

Complaints Policy

Document Control

Date Written	6 th July 2018
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Version	3
General Conditions of Recognition	D4; I2
Criteria for Recognition	A4
Relevant to	Awarding and End-Point Assessment

Introduction

This document sets out the complaints policy and procedure and is aimed at all Occupational Awards Limited (OAL) centres, learners and any other interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from OAL.

OAL values all of the centres delivering its qualifications and the learners who undertake them and apprentices who go through end-point assessment. OAL are confident that its policies and procedures will lead to the provision of a consistently high quality service.

However, if any centre or individual believe that they have encountered a level of service that is below expectations, they are encouraged to raise their concerns with OAL so that they can be addressed.

Scope

This policy covers complaints that learners, members of the public or approved centres may wish to make in relation to the qualifications, end-point assessments and associated services offered by OAL.

It is not to be used to deal with enquiries about services offered by OAL or appeals in relation to decisions made by OAL. These areas 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 in accordance with our Appeals Policy.

If you are unhappy about the way an examination or assessment was delivered and conducted and 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 responsibilities

OAL suggests that all people involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications, end-point assessments, and all learners, are made aware of the contents of the policy. All learners should also be made aware that each centre has a complaints handling procedure and appeals process in place to deal with complaints from learners about the services they receive from the centre.

OAL responsibilities

The Chief Executive is accountable for ensuring the implementation of this policy. The Operations & Quality – Senior Manager is responsible for carrying out the requirements of this policy. Where either party is implicated in the complaint the Chair will be responsible for appointing suitable person(s) to carry out these activities.

How should I complain?

All OAL employees have been trained to support customers and service users.

Centres should first try to sort out any problem at the earliest opportunity by speaking their normal OAL contact. If they cannot help or if the Centre wishes to speak to someone else, the Centre can ask to speak to the Head of Customer Support.

If this is not possible, or if the Centre is not satisfied with the help provided by the Head of Customer Support, the Centre may send a written complaint. This should be done within one month of the event that forms the subject of the complaint and should be addressed to OAL using the contact details outlined at the end of policy. Centres should submit complaints in this manner via the 'Complaint form' at the end of this policy.

Learners and/or members of the public who wish to complain about the level of service provided by the centre at which they have taken an OAL qualification should have exhausted the centre's own complaints process before bringing the complaint to OAL. However, in exceptional circumstances, learners can make the complaint directly to OAL if they feel there has been a significant breach of OAL's procedures by any centre.

If I complain what details do I have to give?

If a centre or an individual contacts OAL in relation to a complaint, they should be ready to provide:

- Full contact details including their name and a daytime telephone number;
- A full description of the complaint (including the subject matter and dates and times if known);

- The names of any people that have been included in the complaints process so far; and
- Copies of any papers or letters connected with the complaint.

Complaints brought to our attention by the regulators

On occasion, the regulators may notify OAL about failures relating to the activities of another awarding organisation. These will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints in accordance with the procedures below. This will ascertain if the same issue could affect the provision of OAL qualifications in the future.

Confidentiality and whistle blowing

Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. However, it is always preferable to reveal the complainant's identity and contact details to OAL. If the complainant is concerned about possible adverse consequences they must inform OAL at the start of the process that they do not wish to have their identity divulged. OAL is not obliged (as recommended by the regulators) to disclose information if to do so would be a breach of confidentiality and/or any other legal duty.

Whilst OAL are prepared to investigate issues which are reported anonymously, OAL 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. At all times, OAL will investigate such complaints from whistle blowers in accordance with the OAL Whistleblowing Policy and relevant whistle blowing legislation.

What will happen to the complaint?

OAL will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days, and will let the complainant know who is investigating the complaint.

OAL aim to investigate all complaints within 5 working days. If the complaint is more complex, or involves people who are not available at the time, OAL may extend this period to 10 working days. OAL may contact the complainant within this period to seek further information or clarification. In some instances OAL may recommend a meeting. At the end of the investigation, OAL will write/email to inform the complainant of the result of the investigation.

What happens if the complaint is upheld?

If any part of the complaint is upheld, OAL will respond to the complainant accordingly and give due consideration to how OAL can improve its service and arrangements. This might be through reviewing procedures to mitigate the impact of the subject of the complaint on arrangements and assessment process or arranging for additional staff training. In extreme circumstances, where the performance or behaviour of staff is deemed inappropriate, internal disciplinary procedures may be exercised.

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

- identifying and contacting any other learner who might have been affected by that failure;
- correcting, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigating as far as possible the effect of the failure; or
- implementing new procedures to ensure that the failure does not reoccur in the future.

What if the complainant is not happy with the reply?

If the complainant disagrees with any decision linked to a complaint, should first contact the Responsible Officer. If they are still unhappy with the decision taken by OAL in reviewing the complaint they can then take the matter through the Appeal arrangements which are outlined in the Appeals Policy (OAP01).

Storage and use of information

All information and data collected regarding any complaints made to OAL Ltd will be stored securely on the database system. Depending on the nature of the complaint this information will be stored against either a centre or learner or within the OAL files. This information will only be made available to relevant persons.

Information may be used to review associated processes and policies to ensure that the 'failure' does not occur again or mitigate the situation as far as possible if the failure that occurred cannot be corrected.

Complaints Form

OAL has put in place policies and procedures that underpin high quality service delivery to all centres and other customers.

However, should a situation arise whereby you wish to complain about any aspect of OAL and/or the services we provide please contact our customer services team at info@oawards.co.uk or telephone 01904 236 483.

Please complete this form and return, using the email address above, to the OAL Responsible officer who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Name:

What's your role

Centre Name:

Contact Details

Telephone:

Email:

Please give details about your 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?

Are you attaching any paperwork?

If so, please give details:

Date:
