

Complaints Policy

BHS Qualifications (BHSQ) is committed to making sure all its activities are conducted fairly, transparently, objectively and are therefore free from bias. This policy is for all BHSQ customers, stakeholders and learners who wish to complain about the service provided by BHSQ and/or an BHSQ Approved Centre.

This policy will:

- Define what is meant by a complaint.
- Provide examples where a complaint may arise.
- Explain how a complaint can be made to BHSQ.
- Establish a clear complaints procedure.
- Ensure all complaints are responded to and dealt with fairly, in a timely manner.
- Promote public confidence in BHSQ's ability to be open, objective and impartial.
- Define terminology used by BHSQ in this policy.

BHSQ is committed to providing an excellent service and therefore welcomes complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future. BHSQ aims to treat every complaint fairly; in order to do this and investigate complaints thoroughly please contact BHSQ as soon as possible.

Should BHSQ fail to meet expectations or should a learner, centre or other interested third party be dissatisfied with any BHSQ qualification or associated services, they should raise these concerns directly with BHSQ so they may be reviewed and addressed.

Date for review: November 2020

Contact details for BHSQ:

Address: BHS Qualifications
Abbey Park
Stareton
Kenilworth
Warwickshire
CV8 2XZ

Telephone: 02476 840544

Email: enquiries@bhsq.co.uk

Website: www.bhsq.co.uk

What is a complaint?

A complaint can be defined as an 'expression of dissatisfaction' about a standard of service or lack of service that is unacceptable to the person(s) and/or organisation(s) that has been affected.

Complaints can be made to BHSQ by any person or organisation who is a customer of BHSQ, or by someone on their behalf (a third party), who has been directly affected. Complaints submitted by a third party must have the written permission of the person they are representing.

All BHSQ Approved Centres are required to have their own internal complaints procedures, therefore if the complaint is a direct result of the service or actions of an BHSQ Approved Centre, the complainant must follow the Centre's own complaints procedure in the first instance. If the complaint is not resolved to the persons/organisations satisfaction and all other avenues have been exhausted, they can then contact BHSQ for further advice. This may result in a complaint being made to BHSQ.

A complaint may relate to:

- Failure to provide an adequate standard of service as detailed in BHSQ's Customer Service Standards Policy (this can be found on the BHSQ website here).
- A member of BHSQ staff and/or a representative of BHSQ including:
 - External Verifiers/Moderators,
 - Consultants,
 - Volunteers.
- Failure to follow guidelines and/or timelines.
- Lack of/or slow response to enquiries.
- Disagreement where a decision has been made by BHSQ.
- Bias or unfair treatment.
- Unprofessional behaviour and/or conduct.
- An BHSQ Approved Centre and/or their representatives.

This list is an example; each complaint is different and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the BHSQ office if you would like to make an appointment, our details are on the cover page.

How to make a complaint

Informal process

In most cases complaints can be dealt with informally. This may be where there is a lack of clarity or understanding regarding a persons and/or organisations roles and responsibilities. BHSQ aims to resolve and address informal complaints as swiftly as possible.

In the first instance please contact the BHSQ Office for an informal discussion regarding the concern or dissatisfaction. BHSQ may be able to resolve the issue by providing an explanation, clarity, an apology and/or a further course of action.

Where BHSQ is unable to resolve the complaint informally, the complainant will be advised to submit a formal complaint in order to facilitate a thorough investigation.

Formal process

Stage One

All complaints must be submitted in writing, addressed for the attention of the BHSQ Manager and include the following information:

- Name, address and contact details of the complainant.
- A full description of the complaint including:
 - when it happened,
 - the sequence of events,
 - persons/organisations involved,
 - witnesses who are able to support the complaint.
- Copies of any documentation and evidence associated with the complaint.
- The desired action or response sought for resolution.
- If appropriate, any information regarding previous attempts for resolution.

Everyone has the right to appoint someone else to act on their behalf. Should a complaint be submitted by a third party on behalf of the person directly concerned, written permission from the person they are acting on behalf of must be submitted in addition to the above.

BHSQ will respond to the complainant within 3 working days of receipt. A log of all correspondence, documentation and conversations will be retained by BHSQ.

The BHSQ Manager will conduct an investigation into the complaint, where all evidence and documentation will be scrutinised and evaluated. To conduct a comprehensive investigation, information may need to be disclosed to third parties. Where additional evidence or documentation is required, the BHSQ Manager will discuss this with the complainant in the first instance.

The BHSQ Manager will provide a written response to the complainant when a decision regarding the outcome of the complaint has been made.

The response will describe:

- The action taken to investigate the complaint.
- Conclusions from the investigation.
- Outcome of the complaint.
- Where required, action taken as a result to change or improve processes and procedures.

BHSQ aims for an outcome to be reached within 20 working days of the complaint being received, however depending on the nature of the complaint, this may take longer in order to ensure a fair and thoroughly considered outcome. In all cases the complainant will be provided with a regular progress report detailing anticipated timescales.

If the complaint is about a member of staff, they will not take part in any review and responsibility for the investigation will be directed to their respective manager. For example, complaints about the BHSQ Manager will be reviewed by the Head of BHSQ; complaints against the Head of BHSQ will be reviewed by the Chairman of the BHSQ Board of Directors.

Stage Two

If an outcome cannot be reached and/or the complaint remains unresolved, the BHSQ Manager will escalate the complaint to the Head of BHSQ. If this is the case, BHSQ will notify the complainant within 3 working days of the escalation. In the interim, BHSQ will keep the complainant informed in writing and provide a progress report.

The Head of BHSQ will review the original complaint; its findings; conclusions; conduct further investigations as appropriate and ensure the correct process has been followed. The Head of BHSQ will provide a written response to the complainant when an outcome has been reached.

BHSQ aims for an outcome to be reached within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated to the Head of BHSQ, however depending on the nature and severity of the complaint the investigation may take longer. In all cases the complainant will be provided with a regular progress report detailing anticipated timescales.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can appeal this decision and move to the next stage of the process.

Stage Three

To appeal a Stage Two outcome, the complainant must submit their appeal within 10 working days to the Head of BHSQ, following receipt of the Stage Two outcome.

Escalation to Stage Three may also be instigated by the Head of BHSQ where they are unable to resolve the complaint.

The Head of BHSQ will appoint an Independent Review Panel to investigate further. The panel will be made up of a minimum of one person external to BHSQ.

The Independent Review Panel will:

- Conduct an investigation of the complaint.
- Review all evidence and correspondence.
- Conduct interviews.
- Ensure processes and procedures have been fairly and consistently applied.
- Equitable decisions have been reached.

The Independent Review Panel aims for an outcome to be reached within 30 working days of being appointed. The Panel will write to the complainant within 3 working days of the final decision being made.

The decision of the Independent Review Panel is final.

Taking a complaint further

Where the complaint relates to a regulated qualification and the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome and the concern is still not resolved, the matter may be escalated to the relevant Regulator. The Regulators will only consider complaints where BHSQ's own complaints process has been exhausted, unless the complaint is serious and requires regulatory intervention at an earlier stage. Please see Appendix One for the list of Regulators.

Outcome from investigations

Where the investigation has highlighted flaws, errors or failures within BHSQ's or the Centre's processes, procedures and/or guidance, all reasonable steps and appropriate action will be taken to prevent a reoccurrence.

This may involve:

- Contacting other learners who have been affected.
- Mitigate as far as possible where failures cannot be corrected.
- Recall incorrect certificates.
- Apply sanctions as appropriate.
- Update policy and procedure guidance and manuals to provide clarity.

Confidentiality

BHSQ adheres to the data protection legislation and will treat all complaints sensitively and in confidence. All instances will be recorded securely on a central register and monitored.

Information regarding complaints, reviews and investigations may need to be provided to regulators and other organisations, if requested. BHSQ will respect a person's anonymity where requested, however depending on the nature of the complaint this may not be possible. The complainant will be notified in this instance.

Monitoring and Review

This document and its content will be reviewed on a three year cycle, or earlier should it be needed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and reflects the types of complaints that have arisen.

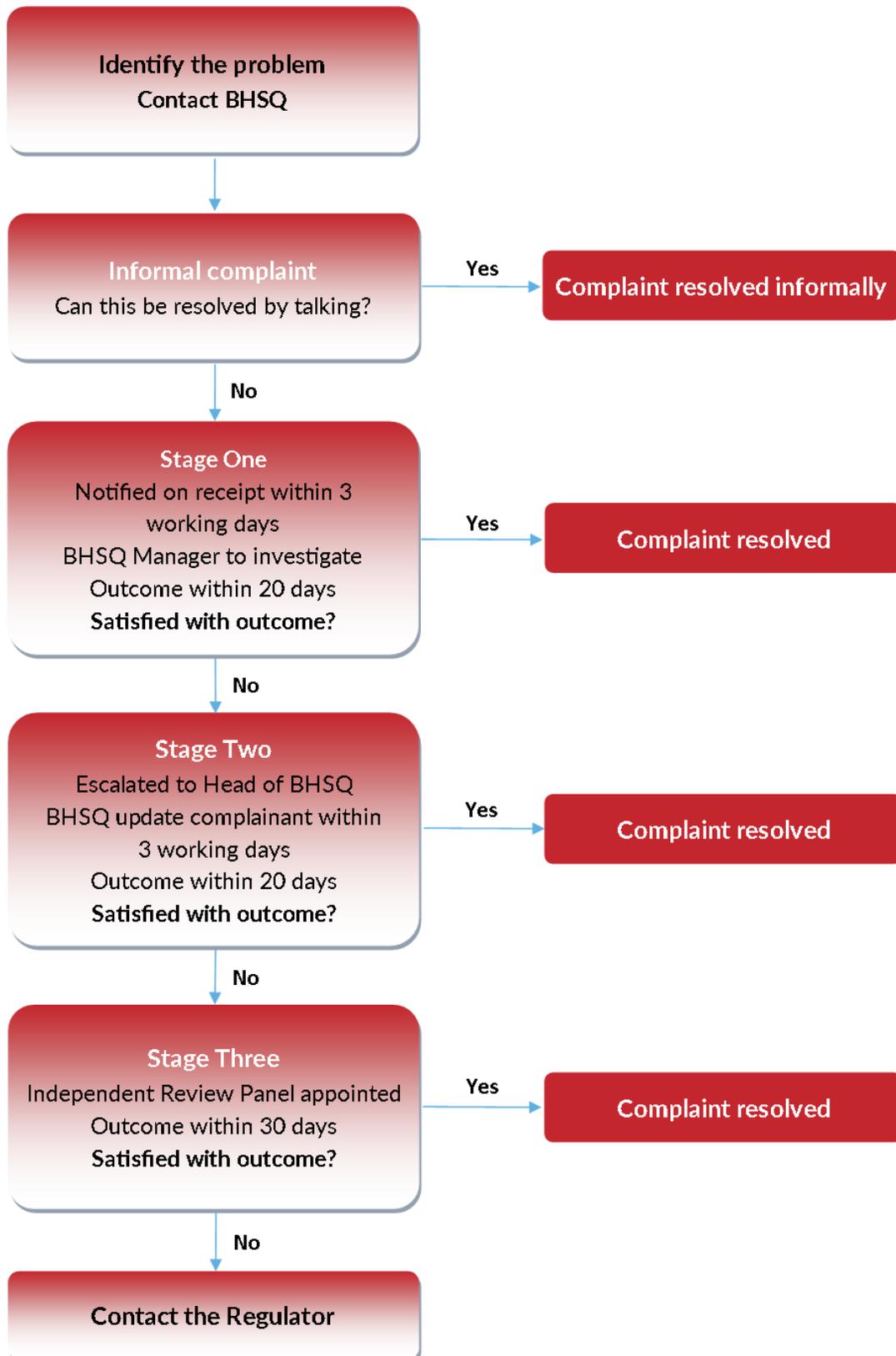
In the event of the Regulators or another Awarding Organisation notifying BHSQ of failures that have been discovered in the assessment process, BHSQ will review whether or not a similar failure could affect its own processes and practices.

Document history

Version	Revision date	Reason
2	09/11/2017	Revision of previous Appeals and Complaints Policy (30/01/2016), to enhance regulatory compliance

Please note: This document is uncontrolled once printed. Please check with BHSQ for the most up to date version.

Complaints Process



Appendix One: BHSQ's Regulators – contact details

England:	Ofqual <i>(the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulator)</i>
	Address: Spring Place, Herald Avenue Coventry, CV5 6UB
	Phone Number: 0300 303 3344
	Email: Public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk
	Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual
Wales:	Qualifications Wales (QW)
	Address: Q2 Building, Pencarn Lane, Imperial Park, Coedkernew, Newport, NP10 8AR
	Phone Number: 0333 077 2701
	Email: enquiries@qualificationswales.org
	Website: www.qualificationswales.org
Northern Ireland:	CCEA Regulation <i>(the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment)</i>
	Address: 29 Claredon Road, Clarendon Dock, Belfast, BT1 3BG
	Phone Number: 02890 261200
	Email: ccearegulation@ccea.org.uk
	Website: www.ccea.org.uk/regulation
Scotland:	SQA Accreditation
	Address: The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DQ
	Phone Number: 0345 213 5249
	Email: accreditation@sqa.org.uk
	Website: www.accreditation.sqa.org.uk

Users of public bodies in Scotland (e.g. FE colleges and local authority centres) have the right to complain to the SPSO as the final arbiter. Users have to exhaust the public body's own complaints procedure before the SPSO will consider their complaint. Learners at centres that are not public bodies will not be able to escalate their complaints to the SPSO.

Appendix Two: Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Assessment	The process of making judgements about the extent to which a learner's work meets the assessment criteria of a unit, or any additional assessment requirements for a qualification.
Assessment Criteria	Description of the requirements a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved.
Assessor	A person who assesses or marks a learner's work. This involves using a particular set of criteria to make judgements as to the level of attainment a learner has demonstrated.
Centre	An organisation undertaking the delivery of assessments (and potentially other activities) to learners on behalf of BHSQ.
Complainant	Person representing themselves, an organisation, or someone else.
CCEA Council for the Curriculum, Examination and Assessment	CCEA has responsibility for the regulation of qualifications taken by learners in Northern Ireland, as set out in the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. They develop and publish criteria for the accreditation of relevant external qualifications, and accredit, where such criteria are met, any qualifications submitted for accreditation.
BHSQ Unique ID Number	A unique identification number given to a candidate when they have been registered by BHSQ for a qualification. This is not their ULN.
External Moderator/Verifier	An individual appointed by BHSQ to ensure accurate and consistent standards of assessment, across Centres and over time.
Internal Verifier	An individual appointed by the Centre to ensure accurate and consistent standards of assessment, both between Assessors operating within a Centre and between assessment locations or sites offering the same award.
Learner	A person who is registered to take a qualification and to be assessed as part of that qualification.
Ofqual Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator	Ofqual is the regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. They regulate by recognising and monitoring organisations that deliver qualifications and assessments as set out in the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act (2009) and Education Act (2011).
QCF Qualifications and Credit Framework	Qualifications that use the QCF rules are made up of units, providing a flexible way to get a qualification. Each unit has a credit value which tells you how many credits are awarded when a unit is completed. The credit value also gives an indication of how long it will normally take to prepare for a unit or qualification.
QW Qualifications Wales	QW is the independent organisation responsible for regulating general and vocational qualifications in Wales.
RQF Regulatory Qualifications Framework	The RQF is a framework for cataloguing all qualifications and awarding organisations regulated by Ofqual and CCEA. The RQF replaced the QCF and NQF in October 2015.

Reasonable Adjustments	Defined as reasonable steps to ensure disabled people are not placed at a disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled people, 'substantial' being more than minor or trivial.
Responsible Officer	The person responsible to the Regulators for matters relating to regulation.
SCQF	The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. The Framework is for users to gain a better understanding of qualifications in Scotland and plan future learning. The Framework supports everyone in Scotland, including learners, learning providers and employers.
Service	An organisation that is responsible for a particular type of activity, or for providing a particular thing that people need.
SQA Accreditation	The regulatory arm of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, separate from SQA Awarding Body. SQA Accreditation quality assures qualifications offered in Scotland by approving awarding bodies and accrediting their qualifications, including Scottish Vocational Qualifications.
Training Providers	Organisations who are responsible for providing a specified programme of training and assessment to a learner registered for a qualification.
Unique Learner Number	The Unique Learner Number (ULN) is a 10 digit number issued and held by the Learning Records Service (LRS), who use the number to index learner identity details as well as education and training qualifications within the PLR.