

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 robust procedures 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 and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679
 - 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 appeals 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 Quality 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 with 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. All written complaints are referred initially to the Chief Executive/Responsible Officer who will attempt to resolve these with the complainants. If this is not possible, a report will be prepared and submitted to the Standards & Quality Group (S&QRG), which will decide whether or not the complaint should be upheld based on the available evidence.
13. If the complaint is not upheld FDQ will appoint an Independent Investigator who has not been involved with FDQ in any capacity for at least 5 years. The Independent Investigator will gather additional information, review the complaint and provide a written report of the investigation to the S&QG within 6 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 S&QG and the complainant will receive written notification of the outcome of the investigation, within 14 days.
14. Where complaints are referred to an Independent Investigator, the complainant will be charged a fee to cover investigation costs. These charges will be refunded if the complaint is subsequently upheld.

Dealing with the outcomes of complaints

15. When a 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 Log.
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.