



SQA Accreditation: Regulatory Complaints Handling Procedure

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SQA is committed to using plain English. We will try to make our publications as easy and straightforward to understand as we can and will try to avoid all unnecessary jargon. If there's any language in this document that you feel is hard to understand, or could be improved, please write to Editor at the Glasgow address or email: editor@sqa.org.uk.

Contents

SQA Accreditation: Regulatory Complaints Handling Procedure	1
What is a regulatory complaint?	1
What can I complain about?	2
What can't I complain about?	2
Who can make a regulatory complaint?	3
How do I make a regulatory complaint?	3
How long do I have to make a regulatory complaint?	3
What happens when I have complained?	4
Stage 1 — Frontline resolution	4
Stage 2 — Investigation	4
Conclusion	5
Getting help to make your regulatory complaint	5
Our contact details	6
Quick guide to our Regulatory Complaints Handling Procedure	7
Document control and revision history	8

SQA Accreditation: Regulatory Complaints Handling Procedure

Under Scottish Government legislation, SQA Accreditation quality assures qualifications offered by approved awarding bodies and accredits their qualifications. We do this by regulating awarding bodies and their qualifications against published regulatory requirements.

This includes ensuring that the awarding body and its providers have open and transparent systems to manage complaints and appeals.

SQA Accreditation is committed to ensuring high standards of quality to maintain the integrity of its accredited qualifications and to ensure that all awarding bodies remain compliant with SQA Accreditation regulatory requirements.

This will include assessing how awarding bodies deal with complaints and appeals made to themselves and to their providers who are approved to deliver accredited qualifications.

Where an individual or an organisation has a regulatory complaint about an awarding body, or its providers, we will carry out appropriate enquiries to ensure the awarding body and its providers are delivering services in line with its policies and procedures and that they meet the requirements of the Regulatory Principles and associated policies.

SQA Accreditation will only consider regulatory complaints about awarding bodies approved by us and/or qualifications accredited by us.

Normally we would expect the regulatory complainant to have exhausted the awarding body's complaints process before complaining to us.

However, we do reserve the right to investigate a regulatory complaint at any time.

It is also important to note that SQA Accreditation cannot overturn an academic decision.

What is a regulatory complaint?

We define a regulatory complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about an awarding body or its provider's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- ◆ a failure to provide a service
- ◆ an inadequate quality of standard of service
- ◆ a request for a service or for information which has not been actioned or answered
- ◆ the expression of a view that a policy or process is inappropriate — a regulatory complaint may be made around how a policy or process was applied in practice
- ◆ providing incorrect information about accredited qualifications
- ◆ the quality and availability of facilities and learning resources
- ◆ a decision regarding provider approval made by the awarding body
- ◆ a decision regarding a specific award approval
- ◆ a decision to de-approve a specific award
- ◆ an external verification decision

What can't I complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our Regulatory Complaints Handling Procedure. These include:

- ◆ a request for clarification or information about an awarding body's or provider's policy or process
- ◆ an attempt to re-open a previously concluded regulatory complaint or to have a regulatory complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
- ◆ an expression of dissatisfaction with a process for which another party is fully responsible, for instance staffing issues within a provider
- ◆ a request to overturn an academic judgement
- ◆ the behaviour of a member of staff or contractor
- ◆ a student's behaviour
- ◆ issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or tribunal (if you decide to take legal action, you should let us know as the complaint cannot then be considered under this process)
- ◆ disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector
- ◆ a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts

Who can make a regulatory complaint?

Anyone can make a regulatory complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with the service of an awarding body/provider.

How do I make a regulatory complaint?

You can complain in person at SQA Accreditation, The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ, or by phone, in writing, by email or by using our online complaints form which can be found at:

[accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/About_Us/Complaint](https://www.accreditation.sqa.org.uk/accreditation/About_Us/Complaint)

As part of SQA's Gaelic Language Plan, complaints can also be submitted in Gaelic and we will reply to you in Gaelic.

It is easier for us to resolve regulatory complaints if you make them quickly and directly about the service concerned. So, please talk to a member of our staff about the service you are complaining about.

When complaining, tell us:

- ◆ your full name and address
- ◆ as much as you can about the complaint
- ◆ what has gone wrong
- ◆ how you want us to resolve the matter

Our contact details are:

SQA Accreditation
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow
G2 8DQ

Telephone: 0345 213 5249

(At the time of publication, this number is not currently staffed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

Website: [accreditation.sqa.org.uk](https://www.accreditation.sqa.org.uk)

email: accreditation@sqa.org.uk

How long do I have to make a regulatory complaint?

Normally, you must make your regulatory complaint within six months of:

- ◆ the event you want to complain about, or
- ◆ finding out that you have a reason to complain

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a regulatory complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your regulatory complaint.

Our regulatory complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage 1 — Frontline resolution

We aim to resolve regulatory complaints quickly, where appropriate, and to provide an explanation to the complainant of what action, if any, SQA Accreditation can take to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Please note that if a complaint is received after 5pm or on a weekend or a public holiday, we will treat it as being logged on the next working day.

If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next. If you choose to, you can take your regulatory complaint to stage 2. You must normally ask us to consider your regulatory complaint at stage 2 either:

- ◆ within six months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain; or
- ◆ within two months of receiving your stage 1 response (if this is later)

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a stage 2 regulatory complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your regulatory complaint, please tell us why.

Stage 2 — Investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of regulatory complaint: where the complainant remains dissatisfied after stage 1 and those that clearly require investigation, and so are handled directly at this stage. If you do not wish your regulatory complaint to be handled at stage 1, you can ask us to handle it at stage 2 instead.

When using stage 2 we will:

- ◆ acknowledge receipt of your regulatory complaint within three working days
- ◆ confirm our understanding of the regulatory complaint we will investigate and what outcome you are looking for
- ◆ try to resolve your regulatory complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as

mediation); and where we cannot resolve your regulatory complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days

If we anticipate that our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will also indicate our revised time limits and keep you updated on progress.

Conclusion

After we have fully investigated your regulatory complaint, we will issue the final decision of SQA Accreditation. There is no right of appeal to this decision.

Although there is no right of appeal to our decision, you may make a complaint to us if:

- ◆ we delayed in responding to your enquiries and requests
- ◆ we failed to provide a service
- ◆ our standard of service was poor
- ◆ your treatment by us or the attitude of a member of staff was not up to standard
- ◆ we failed to follow proper procedure

If we did not meet the above standards then you can make a complaint using our [Complaints Handling Procedure](#). Please note that if you do make a complaint about us that we will not address or revisit your original regulatory complaint.

Getting help to make your regulatory complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a regulatory complaint yourself. We accept regulatory complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with the service of an awarding body or one of its providers. We can take regulatory complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: 0131 510 9410

Website: siaa.org.uk

You can find out about advisers in your area through Citizens Advice Scotland:

Citizens Advice Scotland

Website: cas.org.uk or check your phone book for your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, tell us in person, contact us on 0345 213 5249 or email us at accreditation@sqa.org.uk.

Our contact details

SQA Accreditation's contact details are:

SQA Accreditation
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow
G2 8DQ

Telephone: 0345 213 5249
Website: accreditation.sqa.org.uk
email: accreditation@sqa.org.uk

We can also give you this information in other languages and formats (such as large print, audio and Braille).

Quick guide to our Regulatory Complaints Handling Procedure

Regulatory complaints procedure

You can make your regulatory complaint in person, by phone, by email or in writing.

We have a **two-stage regulatory complaints procedure**. We will always try to deal with your regulatory complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage 1: Frontline resolution

We will always try to resolve your regulatory complaint quickly, within **five working days** if we can.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your regulatory complaint at stage 2.

Stage 2: investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at stage 1. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they need investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **three working days**.

We will confirm the points of complaint to be investigated and what you want to achieve.

We will investigate the complaint and give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than **20 working days** unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

Document control and revision history

Version	Date	Author	Amendment Details
V2	22/1/2019	George Brown	Text amended to make it clear that SQA Accreditation can only deal with complaints about approved awarding bodies and accredited qualifications. In addition, that SQA Accreditation reserves the right to consider complaints in situations where the complainant may not have exhausted the awarding body's complaints process.
V3	22/6/2021	George Brown	Refresh of document including removal of reference to SPSO, which is only applicable to complaints about SQA Accreditation.