



# Complaints Policy

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Department: AO



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# Complaints Policy

## Version Control

The following table presents the version control of this policy:

Version	Date	Reason for Change	Changes approved by:
POL003-V23-1	13/06/23	Updated onto new document template and wording changes relating to FutureQuals team name.	SS
POL003-V24-1	23/10/24	Updated wording around vexatious complaints.	SS

### 1. Introduction

We are committed to providing an effective and efficient service to a high standard. However, if we fall short of expectations or our own standards, we want to give the opportunity for those affected to provide feedback so we can put things right.

We encourage users of FutureQuals qualifications to contact us if they feel that any aspect of our qualifications, assessment arrangements or support materials may have discriminated users with a particular protected characteristic.

We regularly review complaints and feedback that we receive in order to learn from any errors made and to improve our service.

### 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe how FutureQuals learners, centres and other third parties can approach FutureQuals to make a complaint. Through this policy, FutureQuals ensures that all complaints are handled in an open, timely and consistent manner.

It provides information about what we will do on receipt of a complaint and the process we will undertake to resolve the complaint, identify the cause of the problem and implement any necessary mitigation or remedial action. The process for escalating a complaint to the relevant qualifications regulator is also described

### 3. Links to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- Business Continuity Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

- Sanctions Policy
- Public Interest Disclosure Policy

#### 4. Links to Ofqual Regulatory Criteria

Regulator	Regulatory rule or guidance document	Regulatory condition / principle
CCEA	General Conditions of Recognition	D4, I4
Ofqual	General Conditions of Recognition	D4, I4
Qualifications Wales	Standard Conditions of Recognition	D4, I4
SQA Accreditation	Regulatory Principles (2021)	RP16

#### 5. Definitions

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction from you about our qualifications, our standard of service, our actions or lack of action or the complaints handling process.

#### 6. Responsibilities

This policy must be followed by FutureQuals staff to ensure that complaints are managed and responded to in a professional and timely manner. Centres must ensure they make their staff aware of this policy and have in place their own policy which is accessible for learners, staff and other stake holders

#### Procedure

##### Making a Complaint

We will investigate complaints quickly, fairly, consistently, politely and, where necessary, confidentially. All complaints are allocated the appropriate resource and a response provided in the right way. For example, by giving you an explanation or an apology where we have got things wrong, and letting you know what action we've taken.

Formal complaints can be submitted in writing addressed to the AO Operations Team using the contact details below, by letter or email, or via the FutureQuals website.

Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd  
 EMP House  
 Telford Way  
 Coalville  
 Leicestershire LE67 3HE  
 Email: [ao@futurequals.com](mailto:ao@futurequals.com) | Website: [www.futurequals.com](http://www.futurequals.com)

When submitting a complaint please include the following information:

- Your name, address and contact details
- Full details of your complaint i.e., what happened, where it happened and when it happened
- Any information or evidence that supports your complaint
- The resolution you feel is warranted

As part of the FutureQuals centre approval process all centres must have an internal policy in relation to complaints and therefore if a complaint relates to a specific centre, you/your learners must exhaust the Centre's policy in the first instance. If you feel that a centre has not investigated the complaint fully or correctly, you can raise a complaint directly with FutureQuals to investigate under the terms of its agreement with the centre.

If a complaint involves an allegation of malpractice or maladministration, please refer to the FutureQuals Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

We will investigate complaints from anonymous sources only where there is sufficient detail provided to identify the issue/concern, individual or centre involved and the qualification(s) implicated in the complaint.

Future (Awards and Qualifications) Ltd is registered under the Data Protection act and handles all data in accordance with the required procedures of the Act.

### **Investigating a complaint and its outcome**

A Senior Manager or nominated deputy, will allocate a senior member of FutureQuals staff not involved in the complaint to investigate.

All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days and you will be informed of the name of the person who is investigating your complaint, and a reference number for your complaint.

If the complaint is excessively long or complex, we may ask you to provide a summary so that we are clear about what the issues are.

We aim to resolve complaints within twenty working days of the acknowledgement of your complaint, as long as the details of the complaint are clear, supporting evidence is submitted and labelled in a clear and concise manner, and you have stated the resolution you feel is warranted, should the issue be complex, we inform you if resolution is not possible within that timeframe.

If your complaint does not meet the complaint requirements, then your complaint will be rejected and closed. Should you supply the complaint requirements, the original complaint will be reopened and timelines applied from that date onward.

Once we have completed our investigation, we will provide a response that explains what went wrong, why it went wrong and what action will be taken to resolve the situation.

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive to your complaint, you can request a review of it within twenty working days of the date of our decision letter. In this circumstance, the request will be referred to the Chief Operating Officer who will either allocate a senior member of FutureQuals staff not involved in the original complaint or its response to complete the review or may undertake the review himself/herself. However, we will only conduct a review if you provide clear reasons for making your request and set out the areas of concern. Your reasons must relate only to the way that we have or have not investigated your complaint and not the details of the complaint itself.

If as a result of the complaint, we identify a failure in any of our services, policies and procedures we will take all reasonable steps to:

- Identify other learners/centres who have been affected by the failure
- Correct the failure or, where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure
- Put arrangements in place to ensure that the failure does not recur in the future
- Put arrangements in place to notify all relevant stakeholders of any changes that affect them and why

### Conflicts

Whereby the complaint is regarding any of the individuals holding the named positions above We will look to identify alternative individuals to undertake the above responsibilities.

### Vexatious complaints

Whilst we understand that making a formal complaint can, in some cases, may be raised as a result of emotive circumstances, FutureQuals staff will not engage with abusive complainants or persistent and repeated contacts from complainants. This type of contact reduces the time that FutureQuals can dedicate to carrying out investigations into complaints.

Where a complainant becomes abusive in the manner in which he/she corresponds with FutureQuals, or repeatedly contacts FutureQuals with no new evidence or information, this will be classed as vexatious behaviour.

We consider the following forms of behaviour as being vexatious: •

- A complainant being abusive or threatening, or making unreasonable demands either during a telephone conversation, face to face meeting or in written correspondence.
- A complainant repeatedly contacting FutureQuals via telephone or email in a given working day without offering new evidence or information.
- Making accusatory remarks about FutureQuals or the FutureQuals' member of staff investigating the complaint.

## Regulatory requirements

Every attempt has been made to ensure that the provisions of this document are consistent with the requirements of the regulatory authorities. Where the requirements of the regulatory authorities are amended and require changes to this document, such changes will be made as soon as practicable and FutureQuals will inform its customers accordingly.

### Regulators

If your complaint relates to a qualification regulated by Ofqual, you may complain directly to Ofqual if you have exhausted our complaints policy. The following link will provide further information on how you may do this. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual/about/complaints-procedure>

If your complaint relates to a qualification regulated by Qualifications Wales you may complain directly to Qualifications Wales if you have exhausted our complaints policy. The following link will provides further information on how you may do this. <http://qualificationswales.org/regulation/complaints/?lang=en&>

If your complaint relates to a qualification regulated by CCEA Regulation you may complain directly to CCEA Regulation if you have exhausted our complaints policy. CCEA can be contacted by email at [ccearegulation@ccea.org.uk](mailto:ccearegulation@ccea.org.uk)

### SQA Accreditation in Scotland

In Scotland, learners have the right to complain directly to the regulator, SQA Accreditation. This includes if you remain unhappy with decisions made by your centre or by further complaint to FutureQuals. Although no complaints of this nature have been escalated to SQA Accreditation following dissatisfaction with a response received from FutureQuals, all our centres should inform learners as part of its induction process (ideally documented in its induction materials), of the opportunity to submit complaints to FutureQuals and the regulator.

Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) The SPSO considers complaints about public services in Scotland which includes further education colleges, local authority centres and higher education establishments i.e. universities and SQA Accreditation. If you're complaint relates to a centre that is not a public body you cannot escalate your complaint to the SPSO. In all cases, complainants must have exhausted the complaints process of the organisation against which it wishes to make a complaint before the SPSO accept the complaint for investigation. However, if a complaint concerns the behaviour of a public service centre staff member, once the centre's complaints process has been exhausted, a complaint can be made to the SPSO without the need to escalate the complaint to FutureQuals. The SPSO cannot consider complaints about academic decisions such as the outcome of an assessment as these are considered to be an appeal. Appeals against the outcome of an assessment are dealt with by the FutureQuals Appeals Policy, which is available on our website.

## 7. Monitoring and evaluation of the policy

*(What we do, how we implement the policy, data collection, storage and sharing)*

The tools we use for implementing and monitoring policies, procedures and processes include regular meetings at operational and senior level. Each policy, procedure or process is assigned to a manager who is responsible for its successful operation, addressing any issues arising from it and evaluating its effectiveness in meeting its purpose. This forms part of the controls that guide our business to ensure compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

Data required in support of a policy, procedure or process is held in line with the FutureQuals Data Protection Policy (Privacy Standard) based on GDPR best practice. All policies are subject to document control to meet the ISO9001 standard.

Policies are stored on Share Point. Additionally, in line with our Business Continuity Plan, a hard copy of every policy is held in the Executive Office, should IT systems fail. It is the responsibility of the Executive Office Manager to ensure that the latest version of a policy (or procedure/process) is available in hard copy.

### Review

This policy shall be reviewed by the Chief Operating Officer not less than annually and presented to the Executive Team (or Advisory Board) for approval. Additional reviews may be undertaken as a result of legislative, regulatory, including qualification regulators, or custom and practice changes.





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