

Highfield

Complaints Procedure



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the Highfield Complaints Procedure and applies to Highfield Approved Centres as well as training providers and other organisations Highfield may work with for the provision of End Point Assessment services ("EPA"). For ease of reference, all hereafter, are collectively referred to as "centres".
- 1.2 This procedure applies to Highfield learners and apprentices. For ease of reference, all hereafter, are collectively referred to as "learners".
- 1.3 Highfield value all the centres delivering our qualifications and the learners who undertake them. Our aim every day is to exceed the expectations of our customers.
- 1.4 Highfield are confident of providing a high-quality service and would be extremely disappointed if this is not the case.
- 1.5 Therefore, it is important should you feel you have encountered a level of service that is below both yours and our expectations that you raise concerns you may have with us immediately so that we may address them and learn lessons.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This procedure covers complaints that learners, members of the public, tutors/assessors or centres may wish to make in relation to the qualifications and associated services offered by Highfield.
- 2.2 It is not to be used to cover appeals in relation to decisions made by Highfield. These areas are covered by the Highfield Enquiries and Appeals Procedure. Should a complaint be submitted which is in fact an enquiry or an appeal we will respond to inform the relevant party that the issue is being considered, where appropriate, in accordance our Enquiries and Appeals Procedure.
- 2.3 If you are unhappy about the way an examination or assessment was delivered and conducted and you suspect malpractice or maladministration may have occurred, you should send your concern to Highfield in accordance with the arrangements in the Highfield Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.
- 2.4 If the centre raises a complaint but then terminates its agreement with Highfield prior to the resolution of that complaint, Highfield will conclude the complaint using the evidence it has available and will not be obliged to

communicate the outcome of such complaint to the centre. Highfield will not be obliged to consider a complaint raised by the centre following the centre terminating its agreement with Highfield.

- 2.5 This procedure also covers complaints made by individuals about Highfield's handling of their personal data or its response to a request to exercise data protection rights. This includes employees, customers, learners, suppliers, website users and any other person whose personal data is processed by Highfield.

3. Centres' responsibility

- 3.1 Centres should take all responsible steps to ensure that their staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of Highfield's qualifications, and your learners, are aware of the contents of this procedure. Centres should also ensure that it has a complaint handling procedure and appeal process in place to deal with complaints from learners about the services provided by the centre.
- 3.2 If an individual is unhappy about a service or activity being delivered by a centre, they must first of all go through the centre's complaints process before bringing the matter to Highfield.

4. Data Protection complaints

- 4.1 A data protection complaint may be raised where an individual considers that Highfield has not handled their personal data in accordance with data protection law. This may include concerns about the collection, use, sharing, security, retention, accuracy or deletion of personal data, or the way in which Highfield has responded to a request to exercise data protection rights.

5. Review arrangements

- 5.1 Highfield will review the procedure and its associated procedures annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary, in response to customer, learner, or regulatory feedback (for example, to align with any appeals and complaints process established by the Regulators), changes in legislation, and any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received.

6. Investigations

6.1 In the event that Highfield receives a complaint during the course of an investigation, Highfield reserves the right to delay hearing the complaint until the outcome of the investigation is known.

6.2 If a centre terminates their agreement with Highfield prior to conclusion of an investigation, or as a result of the outcome of that investigation, the centre will not be entitled to raise a complaint in respect of such investigation or the outcome of such investigation.

7. How should I complain?

7.1 All Highfield employees have been trained to help customers and they all like to help, so you should first try to resolve any problem at the earliest opportunity by speaking with your Customer Support Officer.

7.2 If your Customer Support Officer cannot help or you wish to speak to someone else, you can ask to speak to a manager.

7.3 If this is not possible, or if you are not satisfied with the help provided, please send a written complaint, within 1 calendar month of the event you are complaining about to the contact details outlined at the end of the procedure.

7.4 Learners and/or members of the public who wish to complain about a level of service provided by the centre at which they have taken a Highfield qualification or apprenticeship should have exhausted their centre's own complaints process before bringing the complaint to Highfield. However, in exceptional circumstances (to be determined at Highfield's absolute discretion) learners can make a complaint directly to Highfield where there has been a significant breach by the centre and the learner and/or member of the public has been unable to resolve through the centre's own complaints procedure and processes.

7.5 Where Highfield determines that a complainant has persistently or vexatiously used the complaints procedure, including through the repeated submission of complaints which are found to be without reasonable foundation, we reserve the right to impose reasonable conditions on the acceptance of further complaints. Such conditions may include the payment of a reasonable contribution towards the anticipated cost of investigating any further complaint.

7.6 Any such fee will be notified in advance and will be refunded in full where the complaint is upheld. Highfield may waive the fee where the complaint raises a

potentially serious regulatory, safeguarding or malpractice concern, or where we otherwise consider it appropriate to do so.

8. If I complain, what details do I have to give?

8.1 When you contact us, please give us your full name, contact details including a daytime telephone number together with:

- 8.1.1 a full description of your complaint (including the subject matter and dates and times if known);
- 8.1.2 any names of the people you have dealt with so far; and
- 8.1.3 Any and all evidence that supports your complaint.
- 8.1.4 A form of identification or verification of authority for Data Protection complaints.

9. Complaints brought to Highfield's attention by the Qualification Regulators

9.1 Where the Qualification Regulators or other external authorities notify Highfield about failures that have been discovered in the assessment process or other activities of another awarding organisation, these will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints in accordance with the procedures below to ascertain if the same issue could affect Highfield qualifications.

10. Confidentiality and whistleblowing

10.1 Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. However, it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us. If you are concerned about possible adverse consequences, please inform us that you do not wish for us to divulge your identity. If it helps to reassure you on this point, we can confirm that we are not obliged (as recommended by the Qualification Regulators) to disclose information if to do so would be a breach of confidentiality and/or any other legal duty.

11. What will happen to my complaint?

11.1 Highfield will normally acknowledge all complaints, including data protection complaints, within 3 working days. The acknowledgement will explain the next steps, provide a point of contact and, where possible, indicate when the complainant can expect a substantive response.

- 11.2 We aim to investigate complaints within 10 working days. Where a complaint is complex or further enquiries are required, the investigation may take longer. In those circumstances, Highfield will keep the complainant informed, explain the reason for the delay and, where possible, provide an updated anticipated completion date.
- 11.3 Data protection related complaints will be acknowledged and investigated in accordance with the timeframes set out within the relevant data protection legislation.
- 11.4 Highfield may choose not to consider a complaint that has not been made within the timeframe set out above, to be determined at Highfield's absolute discretion.

12. Successful complaints and/or issues brought to our attention by the Qualification Regulators

- 12.1 If any part of your complaint is upheld Highfield will of course respond to the complainant accordingly and give due consideration to how we can improve our service and arrangements. For example, by reviewing our procedures to assess the impact on our qualification development, delivery or awarding arrangements and assessment process (if relevant) or arranging for staff training. In extreme circumstances, internal disciplinary procedures may be exercised where the performance or behaviour of our employee(s) is deemed inappropriate.
- 12.2 In situations where a complaint has been successful, or where an investigation following notification from the Qualification Regulators indicates a failure in our processes, Highfield will give due consideration to the outcome and will take appropriate actions such as:
 - 12.2.1 identify any other learner/centre or individual who has been affected by that failure;
 - 12.2.2 correct, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure;
 - 12.2.3 ensure that the failure does not recur in the future; and
 - 12.2.4 apply sanctions and actions to the relevant centre(s) if a failure has occurred in the arrangements of the centre(s).

- 12.3 Where a data protection complaint identifies a potential personal data breach, Highfield will also consider whether the matter must be managed under its personal data breach procedure and whether notification to the Information Commissioner's Office or affected individuals is required.

13. Scottish Public Service Ombudsman

- 13.1 In Scotland, if you have taken your qualification at a local authority centre or a college, you have the legal right to be able to complain to the SPSO (Scottish Public Service Ombudsman) once all other/relevant complaint processes have been followed.

14. What if I am not happy with the reply?

- 14.1 If you are still unhappy with the decision taken by Highfield in reviewing the complaint you can, where relevant (and if eligible), take the matter through our appeal arrangements which are outlined in our Enquiries and Appeals Procedure.

- 14.2 If you are not happy with an appeal decision made by Highfield, you can complain directly to the Qualification Regulators or the Information Commissioners Office. Specifically:

14.2.1 The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) as the qualification regulator for England (<https://submit.forms.service.gov.uk/form/6208/make-a-complaint/MbaJgQQx>);

14.2.2 Qualifications Wales as the qualification regulator for Wales (<https://qualifications.wales/about/contact/>);

14.2.3 Qualifications Scotland Accreditation as the as the qualification regulator for Scotland (<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/97401.html>); and

14.2.4 The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations, and Assessment (CCEA) as the qualification regulator for Northern Ireland (<https://ccea.org.uk/contact>).

14.2.5 Information Commissioners Office (<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>)

15. Contact Details

15.1 If you have any queries about the contents of the procedure, please contact your Customer Support Officer directly on 01302 363277 or email confidentialenquiries@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	Terminology/Branding change
V4	August 2025	Grace Stansfield	Latest review
V5	August 2026	Terry Bloor	V5 – August 2026 – Data protection complaints requirements incorporated following the Data (Use and Access) Act 202