

Skillsfirst Awards

Complaints Policy

April 2021

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Skillsfirst Awards Complaints Policy

Introduction

This document is aimed at all Skillsfirst's customers and any other stakeholder. This includes centres, learners and members of the public and covers any complaints these individuals or organisations may wish to make about Skillsfirst, our services, or our staff.

It does not cover:

- enquiries about services offered by Skillsfirst, which is covered by our Customer Service Policy or;
- appeals in relation to decisions made by Skillsfirst, which is covered by our Appeals Policy and or;
- any complaint about possible malpractice or maladministration, which is covered by our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

Review arrangements

We will review this policy annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary. Changes may be made in response to customer feedback or regulatory requirements, for example to align with any complaints process established by the Regulator. In addition, we will review the outcomes of any complaints and make changes to our policies and procedures where necessary.

Approach

We value our customers, learners and partners and are confident of providing a high-quality service at all times. We would be extremely disappointed should this not be the case.

Each member of Skillsfirst's staff has been trained to provide support to our customers and they are all willing to help, therefore it is important that should you feel you have encountered a level of service that is below expectations, you raise any concerns you may have with us immediately so that we may address them and review it as part of our lessons learnt.

How should I complain?

In the first instance, you should try to sort out any problem at the earliest opportunity by either speaking to the person who dealt with you, or contacting the Customer Services Team. If they cannot help, or you wish to speak to someone else, you can ask to speak to a manager.

If this is not possible, or if you are not satisfied with the support and guidance provided by the manager, please email or send a written complaint. You should do this normally within 20 working days of the event you are complaining about. Skillsfirst recognised centres should submit a complaint through the QMIS complaints form. All other individuals should address a complaint as specified through the contact details provided at the end of this policy.

If I complain, what detail do I have to provide?

When you contact us with your complaint, please provide: 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 and;
- copies of any documents relating to the complaint.

Complaints brought to our attention by the regulators

Where the Regulator notifies Skillsfirst of a complaint about us or our qualifications, we will deal with it in the same way as any other customer complaint.

We will give due regard to any outcomes of any complaints processed by the Regulator in relation to a qualification.

We will fully comply with the Regulator's complaints process if the regulator is investigating a complaint about Skillsfirst.

If Skillsfirst is notified of a failure that has been discovered in the assessment process of another awarding organisation via a complaint, we will review our procedures in accordance with this policy to ascertain if the same failure could affect our arrangements.

Confidentiality and whistle blowing

Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. Although it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us, if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences, you may request us not 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, our GDPR data protection privacy policy and/or any other legal duty.

Whilst we are prepared to investigate issues which are reported to us anonymously, we shall always try to confirm a complaint by means of a separate investigation, before taking up the matter with those to whom the complaint relates. At all times we will investigate such complaints from whistle blowers in accordance with relevant whistle blowing legislation and guidance from our regulators.

What will happen to my complaint?

Skillsfirst will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 2 working days.

We aim to investigate 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 and will let you know an expected response date. 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 inform you of the outcome of your complaint in writing.

What happens if my complaint is upheld?

If any part of your complaint is upheld, we shall of course apologise and give due consideration as to how we can improve our service and arrangements, for example, by amending our procedures, or arranging for additional staff training.

In situations where a complaint has been successful, or where an investigation indicates a failure in our assessment processes we will, as appropriate, take actions such as:

- informing the regulator if a learner's assessment has been affected;
- identifying any other learner who has been affected by that failure;
- correcting or, where it cannot be corrected, mitigating as far as possible the effect of the failure and;
- 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, please write to us explaining the reasons. This will be reviewed by a senior member of staff who will consult with others as necessary. That outcome will be final unless the complaint is about a matter that can be appealed.

If you wish to appeal under the jurisdiction of our appeals policy, please follow the arrangements which are outlined in our Appeals Policy.

Contact us

Skillsfirst recognised centres should submit a complaint through the QMIS complaints form. All other individuals should address a complaint to the Customer Service Team at customerservices@skillsfirst.co.uk or post it to Skillsfirst Awards Ltd, Suite 416, Fort Dunlop, Fort Parkway, Birmingham B24 9FD.

If you have any queries about the contents of this policy, or wish to give feedback, please contact our Customer Service Team on 0121 270 5100 or email them at customerservices@skillsfirst.co.uk.