

# COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## Introduction

We value all Centres delivering our regulated qualifications or units or courses and the learners who undertake them and our aim every day is to exceed the expectations of our customers. We are confident of providing a high quality service and would be extremely disappointed if this is not the case.

Therefore, it is important should you feel you have encountered a level of service that is below both your and our expectations that you raise any concerns you may have with us immediately so that we may address them and learn lessons.

## Scope

The complaints policy and procedure is aimed at our Centres, learners and all interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from Gateway Qualifications.

It is not to be used to cover appeals in relation to decisions made by Gateway Qualifications. This is 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 in accordance with our Appeals policy.

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

## Centre's responsibility

We expect that both your staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our regulated qualifications or units or courses, and your learners, are aware of the contents of the policy and that your Centre has a complaints handling procedure and appeals process in place to deal with complaints from learners about the services provided by your Centre.

## Review arrangements

We will review this policy and its associated procedures annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it 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 any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received.

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

## How should I complain?

### Centres:

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All our staff have been trained to help our customers and they all like to help, so you should first try to sort out any problem at the earliest opportunity by speaking to the person who dealt with you.

If they cannot help or you wish to speak to someone else, you can ask to speak to their manager.

If this is not possible, or if you are not satisfied with the help provided by the manager, please send a written complaint, normally within one month of the event you are complaining about to the Director of Quality at the contact details provided at the end of the policy.

### Learners:

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Learners and/or interested parties who wish to complain about a level of service provided by the Centre at which they have taken a qualification offered by Gateway Qualifications should have exhausted their Centre's own complaints process before bringing the complaint to us. However, learners can make the complaint directly to Gateway Qualifications in the following exceptional circumstances:

- A significant breach by the Centre of their own procedures.
- Communications have broken down between the learner and the Centre.

## Responsibility for the investigation

All complaints will be passed to the Director of Quality who will acknowledge receipt, as appropriate and will advise the Chief Executive Officer of the complaint.

The Director of Quality will be responsible for ensuring the investigation of the complaint is carried out in a prompt and effective manner and in accordance with the procedures in this policy and will allocate a relevant member of staff to lead the investigation and review any supporting evidence received or gathered by Gateway Qualifications.

As part of the allocation of the investigation the Director of Quality will ensure that those involved in deciding the outcome of the complaint are not involved in the incident or do not have a vested interest in the outcome.

## **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).
- Any names of the people you have dealt with so far.
- Copies of any papers or letters to do with the complaint.

## **Complaints brought to our attention by the regulators**

Where the regulators notify us about failures that have been discovered in the assessment process or other activities of another awarding organisation, these will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints in accordance with the procedures below to ascertain if the same issue could affect other qualifications offered by Gateway Qualifications.

## **Complaints made against Gateway Qualifications**

In cases where the complaint is against Gateway Qualifications as an organisation, the regulators will be informed without delay to determine the appropriate course of action.

## **Confidentiality and whistle blowing**

Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. It is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us, however, if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences please inform us that you do not wish for us to divulge your identity. If it helps to reassure you on this point, we can confirm that we are not obliged to disclose information if to do so would be a breach of confidentiality and/or any other legal duty.

While we are prepared to investigate issues which are 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 the complaint/allegation relates. At all times we will investigate such complaints from whistle-blowers in accordance with relevant whistle blowing legislation.

## What will happen to my complaint?

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 2 working days, letting you know who is investigating your complaint.

We aim to initiate the investigation of the complaint within 10 working days. If your complaint is more complex, or involves people who are not available at the time, we may extend this to 20 working days. We may contact you within this period to seek further information or clarification (in some instances we may recommend a meeting). At the end of the investigation we shall write to inform you of our decision.

## What happens if my complaint is upheld?

If any part of your 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, by reviewing our procedures to assess the impact on our arrangements and assessment process (if relevant) or arranging for 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 and indicates a failure in our assessment processes we will take appropriate actions such as:

- Identify any other learner 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
- Ensure that the failure does not recur in the future.

## What if I am not happy with the reply?

If you disagree with the decision the first point of call is the Director of Quality.

If you are still unhappy with the decision taken by Gateway Qualifications in reviewing the complaint you can then take the matter through our appeal arrangements which are outlined in our Appeals Policy.

## Monitoring

Gateway Qualifications' Quality and Standards and Access to HE Committees' will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the complaints process. Summary reports will be submitted to enable the Committees' to review the effectiveness of the process and, where appropriate, monitor changes to the policy and procedures, which will be submitted annually to the Board of Trustees for monitoring and appropriate action.

## Contact us

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

Telephone: 01206 911 211  
 Email: enquiries@gatewayqualifications.org.uk  
 Post: Gateway Qualifications, Gateway House, 3 Tollgate  
 Business Park, COLCHESTER, CO3 8AB

Version: 2.6 October 2017  
 Board Approval: 18 October 2017  
 Latest review: October 2017  
 Policy author: Director of Quality  
 Review Date: October 2018

<b>Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition</b>
<b>Condition D3:</b> Reviewing approach
<b>Condition D4:</b> Responding to enquiries and complaints
<b>Qualifications Wales</b>
<b>Condition D3:</b> Reviewing approach
<b>Condition D4:</b> Responding to enquiries and complaints
<b>Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment</b>
<b>Condition D3:</b> Reviewing approach
<b>Condition D4:</b> Responding to enquiries and complaints
<b>QAA licensing criteria</b>
Criteria 30: It has documented and accessible procedures to enable complaints and appeals to be received, considered and resolved fairly. These procedures relate to: (a) appeals made by students (b) complaints made by students (c) appeals made by providers (d) complaints made by providers.