

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Regulatory References	D4
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Policy

Purpose

This policy covers complaints that centres/employers, learners/apprentices or key stakeholders may wish to make in relation to the qualifications/end-point assessments and associated services offered by Innovate Awarding.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to our centres/employers, learners/apprentices and key stakeholders if they are dissatisfied with the service they have received and wish to make a complaint.

When to use this policy

A complaint may be made about any aspect of the operations of Innovate Awarding over which it has control, such as:

- The operation of Innovate Awarding services, systems, process and procedures (Any complaint about maladministration will be dealt with through the procedures specifically designed for malpractice and maladministration)
- The operations of an Innovate Awarding approved centre, but only where those operations specifically fall within the approval or control of Innovate Awarding as a consequence of its recognition of the centre, and the complainant has exhausted the centre's own complaints procedures.
- Innovate Awarding will not normally investigate complaints
- Which are being, or have been, considered by a court or similar body
- More than one month after the decision or action complained about has been taken
- Where Innovate Awarding considers the complaint to be vexatious, malicious or frivolous.

The policy

Innovate Awarding is committed to maintaining the highest standards for its learners/apprentices, centres/employers and other key stakeholders. The policies and procedures covering complaints aim to provide an efficient, effective and transparent mechanism for learners/apprentices, centres/employers and other key stakeholders to complain about any aspect of Innovate Awarding.

All complaints will be dealt with fairly and in a timely manner and will be recorded so that analysis is facilitated. Individuals will not be discouraged from making complaints, unless they are vexatious, malicious or frivolous. Where possible complaints will be dealt with informally, although all complaints and their outcomes will be recorded.

Where formal complaints are made it is critical that they are responded to with an appropriate degree of formality and in such a manner as to ensure so far as possible that all concerned can have confidence in the process and the outcomes. The procedural policy set out below is designed to provide such confidence.

Innovate Awarding is prepared to investigate issues which are reported anonymously. However, it is always preferable for complainants to reveal their identity and contact details. If they are concerned about possible adverse consequences, they can inform us that they do not wish for us to divulge their identity. Innovate Awarding is not obliged (as recommended by the regulators) to disclose information if to do so would be a breach of confidentiality and/or any other legal duty.

Should, as part of a complaint investigation, Innovate Awarding discover a failure in its assessment process, Innovate Awarding will take all reasonable steps to:

- Identify other learners/apprentices who have 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 in the future.

This policy sets out guidelines to ensure that complaints received by Innovate Awarding are dealt with quickly, fairly and effectively.

Innovate Awarding will:

- Take appropriate action to address concerns
- Implement the Complaints procedure in an open, transparent and accountable way
- Acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 2 working days of a written complaint being received
- Provide a response to the complainant within 20 working days from receipt of a Stage 1 complaint
- If a complaint is escalated to Stage 2 a response will be communicated within a further 15 working days of the escalation being acknowledged

Innovate Awarding staff will not engage with persistent/repeated contact from complainants or abusive complainants. Where a complainant corresponds with Innovate Awarding in an abusive manner or repeatedly and persistently contacts Innovate Awarding with no new information or evidence to bring to investigations, Innovate Awarding will treat such behaviour/correspondence as vexatious.

The following forms of behaviour or correspondence are considered vexatious:

- A complainant being abusive or threatening, either during a telephone conversation, face to face meeting or in written correspondence
- A complainant repeatedly contacting Innovate Awarding via telephone or email in a given working day without offering new evidence or information
- Making unreasonable demands on Innovate Awarding outside of the agreed remit of the investigation
- Making accusatory remarks about Innovate Awarding or the Innovate Awarding Representative managing the case.

In all the above circumstances, the complainant will be referred to the Director of Compliance or the Managing Director.

Every attempt has been made to ensure that the provisions of this document are consistent with the requirements of the regulatory authorities. Where the requirements of the regulatory authorities are amended and require changes to this document, such changes will be made as soon as practicable and Innovate Awarding will inform its customers accordingly.

Procedure

If we do get things wrong, we'll make every effort to resolve your issues quickly and efficiently. If you would like to raise a formal complaint, then please email us at contactus@innovateawarding.org.

Please include the following information within your email as this will help us identify where best to direct your complaint within Innovate Awarding:

- If you are a learner or apprentice, then we would recommend that you provide your name and address
- a centre/provider/employer name and number (if you are from an approved centre)
- a contact telephone number
- the qualification/standard or service your complaint relates to
- a clear description of your complaint
- copies of any relevant emails and correspondence

If you are a learner, then we would recommend that you first speak with your Head of Centre as each of our centres has its own complaints procedure. If you have done this already and remain dissatisfied with the outcome, then please contact us directly.

If you are an apprentice, then speak to your training provider and employer. If your training provider has a complaints procedure it may be appropriate to follow that initially. If you have done this already and remain dissatisfied with the outcome, then please contact us directly.

We have lots of information on our website that may be of help to you, including our enquiries and appeals policies and processes, please visit www.innovateawarding.org.

If you are not completely satisfied with the response you receive from Innovate Awarding, please advise us and we will review the complaint and our original response as a Stage 2 complaint. If we feel that not all points have been covered, then we will give a full response. If we are satisfied that all the points in the complaint have been answered, then we will close the complaint.

If further evidence or related issues come to light, the complaint will be reopened and investigated further.

If at any stage you are not happy with the way in which we have handled your complaint, you have the right to appeal, please refer to our appeals policy and process.

If you are still unhappy then you can refer your complaint to our regulators:

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (OFQUAL)

Ofqual, Earlsdon Park, 53-55 Butts Rd, Coventry CV1 3BH

The Institute for Assessments and Technical Education (IfATE)

IfATE, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT

IfATE, Level 2 Cheylsmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT

We understand that sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. While we are prepared to investigate complaints which are reported to us anonymously, in these cases we will always try to confirm an allegation by means of a separate investigation before taking up the matter with those responsible.

This may delay a resolution of the complaint and may even mean that it is not progressed further. It is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us, and if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences because of making a complaint, then rest assured, we will not divulge your identity.

If you have any questions or would like to talk to a member of staff about this procedure, then please contact us:

Telephone: 0117 314 2800

Email: contactus@innovateawarding.org

Associated Policies/documents

- Malpractice and maladministration policy and procedure
- Appeals policy and process
- Innovate Awarding Team Pledges