

COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

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1. Policy Statement

The organisation is committed to providing high-quality education, training, and support. We welcome compliments, comments, and complaints as opportunities to:

- celebrate excellent practice
- learn from feedback
- improve services
- resolve concerns quickly and fairly

We aim to handle all feedback in a transparent, timely, and accessible manner.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Learners
- Parents/carers (where appropriate)
- Employers and partners
- Members of the public
- Staff and volunteers

It covers all aspects of the provision, including teaching, support services, facilities, safeguarding, and subcontracted provision.

3. Definitions and Academic Exclusions

Compliment: Positive feedback recognising good service, support, or performance.

Comment: General feedback or suggestions for improvement.

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction about the organisation's actions, service, or staff, where a response or resolution is expected.

MANDATORY EXCLUSION CLAUSE (NCFE/JCQ): This policy strictly governs non-academic operational complaints. Any concerns, disputes, or appeals regarding official academic marks, portfolio assessments, examination grading, or internal/external quality assurance decisions **MUST NOT** be processed under this procedure. All academic assessment disputes must be immediately redirected to the standalone **Qualifications Appeals Policy** in accordance with awarding body criteria.

4. Principles

We commit to:

- Accessibility – everyone can provide feedback easily
- Fairness – complaints handled impartially
- Confidentiality – information shared only with those who need to know
- Timeliness – clear response times
- Resolution – focus on solutions and improvement
- No detriment – learners will not be disadvantaged for raising concerns

5. Compliments Procedure

Learners and stakeholders can submit compliments:

- verbally to staff
- via email
- through the website
- through surveys or learner voice activities

Compliments will be acknowledged, shared with relevant staff, and recorded for quality improvement.

6. Complaints Procedure (Step-by-Step)

The organisation follows a robust internal three-stage process prior to any external escalation options:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- Used for: most concerns, issues that can be resolved quickly.
- Actions: Raise the concern directly with the relevant member of staff, tutor, or line manager. Staff aim to resolve the issue within **5 working days**. A restorative conversation may be offered.
- Outcome: Issue resolved informally wherever possible.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

- Submission: If unresolved informally, file in writing (via email or formal complaints form) or by phone with written confirmation. Complainants should include comprehensive timelines, dates, people involved, relevant evidence, and a clear desired outcome.
- Actions: Acknowledgement will occur within **3 working days**. An objective investigation will be handled by an appropriate Director. Actions: Reviewed by a senior leader or independent Director not previously involved in the case.
- Outcome: Full written resolution provided within **15 working days** detailing whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld, alongside service improvement outcomes.

Stage 3 – Internal Appeal

- Submission: File an appeal within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 outcome on grounds of procedural non-compliance, new material evidence, or an unreasonable verdict.
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- Outcome: Final internal response issued within **15 working days**. This concludes the internal organizational procedures.

7. External Escalation & Awarding Body Adjudication

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after fully exhausting all three internal stages of this policy, they have the right to escalate the matter externally based on the nature of the provision:

A. NCFE Regulated Qualifications and Delivery:

- Complainants can formally escalate their grievances directly to **NCFE** if the complaint relates directly to the delivery, quality standard, or administration of an NCFE qualification framework.
- Contact Pathway: Submissions must be logged using the official customer complaints protocols accessible on the **NCFE Customer Support Portal** (www.ncfe.org.uk) or via telephone (0191 239 8000).

B. Regulatory Oversight (Ofqual):

- Should the complainant feel that NCFE has not handled the escalated complaint appropriately, the matter can be further escalated to the statutory qualifications regulator, **Ofqual** (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation).

C. Funding and Local Authority Adjustments:

- For relevant local authority funded provisions and associated care pathways, learners may contact **North Yorkshire County Council** for independent review.

8. Safeguarding, Prevent, and Malpractice Fast-Track

Any complaint uncovering underlying elements or explicit allegations involving the following metrics must bypass the standard informal resolution phases and be transferred directly to specialized corporate leads:

- Safeguarding or child protection concerns (Immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead - DSL)
- Radicalisation, extremism, or Prevent duty alerts
- Criminal activity or severe breaches of legislation
- **Suspected Malpractice or Maladministration:** If the complaint uncovers evidence of internal assessment tampering, widespread plagiarism, or examination manipulation, the case will instantly transfer to the **Malpractice Policy**. The centre will log a mandatory notification with the NCFE Provider Assurance Team.

Statutory safeguarding and regulatory reporting protocols take total precedence over standard complaints resolution timelines.

9. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be evaluated and logged where possible to preserve organizational safety. However, anonymity may significantly limit the center's capacity to investigate facts thoroughly or deliver formal outcome communications.

10. Vexatious or Malicious Complaints

The organisation reserves the right to terminate investigations into complaints that a Director determines to be malicious, explicitly repetitive, abusive, or raised completely without valid grounds. This determination will be documented transparently.

11. Monitoring and Quality Improvement

We systematically monitor and track:

- The raw volume and categorized type of incoming complaints
- Adherence to milestone response times
- Resolution rates, operational trends, and systemic themes

Anonymized tracking analytics directly inform the center's annual Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and continuing professional staff development tracks.

12. Data Protection and Mandatory Record Retention

All personal documentation and correspondence collected throughout a compliment, comment, or complaint lifecycle will be managed in strict accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and internal information security rules.

AWARDING BODY RETENTION MANDATE: To comply fully with NCFE center approval criteria and regulatory monitoring checks, a complete, highly structured electronic audit trail of all formal complaints, investigatory witness notes, panel judgments, and resolution sign-offs must be securely archived and maintained for a minimum period of **3 years (36 months)** from the formal closure date of the case file.