

**Highfield**

**Sanctions Policy**



## 1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy is aimed at Centres delivering Highfield qualifications or units and who have failed to meet aspects of Highfield delivery requirements and the obligations set out in Highfield policies, procedures and agreements.
- 1.2 This policy also applies to standards set out by the Regulatory Authorities in respect of regulated qualifications and units.
- 1.3 Set out below are details regarding the sanctions Highfield may impose on Centres in such situations.

## 2. **Supporting Policies**

- 2.1 Further specific criteria regarding the application of sanctions can be found in the following policies:
  - 2.1.1 Highfield Malpractice and Maladministration Policy;
  - 2.1.2 Highfield Centre Agreement; and
  - 2.1.3 Highfield Plagiarism Policy.

## 3. **Centre's Responsibility**

- 3.1 It is important that Centres and staff involved in the delivery of Highfield qualifications and assessments are fully aware of the contents of the policy and its possible implications on your Centre should the requirements, that are specified by Highfield in relation to the delivery of our qualifications (some of which are required of Highfield by the Qualification Regulators), are not met.

## 4. **Review Arrangements**

- 4.1 Highfield will review the policy annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer feedback, trends from our internal monitoring arrangements, changes in our practices, actions from the Regulatory Authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation.

## 5. **Ensuring the Standards of Highfield Qualifications and Units**

- 5.1 Highfield has a responsibility to the learners taking our qualifications and the UK Regulatory Authorities to ensure that Centres deliver Highfield qualifications and units in accordance with relevant regulatory requirements.

## 6. **Approach to Sanctions**

- 6.1 Highfield has a range of sanctions that can be imposed on a Centre depending on the seriousness of the situation, the level and track record of the Centre's non-compliance and the risk to the interests of learners and the integrity of the qualifications and units and/or the effect on public confidence in Highfield qualifications.
- 6.2 Nonetheless, Highfield aims to ensure that the application of sanctions is a last resort and through our approach to Centre support and management, and the creation of appropriate action plans, we will work with Centres to prevent situations arising that would warrant a sanction being imposed.
- 6.3 However, if sanctions are required then they will be applied depending on the nature of the situation. For example, if the Centre has:
- 6.3.1 outstanding actions;
  - 6.3.2 failure to meet payment terms;
  - 6.3.3 poor records to confirm assessment decisions;
  - 6.3.4 no internal quality assurance (IQA) personnel in place;
  - 6.3.5 proven collusion or persistent bad marking of Centre-marked assessments;
  - 6.3.6 suspected or proven cases of maladministration/malpractice which are being investigated;
  - 6.3.7 made certification claims before learners have completed the unit(s) or qualification(s);
  - 6.3.8 an increased likelihood of an adverse effect/incident occurring (for example, something that is likely to have an adverse effect on the standards of the qualifications they are delivering or public confidence in qualifications);
  - 6.3.9 refused access to premises and/or records to the staff of Highfield or the Regulatory Authorities.
- 6.4 It is important to note that the following are not classified as sanctions, but are regarded as standard, good Awarding Organisation or business practice;

- 6.4.1 When a Centre is first recognised and approved by Highfield to offer one of our qualifications, and/or if it has subsequently applied and been approved to offer another qualification in a sector or qualification type that is significantly different from previous qualifications it offers, Highfield may approve the Centre to offer the qualification(s) but reserves the right not to process any certificate claims for the qualification(s) until the Centre has demonstrated the correct processes to meet Highfield's Internal Quality Assurance standards. This approach is intended to help ensure that Centres are delivering the new qualification effectively before certificates are issued.
- 6.4.2 Should a Centre refuse to pay outstanding fees after various contacts with our Finance department, then Highfield may remove approval and/or Centre recognition with immediate effect. Such a decision would not be considered a sanction but a commercial decision.
- 6.4.3 Undertaking additional visits to a Centre to provide them with a greater level of support and/or monitoring depending on their needs and performance.
- 6.4.4 Requiring specific Centre staff to undergo additional training and/or scrutiny by the Centre if there are concerns about their ability to undertake their role in the delivery of Highfield qualifications effectively. Such decisions would normally be communicated to the Centre via an 'action' or 'recommendation' following a Centre engagement visit.

## 7. **Sanctions on an Individual**

- 7.1 Highfield reserves the right to impose a number of sanctions against individuals at any time. Ordinarily sanctions would be imposed against individuals either during or prior to conducting an investigation into maladministration or malpractice connected to a Centre with whom the individual(s) is/are connected. Sanctions against individuals may include:
  - 7.1.1 temporary or permanent withdrawal of Centre Contact status;
  - 7.1.2 temporary or permanent withdrawal of approval to deliver a specific or range of qualification(s) (in capacity of teaching or internal quality assurance);

- 7.1.3 not permitting the individual to invigilate Highfield examinations or assessments;
  - 7.1.4 altering the way, and the period in which, Centres receive examination/assessment materials from Highfield if there are concerns around their ability to maintain the security and confidentiality of such materials; and
  - 7.1.5 appointing independent invigilators to observe an exam at the Centre if there are concerns around the Centre's arrangements and/or the Centre is unable to resource particular exams. Such actions will be discussed with the Centre during or after a Centre engagement visit.
- 7.2 Centre staff may be terminated for up to 5 years if found to be deliberately involved in malpractice

## 8. **Sanctions that may be Imposed**

- 8.1 The sanction to **withhold and/or suspend the issue of certificates** (for example, suspending certification status) or preventing further registrations can be recommended by an EQS or Highfield employee in relation to:
- 8.1.1 a single qualification;
  - 8.1.2 an entire qualification sector;
  - 8.1.3 an entire qualification type; and
  - 8.1.4 all qualifications.
- 8.2 Such recommendations may be made following a Centre engagement activity undertaken at the Centre and/or following an investigation into a complaint or malpractice/maladministration investigation involving the Centre.
- 8.3 The implementation of any sanction recommended by an EQS or employee will be reviewed by the Quality Assurance Team and Head of EQS, who is responsible for overseeing the work of the EQS and for ensuring the appropriateness and consistency of their work, to ensure there is clear evidence of non-compliance by the Centre and/or a sufficient rationale for the sanction to be imposed.
- 8.4 Only in exceptional circumstances of extremely serious non-compliance or the persistent failure of the Centre to address outstanding actions, and/or the failure of previous sanctions to address the issue, would Highfield impose, via

the Quality Assurance Manager the ultimate sanction of **removal of qualification approval** in relation to:

- 8.4.1 a single qualification;
  - 8.4.2 an entire qualification sector;
  - 8.4.3 an entire qualification type; and
  - 8.4.4 all qualifications and in turn the Centre's 'recognition' with Highfield (in which case its access to the Highfield system may be deactivated).
- 8.5 Highfield expects that it would not impose the immediate withdrawal of approval for a qualification or range of qualifications without:
- 8.5.1 the Centre being given an opportunity to address the area(s) of non-compliance;
  - 8.5.2 first of all, imposing one of the previous sets of sanctions;
  - 8.5.3 there being evidence that the non-compliance poses a significant threat to the interest of learners or the integrity of the qualifications and units.
- 8.6 Should a Centre have its approval for a qualification/suite of qualifications removed, Highfield will take all reasonable steps to protect the interests of any learners currently registered on the qualification(s) in line with the details outlined in our "process for Centres withdrawing from offering our qualifications". For example, Highfield will either certificate learners for any achievements achieved to date and/or seek to transfer them – where possible and feasible – to another Centre to enable them to carry on with their learning.
- 8.7 In all instances, the nature of the sanction and the rationale for its application will be communicated in writing to the Centre via email.
- 8.8 Please note Highfield has a duty, under the Regulatory Authorities' General Conditions of Recognition and Regulatory Principles, to inform any stakeholders and/or Regulatory Bodies in relation to the application of some sanctions (for example, applied following an incident of malpractice or maladministration).

8.9 In cases where Highfield have imposed a sanction on an individual, Highfield reserves the right to inform Centres that the individual has, or may have in future, a working relationship.

8.10 If a Centre disagrees with the decision, they should raise the matter with Highfield in accordance with the arrangements outlined in our Appeals Procedure.

9. **Contact Details**

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact your Account Manager directly on 01302 363277 or email [confidentialenquires@highfield.co.uk](mailto:confidentialenquires@highfield.co.uk)

**Document control**

Version	Date	Author	Notes
V1	April 2022	Terry Bloor	
V2	October 2023	Terry Bloor	Latest review
V3	January 2024	Terry Bloor	Branding change