



Future aims and insights  
supporting the sectors we  
serve

October 2020

# Introduction

*The 2020 SFJ Awards Customer Survey aimed to understand employers and training providers' experiences of working with us, their challenges, and opportunities to help build a future strategy that best supports our customers and adds value to meet collective goals.*

*We aimed to learn about what we could do even more of, or be better at, to ensure the future products and services we provide truly deliver the skills and flexibility to meet our customer's needs. Ultimately, enhancing jobs in the sectors we serve.*

*The survey took place in June, whilst 'lockdown' measures were still in place across the country. We considered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, to both anticipate potential implications, and ensure the best way to support training providers and learners alike.*

*This report explains our plans as to how we intend to continue to adapt and grow in the future, based on insights from the survey, including an outline of the actions we are taking to enhance our services to best suit learners' and organisational needs.*

*Through conducting annual research and ensuring we effectively communicate our key aims as your sector specialist Awarding, and End-Point Assessment Organisation, we hope to demonstrate our unwavering and complete support for learning and development in the sectors we serve.*



**Candace Miller**  
Managing Director  
SFJ Awards

# Working with SFJ Awards

*“In the coming months and years, we aim to host a wide range of meaningful online and face to face events that support our customers and centres, enable valuable networking opportunities, and **share best practice in assessment and certification.**”*

*“We are extremely grateful for the constructive feedback our centres have offered and their willingness and interest for further engagement with us. Although the opportunity was provided for respondents to answer anonymously, we are delighted that so many chose to provide their contact details and indicated a willingness to engage in on-going dialogue.” – Candace Miller*

Based on feedback, we are planning to broaden our discussions to learn how best we can further enhance the specialist support we provide our centres and add value to the learning provision they offer.

The survey attracted a strong response rate, from almost 80% of centre contacts to whom it was sent.

Whilst just over half were long-standing customers, others were relatively new, and just under a fifth had transitioned over from IQ, when we purchased the organisation's assets in March 2020.

Given that a number of centres went into limbo during the time the survey was open, and many had to markedly change their operating arrangements because of Covid-19, we are really grateful that so many made the time to respond.

For the majority of respondents, we are the primary Awarding Organisation (AO) with whom they work and, where centres work with other AOs as well, the feedback indicates that they find we compare favourably.

A third described us as being *“better or much better”* than other Awarding Organisations, with others commenting that we were comparable to other, larger regulated awarding organisations.

*“We are more than happy [working] with SFJ Awards.”*

*“We look forward to working with SFJ Awards wherever possible.”*

*“SFJ Awards are better than others for contact, efficiency, cost, availability and expertise in specialist areas.”*

# Quality assurance and recognition

*“We aim to increase our visibility, and provide more regular website updates, content, and communications to support you further. We aim to ensure that our customers are always able to access relevant, trusted, and portable recognition of their achievements.”*

*“As the market leading awarding organisation for the sectors we serve, it is very pleasing to know how much our centres value the range and uniqueness of our offer and we look forward to working with them to grow that offer even further.” – Candace Miller*

Over the coming months we will be investing in refreshed content on our website. We will also be undertaking more communication activity to highlight the vital role that we and our centres play in assuring the expertise of those delivering fire and rescue, policing and law enforcement, community and social justice, security, health and care, and armed services.

The survey responses paint a pleasingly positive picture of our customers' experiences of working with SFJ Awards, and report on the high opinions they hold of the range of qualifications we provide, the support we offer, and the professionalism of our staff.

**87% of participants** declared that they were very satisfied/satisfied with SFJ Awards services and a similarly high number rated the range of qualifications we offer positively.

We will be continuing to refresh and expand our range of provision, building on the positive feedback that centres value the range and uniqueness of our offer. This will include creating more 'bite-sized' and custom certifications that can be used flexibly to recognise locally required learning, specialist and emerging skills and professional development requirements, and to support on-going CPD.

In the survey, we found that our customers would welcome more promotional content and campaigns highlighting the value of SFJ Awards qualifications and the achievements of our centres and learners.

The SFJ Awards brand stands for quality assured, relevant, and flexible qualification, assessment and certification provision that gives our centres and their learners confidence, and that has real impact for their individual and organisational progression.

*“The qualification offer is really good and fills me with confidence.”*

*“[SFJ Awards] offers unique services, not provided by other Awarding organisations.”*

# Tailored and responsive support

*“We are expanding our capability to provide easy access to even more information, advice, and other resources online, helping our approved centres to deliver excellence for their learners. New content and resources will be made available over the coming months and centres will be notified of it on our website.*

*“Our people are our greatest asset, and our commitment to excellent customer service is something we are all proud of here at SFJ Awards. It is great to hear how much our centres appreciate the support we provide.” – Candace Miller*

We are investing in further improvements to our digital platforms, so that we can make it even easier for centres to register learners, schedule activities, access information and advice, receive updates and request certifications. To improve the digital experience for our EPA customers, from this Autumn we will be implementing ACE360, providing industry-leading EPA management facilities.

The great majority of customers feel supported, welcomed and well informed by us, and have fed back very positively on the responsiveness, professionalism, and knowledge of our staff.

**93% rated us positively** for the friendliness and politeness of our staff, and 86% welcome our responsiveness to queries and ability to solve problems.

*“Less bureaucracy, efficient, simple process.”*

*“Very professional, approachable and knowledgeable staff.”*

*“SFJ Awards are an excellent organisation with people who want to help and assist. They’ve always provided us with exceptional support.”*

Our customers told us that they would welcome additional support in the form of more learning and assessment support resources linked to our qualifications, assessments, and certification services.

This is especially true now, given the expectation many have that they will be delivering even more learning online in the future, as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Customers also said that, whilst our existing online learner registration and certification systems met their needs, they would welcome further support and refinements to make it even easier to use and help them streamline their own processes.

Centres for whom we offer End Point Assessments highlighted some specific enhancements they would welcome.

# Valuing a unique, sector-specialist status

*“We will work with you to strengthen and extend our network and community, building on our existing relationships and new ones. This will not only be within our sectors, but also with external bodies who can add extra value to the services we provide in support of workforce and individual development activities. We are really proud to serve sectors whose contribution to the country inspires us daily.” – Candace Miller*

The survey has confirmed that being a sector-specialist awarding organisation, and having a relationship with Skills for Justice, are significant characteristics that are strongly valued by our centres.

Close to **90% of respondents** declared this to be important, or very important to them, and just over 80% rated us highly for our understanding of the sectors.

Our sector-specialist characteristic was one of the top four reasons that respondents selected us as their Awarding Organisation of choice, alongside our reputation, recognition of the SFJ Awards brand, and the range of qualifications we offer.

*“There is no doubt as to the sector specialism.”*

*“Expertise in specialist areas and good understanding of the sector.”*

Being dedicated to a handful of sectors means our passion permeates everything we do, and every facet of how we do it.

Unlike more generalist awarding organisations, SFJ Awards is fully focussed on the needs of the people and organisations providing our vital fire and rescue, policing and law enforcement, community and social justice, security, health and care, and armed services

*“A recognised industry brand which people are confident in.”*

# Support during the challenges of Covid-19

*“Digitalisation of various aspects of the services and support we offer will continue to be something we will be taking forward over the coming year. We will also continue working with regulators, centres, and suppliers to put in place effective solutions to the ongoing challenges of Covid-19 as we move through the various phases of recovery.*”

*“We will be innovative where we can be, whilst remaining compliant with regulators’ requirements, ensuring that quality is maintained and that learners continue to receive their prized certificates and the recognition they deserve.” – Candace Miller*

The survey demonstrated that our centres very much welcomed the speed of our response, the flexibility to processes we put in place, wherever we could, and the quality and timeliness of the information and advice we provided.

**84% of survey respondents** felt very well informed and kept up to date by the actions we took at SFJ Awards.

*“E-certification has been excellent, and I hope this continues.”*

*“Supported exceptionally by SFJ Awards during COVID 19. Staff at SFJ Awards went above and beyond expectations to assist and ensure our centre and learners were supported.”*

Customers also said that they anticipate continuing to run more learning and assessment processes in the online environment for the foreseeable future and would welcome SFJ Awards continuing to provide agile support for these new ways of working.

*“Great communication.”*

# Summary

*The disruption to learners' and centres' activities during Covid-19 were unfortunately inevitable but, as an organisation, we are pleased that we were able to keep supporting our customers with agile decision-making to minimise impact wherever possible.*

*This included amending assessment and quality assurance processes, maintaining compliance with regulatory standards and accelerating digitalisation of services such as certification, online assessments, and virtual visits/interviews.*

***We are really pleased that our customers found the support we offered so helpful.***

*The 2020 SFJ Awards Customer survey has provided valuable insights into the impact we have for our customers, and how we can continue to develop robust, practical, and meaningful solutions for the organisations that trust us to deliver, and whom we are proud to support.*

*We are extremely passionate about what the future holds and look forward to working in close partnership with our customers to help make these ambitions a reality, so we can best contribute to the ongoing recognition of individuals' achievements of quality assured learning outcomes.*

*On behalf of the team at SFJ Awards, thank you to all those who have contributed to the development of our key aims and insights, and participated in the 2020 Customer Survey.*

**Candace Miller**  
Managing Director  
**SFJ Awards**



# About us

SFJ Awards is a nationally recognised and regulated awarding organisation and approved end-point assessment organisation for apprenticeships. We work with employers and training providers to help people working in justice and community safety, the armed forces, local government, and healthcare to develop their skills and operate more effectively.

We work in partnership with employers and training providers to meet their current and future workforce development needs. We work with organisations delivering services for public benefit, to make sure their teams have the right skills, being deployed in the right way.

We achieve this by quality assuring and endorsing qualifications, accreditations, and end-point assessments. This means the organisations we work with can feel confident that their current and future workforce can operate safely and productively while inspiring public confidence.

# Contact us

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SFJ Awards is an awarding organisation recognised and regulated by the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) in England, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) Regulation in Northern Ireland, Qualifications Wales in Wales, SQA in Scotland and SIA.

SFJ Awards is part of the Workforce Development Trust, a not for profit organisation, together with Skills for Justice and Skills for Health. For over 10 years Skills for Health and Skills for Justice have been working with employers, Governments of the UK, and agencies within the skills system, to better equip workforces with the right skills now and for the future.