



Complaints Policy



The
Workforce
Development
Trust



Revisions and Amendment Register

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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.

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

In addition, this policy outlines how SFJ Awards will respond to complaints received from Qualifications and End-Point Assessment 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 and End-Point Assessment 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 and End-Point Assessment 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. 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 and End-Point Assessment users can submit complaints to SFJ Awards by email to info@sfjawards.com or epa@sfjawards.com or telephone on 0114 231 7379.

Responding to complaints

4.1 Complaints from a Centre, Training provider or Employer

If a Centre, Training Provider or Employer 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.

4.2 Complaints from a Learner or Apprentice

Learners or apprentices 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 or relevant party to investigate the original complaint submitted by the learner or apprentice.

4.3 Complaints from a Third Party

A formal complaint may be made by someone other than those listed above. 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.

4. Mitigation and corrective action

5.1 For Qualifications

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.
- 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 Quality Assurance and Compliance 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' Quality Assurance and Compliance 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.

5.2 For End-Point Assessments

Following the investigation and resolution of a complaint SFJ Awards will take all practicable steps to mitigate the effect of the complaint and prevent any recurrence.

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 apprentice(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.
- Ensure that the failure does not recur.
- Where the outcome of a complaint questions the validity of results, SFJ Awards will act to protect the Interests of other apprentices and the integrity of the assessment results.

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

- A further/independent review of apprenticeship assessments by someone not involved in the original End-Point Assessment.
- A review of the assessment documentation.
- A review of the assessment process.
- The Head of Assessment 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' Senior Management Team will notify the apprenticeship regulators and keep them fully informed.

SFJ Awards are required to notify other End-Point Assessment Organisations/stakeholders where cases are likely to impact on them.

Where the apprenticeship regulators notify SFJ Awards of failures that have been discovered in the process of another End-Point Assessment Organisation/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.

5. 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.

6. Appeal

Appeals against conclusions can be made through SFJ Awards' Enquiries and Appeals Policies.

If the appellant does not agree with the decision, findings and conclusion of their complaint, they may take their appeal to the Regulatory Authorities.

7. Regulatory criteria and conditions

| Regulatory Body | Regulatory guidance document | Regulatory Condition or Criterion |
|----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Ofqual | General Conditions of Recognition | D4 |
| CCEA Regulation | General Conditions of Recognition | D4 |
| Qualifications Wales | Qualification Wales Standard Conditions of recognition | D4 |

8. Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed 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.

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 or epa@sfjawards.com.

9. Location of the Policy

A copy of this policy can be downloaded from Odyssey, ACE360 or from the SFJ Awards website: www.sfjawards.com/policies.

10. 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.