following:

- The result of an assessment, where the assessment is marked by SFJ Awards.
- The decisions made by SFJ Awards Associates.
- Decisions regarding Reasonable Adjustments or Special Considerations.
- Decisions relating to any action to be taken against a learner or a Centre following an investigation into malpractice or maladministration.

Where a learner or Centre is dissatisfied with any other element of the products or services offered by SFJ Awards, they should refer to SFJ Awards Complaints policy.

Please Note: SFJ Awards will not arbitrate in cases of dispute between Learners and Centres. All Centres are required to have complaints and appeals policies and procedures in place. SFJ Awards expect that all Learners are informed of the relevant policies by the Centre as part of their induction. Where appeals relating to Centre-marked assessments are not satisfactorily resolved, Learners may enquire and appeal to SFJ Awards only once the Centre's appeals process has been exhausted.

2. Definitions

Enquiries: allow Centres and Learners to ask for clarification or exemplification on specific or general issues.

Appeals: allow Centres and Learners to question a decision or judgement. An appeal is a process through which the outcome of a decision may be challenged.

Appeals made by approved Centres or Learners can only be made regarding one of the following:

- Assessment decisions
- Conduct of assessment and quality assurance practices
- Decisions regarding Reasonable Adjustments or Special Considerations
- Decisions relating to any action to be taken against a learner, Centre staff member or a Centre following an investigation into malpractice or maladministration.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Learners:

- Must familiarise themselves with the Centre's enquiries and appeals policy.

SFJ Awards Centres delivering qualifications:

- Ensure the Centre has an enquiries and appeals policy in place to meet Centre approval requirements.
- Ensure Centre staff and learners are aware of the Centre's enquiries and appeals policy.

Ensure enquiries and appeals are handled consistently and in accordance with this and the Centre's own appeals policy.

4. Enquiries

Enquiries should be made orally or in writing. SFJ Awards will deal with enquiries from Centres and learners promptly:

- SFJ Awards will acknowledge enquiries within 5 working days.
- SFJ Awards will deal with simple telephone enquiries quickly.
- SFJ Awards will appoint an appropriate member of staff to respond to the enquiry.
- SFJ Awards will respond to written enquiries (email, letter) within 5 working days, if the initial enquiry cannot be resolved within this 5 day period, we will try to be clear regarding timescales..

5. When to Appeal

Appeals will only be considered if they comply with the definition above and the appellant can submit a strong case that any conduct or decision was unfair or in breach of regulatory requirements.

5.1 Appeals from Learners

Learners must follow and exhaust the Centre's appeals and complaints procedure **fully** before making a direct appeal to SFJ Awards where their appeal relates to a Centre-marked assessment.

The Learner should make the Centre aware of their intention to submit an appeal to SFJ Awards, however we understand that this may not be practical in situations where the relationship between the learner and the Centre has irretrievably broken down.

Learners may nominate a representative to complain on their behalf only if they are unable to represent themselves. For instance, this may be due to medical reasons or the learner being under 18 years of age. In such cases the learner should make SFJ Awards aware of their representative and the reason they require a representative at the start of the process. SFJ Awards will not be able to act until such time they have received confirmation from the learner that the representative is authorised to act on their behalf.

As part of their investigation, SFJ Awards may examine the procedures used by the Centre to investigate the original appeal submitted by the learner.

Please Note: SFJ Awards do not arbitrate in cases of dispute between learners and Centres. All Centres are required to have 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. .

5.2 Appeals from Apprentices (or Training Providers on behalf of apprentices)

Appeals against the outcome of an apprenticeship assessment must be made within 15 calendar days of results being issued.

5.3 Appeals from Centres

Appeals submitted by a Centre must be made within 10 working days of being made aware of the decision they are appealing against.

6. Overview of the Stages of the appeals process

SFJ Awards enquiries and appeals process has three stages.

The appeals process will be conducted fairly and consistently, in line with regulatory requirements. SFJ Awards may request further information, speak with learners, speak with Centre staff or arrange a Centre visit as part of their investigation. Appellants will be kept informed throughout the process.

Where the below process requires appeals to be made in writing, this may be waived in exceptional circumstances where the appellant is unable to provide a written appeal. In such cases, an SFJ Awards member of staff will take details of the appeal over the phone and send a written summary of what they believe to be the nature of the appeal to the appellant. The appeal will only proceed once confirmation has been received that SFJ Awards written summary has correctly outlined the nature of the appeal. SFJ Awards preference is for enquiries and appeals to be made via email. This allows SFJ Awards to monitor whether appeals are processed in a timely manner. However, appeals may also be submitted via post to SFJ Awards at the following address:

Quality Assurance team
SFJ Awards
Consult House
4 Hayland Street
Sheffield
S9 1BY

Stage One (Enquiry)

At Stage One, an appeal is referred to as an enquiry and dealt with on a semi-formal basis.

Any enquiry about a decision made by SFJ Awards in relation to a Centre or learners, must be sent to SFJ Awards within 10 working days of receiving the decision or result that is subject to the enquiry.

Enquiries can be made by telephone or email.

Telephone: 0114 284 1970

Email: gateam@sfjawards.com

The enquiry will be acknowledged within 5 working days and reviewed by an appropriate and competent member of the SFJ Awards Quality Assurance team, who has not had a previous connection with or personal interest in the case. SFJ Awards will respond to the enquiry within 10 working days, and will contact the person making the appeal if it is not possible to meet this timeframe. This case officer will make every attempt to answer the enquiry in full and avoid the need for the enquiry to progress to stage two.

Where the enquiry is regarding the marking of an SFJ Awards examination, the enquiry phase will include a simple clerical check of the paperwork. This is a clerical check that will include checks that there has been no error in the transcription of the marks or errors in the adding up of the total marks.

Where the enquiry relates to an SFJ Awards-assessed practical task, SFJ Awards may arrange for the evidence to be reviewed by a different assessor.

Stage Two (Appeal)

If the appellant is not satisfied with the outcome at stage one, they may progress their appeal to stage two.

The purpose of an appeal is to ensure that the correct processes, procedures, and policies were followed and that assessments were graded correctly in accordance with the grading criteria.

A Stage Two appeal should be submitted with additional evidence that was not available at Stage 1, or an explanation as to why the appellant believes that the correct process was not followed during the Stage 1 appeal.

The Stage Two appeal reviews the outcome of the enquiry and does not involve reassessing or reviewing an apprentice or learner's work where this was done at stage 1. This is a desk-based activity and is completed by a manager not involved in the original decision. The manager may or may not be a subject matter expert but will be an expert on assessment decisions.

The appeal must be made in writing and within 10 working days of the Stage one response, stating the full nature of the appeal.

Stage two appeals should be sent in writing to:

gateam@sfjawards.com

SFJ Awards will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 5 working days and will aim to conclude their investigation within 30 working days. (If the process is expected to take longer, you will be advised of this, the reasons, and the likely amended timescale). The investigation will be conducted by a Head of department or member of the Senior Leadership team, who will have no personal interest in the outcome of the appeal. The outcome of the investigation will be conveyed in writing.

Stage Three (Appeals Panel)

If the appellant is not satisfied with the outcome at stage two, they may progress their appeal for independent review at stage three. Stage three appeals cannot be considered unless new evidence has emerged, or certain aspects were not taken into consideration. Stage three appeals cannot be considered just because the appellant is not happy with the appeal outcome.

The appeal must be made in writing, within 10 working days of the stage two response, stating a full explanation of why the appellant is not satisfied with the decision made at stage two.

Stage three appeals should be sent in writing to:

gateam@sfjawards.com

SFJ Awards will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 5 working days and will aim to conclude their investigation within 40 working days. (If the process is expected to take longer, you will be advised of this, the reasons, and the likely amended timescale).

Stage three appeals will be considered by a panel, including at least one member of the SFJ Awards' Quality and Standards Committee, who will be independent to the operation of SFJ Awards, will not be an employee of SFJ Awards, and will have no connection to the subject of the appeal. There will also be a member of the panel who is completely independent of SFJ Awards, with no connection to the AO or EPAO for at least three previous years.

The outcome of the review will be conveyed in writing. The decision made by the Appeals Panel is final.

Appeal to the Regulator

If the appellant does not believe that SFJ Awards has followed their published process in dealing with the appeal, they may take submit a complaint to the relevant Regulator. It is unlikely that a Regulator will change the outcome of the appeal, however they will consider whether SFJ Awards acted in line with our own policies and in line with the relevant regulatory requirements.

Regulator	Area of Responsibility
Ofqual	Qualifications and Examinations regulated in England

Qualifications Wales	Qualifications and Examinations regulated in Wales
CCEA ('Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment')	Qualifications and Examinations regulated in Northern Ireland
SQA Accreditation	Qualifications Accredited in Scotland
SIA ('The Security Industry Authority')	Regulator of the UK Private Security Industry

SFJ Awards will retain all of its records pertaining to the appeal in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and The Data Protection Act 2018.

7. Fees

SFJ Awards will charge for enquiries and appeals in line with our published fees and charges. Where an enquiry or appeal is successful, SFJ Awards will refund the cost of the enquiry/appeal.

SFJ Awards reserves the right to not process an appeal until the related payment is received. In such cases any timescales outlined in this policy will not start until such time that the payment has been made to SFJ Awards.

8. Corrective Action

If during an enquiry or appeal SFJ Awards identifies an issue which threatens the integrity of a qualification, SFJ Awards will take the following action:

- identify all learner(s) who may have been affected
- correct or, where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the problem, and
- take action to ensure that the issue does not recur in the future.

Where the outcome of an appeal questions the validity of other results at a Centre, SFJ Awards will take action to protect the interests of other learners and the integrity of the award of units and/or qualifications. This may include:

- a further review of learners' work by an independent Associate not involved previously in the final verification of the awards. *Up to a 100% sample may be requested and results withheld until SFJ Awards are satisfied of the outcome;*
- a review of the unit(s) of assessment through its unit review process.

9. Monitoring

Investigated appeals will be monitored by SFJ Awards. SFJ Awards' Quality and Standards Committee will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the process. A summary

report will be submitted to the Committee, allowing the Committee to monitor appeal investigations and outcomes over time.

Informing the Qualifications Regulator and other awarding organisations/stakeholders:

If an appeal has the potential to lead to an Adverse Effect, SFJ Awards will promptly notify the Qualifications Regulators and keep them fully informed.

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

10. Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed by SFJ Awards 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.

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

11. Location of the Policy

A copy of this policy can be downloaded from Odyssey, or from the SFJ Awards website: www.sfjawards.com/policies.

12. Copyright

The content of this document is, unless otherwise indicated, Copyright © SFJ Awards and may not be copied, revised, reproduced or distributed, without prior written consent from SFJ Awards.