



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

Contents

1. Purpose	3
2. Definitions	3
3. Roles and Responsibilities	3
4. Enquiries	4
5. When to Appeal	4
6. Overview of the Stages of the appeals process	5
7. Corrective Action.....	8
8. Monitoring	8
9. Regulatory criteria and conditions	8
10. Review of the Policy	9
11. Location of the Policy	9
12. Copyright.....	9

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.

The policy outlines SFJ Awards' approach for providing approved Centres and learners with a means of making an appeal, the steps to follow and how SFJ Awards considers any appeals it receives for its qualifications.

For appeals about end-point assessment for apprenticeships, please see the *SFJ Awards EPA Enquiries and Appeals Policy* on the SFJ Awards website policy page:

sfjawards.com/policies

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 and 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.

Centre Staff:

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

Heads of Centre:

- 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.

SFJ Awards' Quality Assurance and Compliance Manager:

- To consider appeals received, drawing on assessment experts or an EQA, as appropriate.
- Manage the appeals process, updating the RO and escalating as required.

SFJ Awards' Responsible Officer:

- To ensure appeals at stage three are handled in accordance with this policy.
- Update the Quality and Standards Committee on number of appeals and progress/resolution.

4. Enquiries

Enquiries can be made informally, 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.

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.

The learner must make the Centre aware of their intention to submit an appeal to SFJ Awards.

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

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, the learner will be advised of this, the reasons, and the likely amended timescale). The investigation will be conducted by SFJ Awards' Quality Assurance & Compliance Manager.

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. Where appeals between learners and Centres are not satisfactorily resolved, learners can contact SFJ Awards.

SFJ Awards reserves the right to recharge investigation or re-marking/re-assessment costs incurred in dealing with the appeal to the Centre.

5.2 Appeals from Centres

SFJ Awards will consider appeals relating to:

- external verification outcomes.
- the outcomes of Centre recognition;
- the application by a Centre to offer certain SFJ Awards products, units or qualifications;
- award of credit(s) or qualifications;
- outcomes of the Centre's ongoing compliance monitoring including any sanctions that may be imposed;
- sanctions applied to the Centre (see also SFJ Awards Sanctions Policy);
- errors made by SFJ Awards in the generation of certificates;
- outcomes of an application for reasonable adjustments/special considerations.

Appeals against sanctions applied to a Centre must be made within 20 days of being notified of the sanction(s).

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, the Centre will be advised of this, the reasons, and the likely amended timescale). The investigation will be conducted by SFJ Awards' Quality Assurance & Compliance Manager.

6. Overview of the Stages of the appeals process

SFJ Awards enquiries and appeals process has three stages.

Usually, the Centre will send an enquiry or appeal on behalf of a learner (with their consent to do so). Learners can directly apply to SFJ Awards if they have completed the Centres' appeals process.

The appeals process will be conducted fairly and consistently, in line with regulatory requirements. SFJ Awards may request further information from the Centre, 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.

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, should be sent to us within 10 working days of receiving our decision or results.

Stage one enquiries can be made by telephone or email.

Telephone: 0114 284 1970

Email: info@sfjawards.com

The enquiry will be 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. This case officer will make every attempt to answer the query in full and avoid the need for the enquiry to progress to stage two.

Stage Two

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

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 addressed to:

The Quality Assurance & Compliance Manager
SFJ Awards
1st Floor, Unit C
Meadowcourt Business Park
4 Hayland Street
Sheffield
S9 1BY

Or emailed to: info@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 the SFJ Awards' Quality Assurance and Compliance Manager, or another staff member if the Quality Assurance and Compliance Manager has a connection with, or personal interest in. The outcome of the investigation will be conveyed in writing.

Stage Three

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 addressed to:

The Responsible Officer
SFJ Awards
1st Floor, Unit C
Meadowcourt Business Park
4 Hayland Street
Sheffield
S9 1BY

Or emailed to: info@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 reviewed by a panel, including two members of the SFJ Awards' Quality and Standards Committee, who will be independent to the operation of SFJ Awards, will not be employees 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 five previous years. The members of the panel will be trained in the task of deciding appeals.

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

Please see the SFJ Awards published fees list for updated fees related to enquiries and appeals.

Appeal to the Regulatory Authorities

There is no further appeal to the qualification's regulators, but if the appellant does not believe that SFJ Awards has followed their published process with dealing with the appeal, then they may take submit a complaint to the Regulatory Authorities. SFJ Awards will cooperate fully with the Regulatory Authorities in all investigations. Regulatory authorities:

Ofqual ofqual.gov.uk

Qualifications Wales qualificationswales.org

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Northern Ireland cea.org.uk

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. 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 External Quality Assurer not involved previously in the final verification of the awards. *Up to a 100% sample may be requested for EQA purposes and results withheld until SFJ Awards are satisfied of the outcome;*
- a review of the unit(s) of assessment through its unit review process.

The Quality Assurance & Compliance Manager and the Responsible Officer will take responsibility for initiating the most appropriate course of action. Please refer to the *SFJ Awards Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedures* and *SFJ Awards Sanctions Policy* at www.sfjawards.com/policies for further details.

8. 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, the SFJ Awards Responsible Officer will 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.

9. Regulatory criteria and conditions

Regulatory Body	Regulatory guidance document	Regulatory Condition or Criterion
Ofqual	General Conditions of Recognition	C2, I1

CCEA Regulation	General Conditions of Recognition	C2, I1
Qualifications Wales	Qualification Wales Standard Conditions of recognition	C2, I1

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.