

Complaints Policy

BHS Qualifications (BHSQ) is committed to making sure all its activities are conducted fairly, transparently, objectively and 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. The complaints policy addresses all aspects other than appeals about assessment decisions and quality assurance. This is part of the BHSQ's appeals policy.

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 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.

Date for review: March 2024

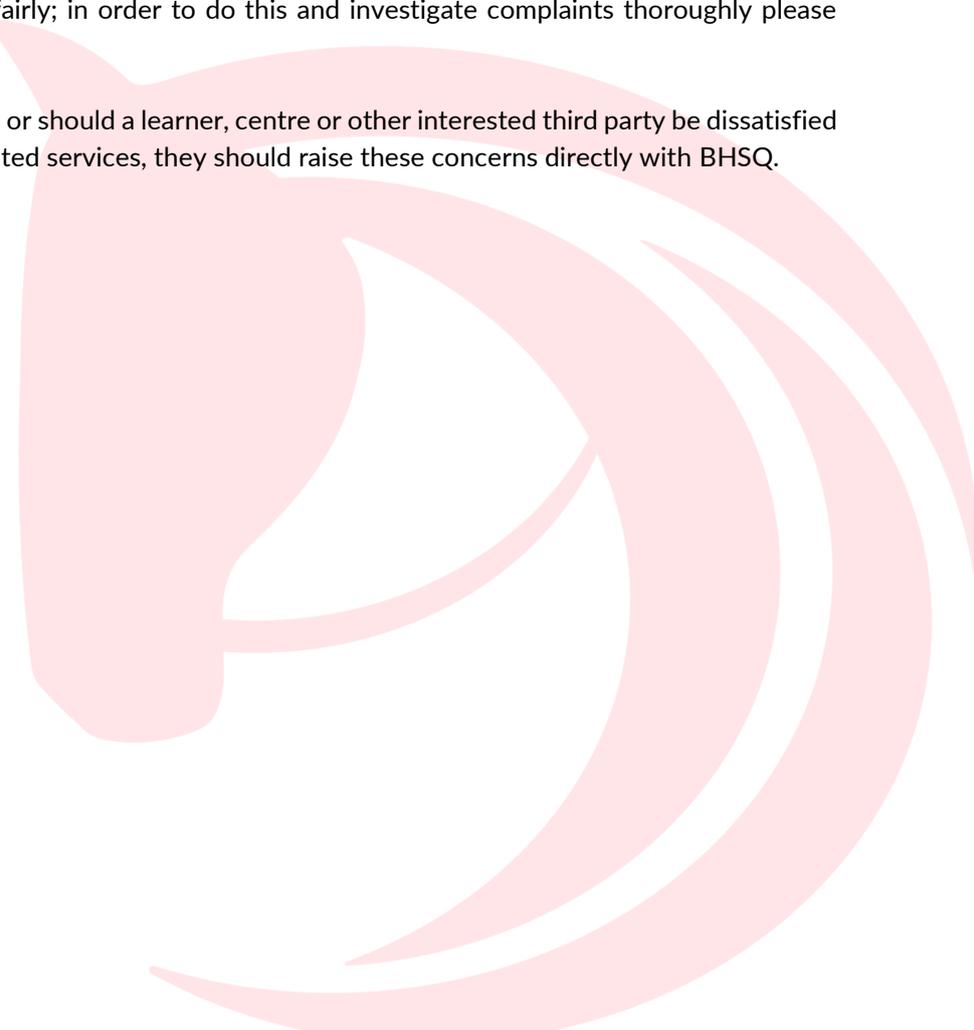
Contact details for BHSQ:

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).
- 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.
- A 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.

How to make a complaint

Informal process

BHSQ aims to resolve a complaint as swiftly as possible. In the first instance the complainant should contact BHSQ for an informal discussion regarding the concern or dissatisfaction. BHSQ may then 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, 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 BHSQ and include the following information:

- Name, address and contact details of the complainant.
- A full description of the complaint including:
 - the specific nature of the complaint
 - 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.

The complainant may appoint someone else to act on their behalf. Should a complaint be submitted by a third party, permission from the person they are acting on behalf of must be submitted in addition to the above.

BHSQ will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 3 working days. A log of all correspondence, documentation and conversations will be retained by BHSQ.

BHSQ 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, BHSQ will discuss this with the complainant.

BHSQ 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. 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

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

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

BHSQ will appoint an Independent Review Panel to investigate further. The panel will be made up of a minimum of two with at least one person external to BHSQ. There is no limit to the number in a panel.

The Independent Review Panel will:

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

Where additional evidence or documentation is required, BHSQ will discuss this with the complainant.

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.

Once a complaint has been investigated and an outcome has been reached, the complaint will be closed by BHSQ. Without further substantial and objective evidence there will be no further investigation.

The decision of the Independent Review Panel is final. However if the complainant remains dissatisfied then referral to regulators may be appropriate (see Taking a complaint further).

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.

Date for review: March 2024

Document history

Version	Revision date	Reason
3	16/03/2021	To review and replace previously produced document

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

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: 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: 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: 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: accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/

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/candidate	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. 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).
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.

Term	Definition
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 part 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.