



AIM Awards Complaints and Appeals Guidance

for centre staff



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Welcome

We are a national Awarding Organisation, offering a large number of Ofqual regulated qualifications at different levels and in a wide range of subject areas. Our qualifications are flexible enough to be delivered in a range of settings, from small providers to large colleges and in the workplace both nationally and internationally.

We pride ourselves on offering the best possible customer service, and are always on hand to help if you have any questions. Our organisational structure and business processes enable us to be able to respond quickly to the needs of customers to develop new products that meet their specific needs.

We are also licensed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to approve and certificate Access to Higher Education Diplomas.

We are also approved as an Apprentice Assessment Organisation (AAO).

Introduction

This document is intended for centre staff at approved AIM Awards centres and provides details on making a complaint and appealing a decision.

Complaints

We are committed to providing our services in a responsive, accessible and prompt manner in accordance with the Service Standard timescales outlined in our “Being an AIM Awards Centre” and “Access to HE Manual” documents. We endeavour to provide you with the best possible service to enable you to cater for the needs of all your registered learners.

If you have a complaint about our services then please let us know as soon as possible. A complaint would be a serious problem concerning the services we provide that requires our attention and action. We do try to resolve complaints informally in the first instance however if you feel you must make a formal complaint the process is described on page 5.

Appeals

We aim to ensure that all decisions we make on the following are fair, consistent and based on valid judgments:

- Assessments and assessment results for external assessments
- Internal assessment decisions at a recognised centre (we will consider appeals against these once the Centre’s own appeals process has been exhausted)
- Decisions concerning centre/qualification approval or registration/certification status
- Any decision/penalty/sanction resulting from a malpractice investigation
- Outcomes of an application for reasonable adjustments or special consideration
- Outcomes of an application for Direct Claims Status

This document explains the steps you need to go through if you wish to question a decision made relating to any of the above. We will only consider whether we followed the required procedures correctly and whether they were applied properly and fairly in arriving at judgements. The process for making an appeal and how we will handle it is described on page 6.

Please note we do not arbitrate in cases of dispute between Learners and Centres. All centres are required to have complaints and appeals procedures in place and we expect that all learners are informed of these upon enrolment.

How to Make a Complaint

If you feel you need to make a complaint about any aspect of our service, in the first instance please contact your allocated contact person and explain the issue. In most cases we will seek to resolve your complaint informally. If you still wish to complain the below process should be followed.

1. Submit a written complaint via enquiries@aimawards.org.uk marking it for the attention of the Director of Quality and Operations (DoQO).
2. The DoQO will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days.
3. The DoQO will investigate the complaint with assistance from appropriate members of staff and inform the complainant of the outcome within 10 working days.
4. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response, the complaint will be passed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Deputy who will reconsider the decision within 5 working days and may uphold the complaint, dismiss the complaint or suggest alternative action.
5. In the event that the complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome, an appeal in writing should be submitted within 14 days to Board of Trustees (BOT) who will consider the matter and reply within 10 working days.

Our Board of Trustees receive a summary of complaints in the annual Self-Assessment Report.

How to Make an Enquiry/Appeal for Examinations

Stage 1 - Post Examination Enquiry

An enquiry may not be made directly from an individual candidate. An enquiry can be for an examination results enquiry, a return of examination paper or for a re-mark. A fixed fee is charged when a request is made for a re-mark. This fee is refunded if the outcome of the examination is changed as a result. If this service is required the following process will apply.

1. Enquiries must be made on behalf of candidates by the Head of Centre via enquiries@aimawards.org.uk within 28 days of results being issued.
2. We will acknowledge the appeal and indicate within 5 working days whether it falls within the scope of the post examination enquiry policy.
3. An examination results enquiry or a return of an examination paper will be processed by customer support staff within 5 working days of receipt. If the enquiry relates to a remark the examination paper will be sent to the Principal /examiner.

Stage 2 - Appeals

If, after accessing the post examinations enquiry service, a centre remains dissatisfied it may appeal using the AIM Awards Appeals process. The process below will be followed:

1. Principal Examiner will convene an Enquiry Panel made up of at least the Principal Examiner, a Marking Moderator and a member of the administration team who will consider the evidence and respond within 10 working days.
2. Initially an administration check will be carried out which will involve: a check to ensure the mark has been added correctly; a check that all sections have been marked; and that the final grade has been calculated properly.
3. Where a re-mark has been asked for, the paper will be copied and marked separately by 2 members of the Enquiry Panel. Once the examination papers have been re-marked, a final grade is decided upon. The final decision rests with the Principal Examiner. The result of any enquiry will be the awarding of a grade either higher, the same or lower.
4. Formal notification of any enquiry will be forwarded to the Head of Centre once a decision has been reached by the Enquiry Panel. A revised results sheet will also be issued. Where a certificate has already been issued, a revised certificate will only be issued once the original certificate has been returned.
5. If the appeal is unresolved or if the appellant is dissatisfied with the decision, they may request that the appeal be referred to the Chair of the Board of Trustees for review within 10 working days.
6. The Chair will appoint a committee consisting of the Chair and two non-staff members. The result of the review will be sent to the appellant within 15 working days and the decision of the committee will be final.

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How to Make an Appeal for All Other Cases

If you wish to appeal decisions made regarding anything else relating to the qualifications we make available please access our appeals process as described below.

Examples of acceptable appeals may include:

- The results of assessments
 - Decisions regarding reasonable adjustments or special consideration
 - Decisions relating to an investigating carried out into malpractice or maladministration
1. An appeal should be submitted in writing via enquiries@aimawards.org.uk to the Director of Quality and Operations (DoQO). We will acknowledge the appeal and indicate within 5 working days whether it falls within the scope of the appeals policy. In the event it can proceed the following applies.
 2. The DoQO will seek information and documentation from the appellant and any other parties.
 3. The DoQO will consider the evidence and respond within 10 working days.
 4. The appellant will be invited to comment on the factual accuracy of the initial conclusion within 10 working days.
 5. The DoQO in conjunction with appropriate internal staff will consider any additional information provided before reaching a final conclusion that will be confirmed to the appellant within 10 working days. We will only consider whether the required procedures were followed correctly and whether they were applied properly and fairly in arriving at judgements. If we find the correct procedures were not followed appropriate remedial action will be taken.
 6. If the appeal is unresolved or if the appellant is dissatisfied with the decision, they may request that the appeal be referred to the Chief Executive for review. The Chief Executive will appoint a committee consisting of the most appropriate members of staff. The result of the review will be sent to the appellant within 15 working days and the decision of the committee will be final.

All decision makers involved in an appeal will have no personal interest in the decision being appealed. Where the Chief Executive Officer has a personal interest in the decision their role will be taken by Deputy Chief Executive.

* If the Director of Quality and Operations has been involved in any aspect of an appeals case it will be referred to a more suitable member of staff.

Outcomes of an Appeal

If the outcome of an appeal brings into question the assessment process that affects one or more learners, we will take all reasonable steps to identify all learners that have been affected then correct or mitigate the effect of the failure and ensure it does not recur in the future, following our Adverse Effects procedure.

Reports go to the Board of Trustees on appeals and their outcome and included in our annual Self Assessment Report.



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