

Complaints Policy

Introduction

1. FDQ wishes to provide the highest levels of service to its customers. It aims to answer accurately and within published timescales any complaints received from users of its services as a regulated Awarding Organisation (AO) or End-point Assessment Organisation (EPAO). Complaints may also relate to its products including qualifications, end-point assessments or other products.
2. FDQ will establish, maintain and publish a robust policy and associated procedure for handling complaints. These procedures will ensure that:
 - a) Complaints are dealt with in a fair and timely manner
 - b) The specific needs and interests of learners/apprentices are considered and protected
 - c) Complainants are kept informed of progress
 - d) Complainants are notified of the outcome reached and, where appropriate, any further action that is to be taken
 - e) Complaints are monitored to identify trends and to ensure continuous improvement
 - f) Every endeavour is made to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and in particular the handling of sensitive data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.
 - g) Customer facing versions of this policy and the associated procedures are available through appropriate media.
3. FDQ will comply with the requirements of any appeals or complaints process established by Regulators, also giving due regard to the outcome of such appeals or complaints process, including those found at other awarding organisations. If a failure in FDQ's assessment process is identified as a result of an appeal or complaint FDQ will identify any other affected learner or apprentice, correct or mitigate the effect of the failure and ensure that the failure does not recur.

In addition following a review resulting from a failure at another awarding organisation, FDQ will review its processes to determine whether a similar failure could affect its own assessment processes and products and take action where needed.

In addition if FDQ identifies a potential failure, it will take the same action as if a failure had been discovered in relation to it by virtue of the Regulators' appeals and complaints process.

4. For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with FDQ performance, or the decisions made by FDQ, or similarly with the performance of centres or the decisions made by them.
5. Complaints may be made by individual learners/apprentices, by the employer, by training providers or centres and may concern any aspect of the business of FDQ.
6. FDQ also requires centres to have their own complaints policies and procedures, which must be clearly defined, managed and monitored in accordance with the enforceable Centre Agreement.

FDQ's approach to handling complaints

7. Where at all feasible, all matters should be considered via the enquiries procedure before being submitted to FDQ as a complaint.
8. Where a complaint concerns dissatisfaction about the standard of service received from, or actions/lack of action taken by the centre, the complaint should, in the first instance, be made to the centre. If, having exhausted the centre procedures (including centre complaints procedure) the complaint remains unresolved, customers will have recourse to the FDQ complaints procedure.
9. Verbal complaints will generally be dealt with at the time of receipt by the Chief Executive/Responsible Officer or the Quality and Operational Assurance Director. The objective is to satisfy as many customers as possible at first contact and verbal complaints that are resolved in this way will not normally be recorded. Where this is not possible customers will be asked to submit details of the complaint in writing.

10. Complaints that may affect the time period allocated for the end-point assessment will be dealt with in a timely manner to avoid disadvantaging the apprentice.
11. FDQ will acknowledge receipt of all written complaints by email within 5 working days. This will detail the process and timescale for dealing with the complaint. Details of the complaint will also be recorded in the complaints log.
12. Where complaints are referred to an Independent Investigator, the complainant will be charged a fee (see FDQ Centre and Qualifications Fees Guide) to cover investigation costs. These charges will be refunded if the complaint is subsequently upheld.
13. All written complaints are referred initially to the Chief Executive/Responsible Officer Quality & Operations Director (Q&OD) who will first attempt to resolve the complaint directly with the complainant/s within 5 working days.

If CE/RO or Q&OD cannot resolve the complaint, within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint, a report summarising the nature of the complaint and explaining why it cannot be resolved is submitted to the S&QG.

The S&QG, will decide whether or not the complaint should be upheld based on the available evidence within 5 further working days of receiving the report. A special meeting of the S&QG may need to be convened to deal with the complaint within timelines.
14. If the complaint is not upheld and the complainant confirms that they wish to continue with the complaint, FDQ will appoint an Independent Investigator (who does not work for FDQ and has not been involved with the early stage of the complaint). The Independent Investigator will gather additional information, review the complaint and provide a written report of the investigation to the S&QG and Governance Committee within 3 weeks. The report will include a recommendation on whether or not the complaint should be upheld. A final decision will then be made by the Governance Committee. The complainant will receive written notification of the outcome of the investigation, within 5 weeks of the stage 4 complaint submission to FDQ and payment of the stage 4 fee.

Dealing with the outcomes of complaints

15. When a written complaint is resolved FDQ will set out any actions that will be taken and will communicate these to the relevant parties, in writing. The outcomes of all complaints, including details of responses provided and actions taken are recorded in the Complaints record.
16. If the outcome of a complaint has any wider implications for centres or other learners/apprentices and/or could lead to any adverse effects, e.g. where the accuracy of results for other learners/apprentices in the same assessment or qualification could be called into question, FDQ will take appropriate action to notify relevant parties and protect the interests of all learners /apprentices.

Monitoring the Complaints Policy and Procedure

17. FDQ will ensure that:
 - a) Appropriate records are maintained of the numbers and types of complaints received and their outcomes – these will be reviewed regularly by the S&QG
 - b) As a part of the overall FDQ quality assurance and continuous improvement programme, details of all complaints are monitored by the S&QG
 - c) Reports are made to the FDQ Governance Committee as part of the self-evaluation procedure – any serious complaints that are likely to have adverse effect or impact on the reputation of FDQ are reported to the Governance Committee
 - d) Guidance from the Regulators is reviewed, and the policy is updated to comply with best practice.
 - e) Information from monitoring activities is made available to Regulators as part of FDQ's self-evaluation procedure and on request.

Appendix 1 FDQ Complaints process

Step	Actions	Responsibility	Response within working days
All complaints must be received within 15 working days of the decision.			
1	Stage 1 Verbal complaint received	Response from FDQ Quality and Operational Assurance Director (Q&OD) or Chief Executive/Responsible Officer to complainant	5
2	If verbal response not accepted by complainant, the complaint to stage 2 must be confirmed in writing within 5 working days.		
4	Stage 2 The complainant submits the complaint in writing, FDQ acknowledges receipt of the complaint	FDQ	5
5	Full response sent to complainant	Q&OD or CE/RO	10
6	If FDQ's response is not accepted by the complainant, they must confirm in writing to FDQ within 5 working days or receipt of the outcome of the stage 2 appeal.		

7	If stage 2 response not accepted by the complainant, full details of the complaint are sent to FDQ Standards and Quality Group.		
8	Stage 3 FDQ Standards and Quality Group receives documented complaint and response sent to complainant	FDQ Standards and Quality Group	10
9	If FDQ's response is not accepted by the complainant, they must confirm in writing to FDQ within 5 working days or receipt of the outcome of the stage 3 appeal. A fee is applied to a stage 4 fee, payable on submission of the stage 4 complaint, refunded if the complaint is upheld. See FDQ's Centre and Qualification Fees Guide for more information.		
10	Documented report (stage 1, 2 and 3) sent to FDQ Independent Investigator.		
11	Stage 4 FDQ Independent Investigator documented report sent to FDQ Governance Committee	FDQ Independent Investigator	Within 15 days of the stage 4 submission
12	FDQ Governance Committee endorses	FDQ Governance Committee	Within 20 days of the stage 4 submission

	Independent Investigators recommendation and informs complainant of decision		
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Appendix 2 Complaint to FDQ by centres, training providers, employers, learner and apprentices

Complaint	
Name of centre/employer/training provider/satellite site	
FDQ qualification / End-point assessment title and number Eg Level 2 Diploma for Professional Chef 603/6807/X	
Learner / apprentice name	
Learner / apprentice FDQ registration number	
Evidence to support complaint Please list the evidence provided or indicate N/A if no evidence attached	

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Please provide specific details relating to the complaint

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Declaration of complaint	
I confirm that the information provided for this complaint is accurate	
Complainant Name	
Job title / role in centre Eg Assessor /Main Centre Contact	
Complainant Signature	
Date	

This completed form and attachments should be forwarded to FDQ.

Email fdq@fdq.org.uk