



Complaints Policy

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Complaints Policy External

Introduction

This document sets out our complaints policy and procedure and is aimed at our centres, learners and all interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from OCN NI.

We value all the centres delivering our qualifications 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 were not the case.

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

Scope

This policy covers complaints learners, members of the public or centres may wish to make in relation to the qualifications and associated services offered by OCN NI.

It is not to be used to cover appeals in relation to decisions made by OCN NI. 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, where appropriate, in accordance with the approach outlined in our Customer Service Statement or Appeals Policy.

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

The Centre's Responsibility

Centres should take all reasonable steps to ensure that their staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications, and your learners, are aware of the contents of this policy and that your centre has a complaint handling procedure and appeals process in place to deal with complaints from learners about the services they provide from your centre. **If an individual is unhappy about a service or activity being delivered by a centre, they must first go through the centre's complaints process before bringing the matter to OCN NI.**

Review Arrangements

We will review the policy and its associated procedures as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer, learner or regulatory feedback and any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received.

If you would like to feedback any views, please contact us at compliance@ocnni.org.uk

How should I make a complaint?

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 the Head of Compliance and Audit or Director of Compliance and Audit.

If this is not possible, or if you are not satisfied with the help provided, please send a written complaint, normally within one month of the event you are complaining about and address it to us at the contact details outlined at the end of the policy.

Learners and/or members of the public who wish to complain about a level of service provided by the centre at which they have taken an OCN NI qualification should have exhausted their centre's own complaints process before bringing the complaint to us. However, learners can make the complaint directly to us in exceptional circumstances where they feel there was a significant breach of one of our various procedures by the centre.

If I complain, what details do I have to give?

When you contact us, please use our email compliance@ocnni.org.uk the 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 correspondence or supporting evidence 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 OCN NI qualifications.

Confidentiality and Whistleblowing

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

While we are prepared to investigate issues that are reported to us anonymously and/or by whistle-blowers,¹ we 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.

What will happen to my complaint?

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 48 hours, letting you know who is investigating your complaint.

We aim to investigate the complaint within 5 working days. If your complaint is more complex or involves people who are not available at the time, we may extend this time. 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 will write/email to inform you of our decision.

Successful complaints and/or issues brought to our attention by Ofqual/CCEA Regulation

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, we may review our procedures to assess the impact on our qualification development, delivery or awarding arrangements and assessment process (if relevant) or arrange 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, or where an investigation following notification from the regulators indicates a failure in our processes, we will give due consideration to the outcome and will take appropriate actions such as:

- (a) identifying any other learner who has been affected by the failure
- (b) correcting, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigating as far as possible the effect of the failure
- (c) ensuring 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 Compliance and Audit.

If you are still unhappy with the decision taken by OCN NI in reviewing the complaint, you can, where relevant, take the matter through our appeal arrangements which are outlined in our appeals policy.

¹ OCN NI defines whistle-blowers as being current or former members of staff (both permanent or contracted) or third-party suppliers of a centre or OCN NI and/or current or previous learners

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our Compliance and Audit Team on 028 9046 3990 or email compliance@ocni.org.uk

Internal Complaints Procedure

Introduction

This document is issued for **OCN NI staff guidance purposes only**. This procedure is to be implemented in response to OCN NI staff receiving complaints from our centres, learners and all interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from OCN NI.

We value all the centres delivering our qualifications and the learners who undertake them, and our aim every day is to exceed the expectations of our customers.

The underlying principles

As in any organisation which is people-based, occasional genuine errors or delays will inevitably occur. The principles and procedures set out in this document are concerned with learning from our experiences. In respect of all complaints about OCN NI, the staff should:

- focus on putting matters right where possible
- ensure that their line manager is aware of the matter at the earliest possible stage
- assess with their line manager what lessons might be drawn from the situation to avoid any future repetition of the problem or issue
- after discussion with their line manager, issue an apology to the affected party (if appropriate) in the situation.

In most cases, the customer (or other interested party making the complaint) will be content that matters have been put right and an apology given. However, there will be occasions where customers (or others) will feel sufficiently strongly about an issue that they will want to take matters further. In such cases, it is important that OCN NI does not, in any way, impede such further reviews.

Overarching Aims

The overarching aims of our procedures should ensure:

- that complaints are acknowledged within a reasonable time of their being received
- where a complaint has been made orally, that a letter of acknowledgement states the complainant's understanding as to the nature of the complaint being made, and invites the complainant to confirm in writing the accuracy of that statement
- that complaints are investigated by a person of sufficient experience, seniority and competence who, where possible, was not directly involved in the particular act or omission giving rise to the complaint
- that any appropriate remedial action on those complaints is promptly taken
- where a complaint is not promptly remedied, that the complainant is advised of any further avenue for complaint available to him or her under the regulatory system (e.g. taking the matter up with the Qualifications Regulator).

The Procedure

Many complaints can be resolved satisfactorily by following the procedures set out below. In this way, the level of 'customer service' is improved and issues of 'poor service' may be resolved without the need for matters to be taken further.

The purpose of this process is to focus on the issues that gave rise to the complaint. Further, it is taken as read that OCN NI staff will, at all times be professional and courteous in their dealings with customers and other interested parties.

To assist customers to log complaints, an example complaint notification form is attached as an appendix to this document.

The procedures to be followed include:

- completion of the complaint notification form
- acknowledgement of the complaint within, 48 hours of receipt (Although a longer period may be acceptable, a prompt acknowledgement reassures the client that the complaint is being given the appropriate level of attention.)
- where the complaint was received by telephone, making a telephone attendance note and sending a letter of acknowledgement outlining your understanding as to the nature of the complaint being made and inviting the complainant to confirm in writing the accuracy of the letter
- where the complaint cannot be promptly remedied, advising the complainant of this and setting out the proposed time frame for dealing with it
- if the complainant is not satisfied, advise them that the first point of call is for us to refer the matter to the appropriate departmental line manager. We aim to investigate the complaint within 5 working days. If your complaint is more complex, or involves people who are not available at the time, we may extend this to 10 working days.
- If the complainant is still unhappy with the decision taken by OCN NI in reviewing the complaint, customers can take the matter to our Compliance and Audit Manager.
- The Compliance and Audit Manager will assess the complaint for risk of reoccurrence and further impact. The compliance and audit manager will update the company risk logs and/or take further action if appropriate.
- filing the completed complaint notification form and related correspondence.

Record keeping

All records should be kept and uploaded to the OCN NI MIS System.

APPENDIX

Complaint notification form

Private and Confidential

Circulation of this form should be restricted to **OCN NI Staff ONLY**

Date of Complaint	Click here to enter text.
Compliant Topic	Click here to enter text.
Format of complaint (delete those not applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter (attach copy) <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone call (attach file note) <input type="checkbox"/> In person (attach meeting note) <input type="checkbox"/> Email (attach copy) <input type="checkbox"/> Fax (attach copy)
Name of Complainant	Click here to enter text.
Complainant contact details: name, address, email, telephone	Click here to enter text.
Select the compliant type	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> EV/QR <input type="checkbox"/> Centre Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Qualification materials/resources <input type="checkbox"/> Fees and invoicing <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of qualifications <input type="checkbox"/> Qualification content <input type="checkbox"/> Unit content/errors <input type="checkbox"/> IT System /website related <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Customer service and/or communications <input type="checkbox"/> Inaccurate Advice <input type="checkbox"/> Registrations and/or Certifications <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please provide details Click here to enter text.
Please tick the statement(s) that best represents the role of the complainant.	<input type="checkbox"/> They are the complainant <input type="checkbox"/> They are complaining of behalf of a learner(s) <input type="checkbox"/> They are from a centre and complaining on behalf of the centre

Provide details of the complaint (including what it is about and when and where it occurred)	Click here to enter text.
All compliant related documentation uploaded to MIS system	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Date of letter issued to complainant acknowledging complaint	Click here to enter text.

Signed by:

Person whom received compliant	Click here to enter text.
Person dealing with Compliant	Click here to enter text.