



Sanctions Policy

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Introduction

This Policy is aimed at Centres delivering Focus Awards approved qualifications or units and which have failed to meet aspects of our delivery requirements and/or the standards laid down by the regulatory authorities in respect of regulated qualifications and units. It sets out the sanctions Focus Awards may impose on Centres in such situations.

It is also for use by our staff to ensure they apply any sanctions in a consistent manner.

Centre's responsibility

It's important that your staff involved in the delivery of our qualifications are fully aware of the contents of the Policy and its possible implications on your Centre should you fail to comply with requirements specified by Focus Awards in relation to their delivery (some of which are required of us by the regulators).

Review arrangements

We will review the Policy annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary, in response to customer feedback, trends from our internal monitoring arrangements, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation.

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

Ensuring the standards of our qualifications and units

Focus Awards has a responsibility to the learners taking our qualifications and the UK regulatory authorities to ensure that Centres deliver our qualifications and units in accordance with relevant national standards.

Approach to sanctions

Focus Awards has a range of sanctions that can be imposed on a Centre depending on the seriousness of the situation, the level and track-record of the Centre's non-compliance, and the risk to the interests of learners and the integrity of the qualifications and units.

Nonetheless, Focus Awards aims to ensure that the application of sanctions is a last resort. Through our approach to Centre support and management, and the creation of appropriate action plans, we will work with Centres to prevent situations arising that would warrant a sanction being imposed.

However, if sanctions are required, they will be applied according to the nature of the situation. For example, if the Centre has:

- outstanding actions;
- poor records to confirm assessment decisions;
- no lead quality officer/internal verifier in place;
- proven collusion or persistent bad marking of Centre marked assessments;
- suspected or proven cases of maladministration/malpractice under investigation;
- made certification claims before learners have completed the unit(s)/qualification(s);
- refused access to premises and/or records to the staff of Focus Awards or the regulatory authorities,

- Or there is an increased likelihood of an adverse effect occurring (e.g., something likely to have an adverse effect on the standards of the qualifications they are delivering, public confidence in qualifications, or the reputation of Focus Awards).

Sanctions that may be imposed

Sanctions that may be imposed as part of a Centre recognition/qualification approval decision, monitoring activity, or investigation into a complaint, appeal, or allegation of malpractice and/or maladministration are as follows:

Focus Awards Sanction Level 1

Withholding certificates (i.e., suspending certification/DCS status), for:

- a single qualification,
- an entire qualification sector,
- an entire qualification type,
- all qualifications.

The allocated EQA has the authority to impose sanctions at this level if there is clear evidence of non-compliance by the Centre and/or a sufficient rationale.

It is important to note that the following scenario will be classed as a Level 1 sanction:

‘When a new or inexperienced Centre is first recognised and approved by us to offer one of our qualifications, and/or if they have subsequently applied and been approved to offer another qualification in a sector or qualification type that is significantly different from previous qualifications they offer, we will approve the Centre to offer the qualification(s) and not process any certificate claims for the qualification(s) until the Centre has received a satisfactory monitoring visit.

This approach is normal practice amongst awarding organisations, is generally seen as good practice and is intended to help ensure the Centre is delivering this ‘new’ qualification effectively before certificates can be issued’.

Focus Awards Sanction Level 2

Preventing further learner registrations (i.e., suspending registration status), for:

- a single qualification,
- an entire qualification sector,
- an entire qualification type,
- all qualifications

Recommendations in relation to the above types of sanctions will be made by the EQA allocated to that Centre, if there is clear evidence of non-compliance by the Centre and/or a sufficient rationale. The sanction will then be authorised and imposed by the Head of Quality Assurance.

Focus Awards Level 3 Sanction

Removal of qualification approval, for:

- a) A single qualification,
- b) An entire qualification sector,
- c) An entire qualification type,
- d) All qualifications and in turn the Centre's 'recognition' with Focus Awards.

Only in exceptional circumstances of serious non-compliance or the persistent failure of the Centre to address outstanding actions, and/ or the failure of previous sanctions to address the issue, would Focus Awards impose the ultimate sanction of removal of qualification approval.

Recommendations in relation to the above types of sanctions will be made by the EQA allocated to that Centre if there is clear evidence of non-compliance by the Centre and/or a sufficient rationale. The sanction will then be authorised and imposed by the Head of Quality Assurance and the Head of Awarding Organisation.

Focus Awards expects that it would never impose the immediate withdrawal of approval for a qualification or range of qualifications without the Centre being given an opportunity to:

- a) address the area(s) of non-compliance, and
- b) impose or invoke one of the previous sets of sanctions,

there being evidence that the non-compliance poses a significant threat to the interest of learners or the integrity of the qualifications and units.

Should a Centre have its approval for a qualification/suite of qualifications removed, we will take all reasonable steps to protect the interests of any learners currently registered on the qualification(s).

For example, we will either certificate them for any achievements attained to date and/or seek to transfer them – where possible and feasible – to another Centre to enable them to carry on with their learning.

If a Centre disagrees with a sanction decision, please speak with your EQA in the first instance; otherwise please follow our Appeals Policy

Sanctions and/or penalties for Centre staff and/or learners

Where malpractice by a member of staff is established, any disciplinary action is the responsibility of the employer. However, Focus Awards:

- may take action to protect the integrity of its qualifications in the future;
- has the right to impose special conditions on the future involvement of such individuals in its qualifications. Other awarding organisations will be informed of these special conditions;
- may refuse to accept certification claims from Centres where malpractice is established;
- may withdraw Centre approval to offer specific/all qualifications where it believes there to be sufficient evidence of serious malpractice.

Where malpractice by a learner is established, one of the following penalties will be imposed:

The learner:

- is issued a warning;
- loses all marks gained for a single piece of work/unit;
- is disqualified from the unit;
- loses all marks gained for a qualification;
- is disqualified from the qualification;
- is barred from entering assessment(s) for a set period of time.

Focus Awards reserves the right to impose further/additional sanctions/penalties if considered appropriate

Contact us

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

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Version History

The version history for this policy is maintained within the Focus Awards Policy Document Control List