



Complaints Policy

Version History

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Introduction

This document sets out our complaints policy and procedure and is aimed at our Centres, learners and all interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from Focus Awards. We value all Centres delivering our qualifications and the learners who undertake them. Our aim every day is to exceed the expectations of our customers. We are confident we provide a high-quality service and would be extremely disappointed if you experience anything less. Therefore, it is important you raise any concerns you may have with us immediately so that we may address them.

Scope

This policy covers complaints learners, members of the public, or Centres may wish to make in relation to the qualifications and associated services offered by Focus Awards.

It is not to be used to appeal against decisions made by Focus Awards. These are covered by our Appeals Policy. Should a complaint be submitted which is in fact an enquiry or an appeal we will respond to inform the relevant party that the issue is being considered, where appropriate, in accordance with the approach outlined in our Customer Service Statement or Appeals Policy.

If you are unhappy about the way an examination or assessment was delivered and conducted and you suspect malpractice or maladministration may have occurred, you should send your concern to us in accordance with the arrangements set out in our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

Centres responsibility

Centres must ensure that any staff involved in the management, assessment, and quality assurance of our qualifications, and the Centre's learners, are aware of the contents of this policy and that the Centre has a complaint handling procedure and appeals process in place to deal with complaints from learners about the services provided. If an individual is unhappy about a service or activity being delivered by a Centre, they must go through the Centre's complaints process before bringing the matter to Focus Awards.

How should I complain?

Centres

Our customer service staff are friendly, approachable, and want to help you. You should, therefore, first try to resolve any problem at the earliest opportunity by speaking to the person who dealt with you in the first instance. Alternatively, Centres can raise and/or submit a complaint form which can be found at the end of this policy.

If you feel the customer service staff have not been able to deal with your complaint satisfactorily and you wish to speak to someone else, you can ask to speak to the relevant Head of Department.

If this is not possible, or if you are not satisfied with the help provided by the Head of Department, please send a written complaint, preferably within two weeks of the incident you are complaining about and address it to us at the contact details outlined at the end of this policy.

Learners and / or members of the public

Learners and/or members of the public who wish to complain about a level of service provided by the Centre at which they have taken a Focus Awards qualification, should have exhausted the Centre's own complaints process before bringing the complaint to us.

If you are unable to locate the Centre's complaints procedure, please contact them by phone, email, or post to request a copy. If learners and/or members of the public have exhausted the Centre's complaints procedure and have not received any response or communication from the Centre, a complaint can be submitted to Focus Awards, attaching evidence that the learner and/or members of the public has exhausted the Centre's complaints procedure.

Please be aware that Focus Awards are not always able to assist, as we are responsible for ensuring qualifications are delivered in line with our own requirements for assessment and quality assurance, and the requirements set by our regulators. If you are unhappy with how the Centre has graded your assessments, their quality of teaching, or the fees paid, you should address this directly with the Centre. In exceptional circumstances learners can make the complaint directly to us, such as where they feel there was a significant breach by the Centre of our various procedures (see contact details at the end of this policy) or the relationship with the Centre has become untenable.

Please note: If you are seeking a refund or financial compensation in relation to a qualification you have enrolled on, we are unable to provide this outcome. You may wish to seek legal advice; Focus Awards is unable to refund or provide compensation for any monies paid to training providers/Centres.

If I complain, what details do I have to give?

When you contact us, please give us your full name, contact details (including a daytime telephone number) along with:

- a full description of your complaint (including the subject matter and dates and times if known).
- names of any people you have dealt with so far.
- copies of any papers or letters relevant to or associated with the complaint.

Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. However, it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us, but if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences, please inform us that you do not wish for us to divulge your identity. While we are prepared to investigate issues reported to us anonymously, we shall always try to confirm an allegation by means of a separate investigation before taking up the matter with those to whom the complaint/allegation relates.

Important: Complaints written by AI technology will be rejected

We will not accept any complaints written by AI or other machine-based technology that generates additional thoughts and ideas to inflate or broaden the scope of the complainant's grievance. Such complaints will be rejected without recourse; they must be written in the complainant's own words. However, should the complainant need help with writing or formulating their complaint, a suitably qualified and unbiased member of our staff will assist.

What will happen to my complaint?

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 48 hours and advise you which member of the Focus Awards team will be investigating your complaint.

Our Head of Centre Support will be responsible for ensuring the investigation is carried out in a prompt and effective manner in accordance with the procedures in this policy and, where required, will allocate a relevant member of staff to lead the investigation and establish whether the issue relating to the complaint has occurred. At all times we will ensure that Focus Awards personnel assigned to the investigation have the appropriate level of training and competence and have had no previous involvement or personal interest in the matter.

If the Head of Centre Support has an involvement in the complaint matter, they will not be responsible for allocating a member of staff to carry out the investigation or for overseeing and managing the investigation.

We aim to investigate the complaint within 20 working days. However, if your complaint is more complex, or involves people who are not available at the time, we may extend this to 30 working days. We may

contact you within this period to seek further information or clarification (in some instances we may recommend a meeting) and inform you of any extended deadlines. At the end of the investigation, we shall write/email to inform you of our decision.

If you are a learner making a complaint in relation to a Centre in which you are studying, please be aware we are limited in actions that we can undertake. For example, 'no registration has been made on the qualification' ultimately means that we have no record of you or the qualification you are studying.

Complaint outcomes

Upheld

The entire complaint (or a portion of it) is upheld. Based on the Complainant's summary, Focus Awards concurs with their conclusion that something went wrong and is willing to take corrective steps to fix the problem.

Partially Upheld

Though they disagree with the Complainant's description of the issue and/or the suggested corrective action, Focus Awards acknowledges that something went wrong.

Not upheld

Focus Awards disagrees the complaint's circumstances occurred as the complainant believes they did and may provide evidence to support that conclusion. We reject the version of events and the assertion that improper Focus Awards activity had a negative impact on students.

Focus Awards is dedicated to looking into every complaint in detail. When the complaints procedure is completed, we will not accept persistent, abusive letters or communications that don't include new information or supporting documentation.

In these situations, you will be notified of our decision and any limitations we may want to put in place. These limitations could consist of, but are not restricted to:

- Prohibiting communication with specific employees of Focus Awards
- Only accepting one method of communication, such as email

What if I am not happy with the reply?

If you disagree with the decision, you should contact the Head of Awarding Organisation. If you are still unhappy with the decision taken by Focus Awards in reviewing the complaint, you can, where relevant, escalate the matter through our appeal arrangements, which are outlined in our Appeals Policy. If after you have exhausted our appeal arrangements you are still dissatisfied with the outcomes, you can complain/appeal directly to the relevant regulatory authority for the qualification (e.g., Ofqual in England).

Successful complaints and/or issues brought to our attention by our regulators

If any part of the complaint is upheld, we will of course respond to the complainant accordingly and give due consideration to how we can improve our service and arrangements. For example, we may review our procedures to assess the impact on our qualification development, delivery, awarding arrangements, and/or assessment process (if relevant), or arrange staff training. In extreme circumstances, internal disciplinary procedures may be exercised where the performance or behaviour of our staff is deemed inappropriate.

In situations where a complaint has been successful, or where an investigation following notification from the regulators indicates a failure in our processes, we will give due consideration to the outcome and will take appropriate actions such as:

- identify any other learner and/or Centre who has been affected by that failure,
- correct, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure, and
- review and amend our arrangements, where appropriate, to reduce the likelihood that the failure will recur in the future.

Review arrangements

We will review the policy and its associated procedures annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it/them as and when necessary, in response to customer, learner, or regulatory feedback (e.g., to align with any appeals and complaints process established by the regulators) and to identify any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received.

If you would like to feedback any views, please contact us via the details provided at the end of this policy.

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our support team

E: info@focusawards.org.uk

T: +44(0)333 3447 388

Focus Awards Complaint Form

Please complete this complaint form and return, using the email address below, to Focus Awards. We will acknowledge receipt within 48 hours and explain what action will be taken next.

Name:				
Are you a: (please tick)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Learner	<input type="checkbox"/> Head of Centre	<input type="checkbox"/> Tutor/ Assessor	<input type="checkbox"/> IV	Other: Please State
Address:				

Telephone number:

Email address:

Name of Centre:

Summary of complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Whom did you speak to, when and what was the response?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Whom did you speak to, when and what was the response?)

Are you attaching any supporting documents? (Please tick)

Yes

No

If yes, please give details:

Signature:

Date:

Please email your complaint form to info@focusawards.org.uk