

GUIDANCE

Ofqual complaints procedure

How to make a complaint about an exam board,
awarding organisation or qualification
regulated by Ofqual

ofqual

Contents

Complaints we can deal with	3
Checklist before complaining to Ofqual.....	3
Make a complaint	5
Checklist for your complaint	5
Complaints outside the 12-month time limit	5
Register a complaint.....	6
What to expect.....	7
Rejected complaints.....	7
The investigation	7
Possible outcomes	8
What to do if you are not happy with the outcome.....	9
Privacy statement.....	10
Complaints about Ofqual.....	10

Complaints we can deal with

Ofqual views a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about an organisation or qualification we regulate. We want all users of regulated qualifications to receive a good service and to have things put right when they go wrong.

Your first step in trying to resolve your issue should be to complain to the organisation you are dissatisfied with, to give them an opportunity to rectify the issue. You can find details of organisations and qualifications that we regulate on the [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#).

We expect you to have complained to the organisation you are dissatisfied with, and given them an opportunity to rectify the issue, before complaining to Ofqual.

Checklist before complaining to Ofqual





We would usually expect you to have completed the awarding organisation's complaints process, before complaining to Ofqual.

You can complain to Ofqual if:

- ✓ you are complaining within 12 months of the issue arising
- ✓ the awarding organisation or qualification are regulated by Ofqual – check on the [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#)
- ✓ the complaint is about:
 - an awarding organisation not complying with our regulations
 - the awarding of a regulated qualification
 - an issue that could undermine public confidence in regulated qualifications

You cannot complain to Ofqual if:

- ✗ you are complaining about an issue that we have already fully investigated using this procedure
- ✗ you are unhappy with your grade and the qualification has its own appeals procedure (for instance, [GCSEs and A levels have their own process](#))
- ✗ the complaint is about a school, college or training provider, or about the quality of teaching or training – you should complain directly to the school or college
- ✗ the matter is, or has been, the subject of legal or on-going regulatory action, or potential action'

-  We do not have the power to change grades awarded. These can only be changed by the relevant awarding organisation.
-  If you are seeking financial compensation, you may wish to seek independent legal advice. Ofqual is unable to award compensation and cannot provide this outcome.

If the matter appears to us to be urgent or in the wider public interest, for example, we may choose to look at a complaint before the awarding organisation's final decision.

Examples of the types of complaint we can look into include:

- customer service issues, such as how the awarding organisation has handled your complaint
- concerns that an awarding organisation has not followed its procedures properly
- concerns that an awarding organisation is in breach of [Ofqual's rules](#)

Make a complaint

Checklist for your complaint

Make sure you have the following information before registering your complaint:

- name of the awarding organisation you are complaining about
- details of the qualification and subject your complaint refers to
- dates of when you complained to the awarding organisation
- a copy of any final letter confirming you have completed the awarding organisation's complaints procedure
- details of what you think the awarding organisation did wrong and how it has affected you – please provide a clear explanation of what happened and when
- what you think the awarding organisation should do to put things right
- your details (name, address, email address and phone number)

If you have any documents to support your complaint, please include copies. Please do not send original documents. We will store any information you send us securely.

Complaints outside the 12-month time limit

Usually we will only consider your complaint if it is within 12 months of the issue arising. In some circumstances, we may still be able to investigate even if you complain outside of this period, for example, because of:

- ill health
- a delay on the part of the awarding organisation

We will look at how much time has passed, and consider:

- whether it is still possible for us to carry out an investigation
- what is fair to all parties in the circumstances

Register a complaint

The quickest and easiest way to register a complaint is through our complaints portal. If you are unable to access the complaints portal, you should contact our public enquiries team who will be able to assist in registering your complaint. We will document your complaint and then write to you to confirm our understanding of your complaint.

Use our complaints portal to tell us about your concerns and send us information securely.

Start now >

Telephone number for assisted complaints: 0300 303 3344

Please see our website for phone line opening times. To ensure Ofqual deals with all complaints equally and fairly, all complaints sent to other sections of Ofqual, including the Chief Regulator or board members, will be forwarded to the complaints investigation team for action under this policy.

What to expect

We take all complaints seriously, and if you complain to us you will be told whether we are able to look into your complaint.

We will:

- send you an acknowledgement within 3 working days, usually by email, but this may be by post or another method
- within another 10 working days we will let you know whether we can investigate your complaint or not
- if we can investigate, we will write to you to summarise our understanding of your complaint
- give you the opportunity to clarify elements of your complaint
- if we need more information from you, we will write to you with details of what we need

Rejected complaints

If we are unable to consider your complaint we will:

- explain to you why we cannot review your complaint
- suggest a relevant organisation who may be able to help you, if we can
- advise you of the next steps should you believe we have made the wrong decision

The investigation

We assess each case on its own merits. We will investigate to find out if it appears that the awarding organisation has failed to follow its procedures or is in breach of our rules. The investigation will not make a final decision as to whether non-compliance has taken place.

As part of our complaint investigation, we will:

- usually contact the awarding organisation to make enquiries and request copies of any relevant documentation
- review all relevant information and consider it in relation to [our rules](#)
- give you and the awarding organisation the opportunity to clarify elements of the complaint

When we believe we have enough information to make a fair decision, we will share a provisional decision with you and the awarding organisation. You and the awarding organisation will be able to provide comments at this point.

We will write to you to confirm the outcome when our investigation is complete and after considering any comments we receive.

Where we can, we will explain what information we have relied on to make our decision. Sometimes we receive confidential or sensitive personal information which we cannot share with you. We will let you know if this is the case.

We aim to complete most cases within 40 working days. Some cases can be more complex and may take longer for us to make a fair decision. If we expect your investigation to take longer, we will keep you informed of our progress at least every 30 working days.

Possible outcomes

If we are satisfied that the awarding organisation has met our requirements we will close the complaint. For example., this may happen where:

- we believe the organisation acted correctly in the first place, followed its procedures correctly and has not breached our rules
- the awarding organisation made mistakes but we believe they have already done what we would expect to put things right for those affected

We may ask an awarding organisation to assure us about the course of action they will take. If we do not get appropriate assurances, we will refer your complaint to the relevant team in Ofqual, and they will consider whether any further action is appropriate. We may do this where:

- the awarding organisation made mistakes or provided a poor service
- the awarding organisation's actions have had a negative impact which has not yet been put right

Whether we decide to take action or not, we will write to let you know the outcome.

Where appropriate, we may appoint an independent party to investigate a complaint.

What to do if you are not happy with the outcome

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, you can request an internal review. An internal review is when somebody who hasn't been involved in your case reviews how we handled your complaint. You should submit this request within 10 working days of the date of our outcome letter. Details of how to request an internal review will be included in your outcome letter. You should provide evidence to support your request.

In order for us to consider reviewing your case, you will need to clearly demonstrate one of the following:

1. We reached the outcome based on inaccurate facts, and if we had accurate facts that could change our decision.
2. You have new and relevant information that was not previously available and which might change the outcome.
3. We overlooked or misunderstood parts of your complaint or did not take account of relevant information, which could change the outcome.
4. How the decision or outcome is not reasonable given the findings of your complaint.

You will also need to explain:

- what you think we have got wrong with our complaint investigation
- how you think it should be rectified

We will tell you if your request meets the criteria above. If it does not meet the criteria, we will write to you and tell you why not.

If your request is accepted, a senior member of staff, who was not involved in conducting the original investigation, will carry out the internal review. We aim to complete an internal review within 30 working days after accepting your request. We will let you know if it is likely to take longer. The review will consider whether:

- the investigation was thorough and fair
- all relevant facts were taken into account
- the conclusions and decision reached were reasonable and properly explained

Following the outcome of the internal review, we may reconsider any issues upheld by the review. In some cases, we may decide to fully re-investigate the complaint.

You will receive the outcome of our review in writing. Unless we decide to fully re-investigate your complaint, the decision of the internal review is final and represents the end of our complaints process.

If you think that the outcome of the internal review is wrong or if you do not agree with our decision not to conduct an internal review, you can [contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman](#). The ombudsman carries out independent investigations into complaints about public bodies.

Privacy statement

It is necessary for us to collect and hold personal information about you to investigate and administer your complaint. If you make a complaint to Ofqual, we will hold the information you provide to us securely and use it to help us to handle and process your complaint. For more information see our [complaints privacy notice](#).

Complaints about Ofqual

If you wish to make a complaint about Ofqual, details on how to do this can be found in [Complaints about Ofqual](#).



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