

Cotswold Assessments

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Aim: This procedure describes how complaints and appeals are processed and how the associated responsibilities are allocated.

Procedure:

1. Policy statement:
 - 1.1 It is Cotswold Assessments policy that appeals against assessment decisions will be treated both fairly and openly.
 - 1.2 Cotswold Assessments acknowledges the right of any candidate who has applied for assessment, to challenge the outcomes of their assessment if they consider that it has not been carried out correctly.

2. Sources and Circumstances of Complaints or Appeals:

The possible sources and circumstances of complaints and appeals are as follows:

- 2.1 Assessors – relating to verification/quality assurance or administrative issues.
- 2.2 Candidates or their employers relating to:
 - (i) registrations/ quality assurance/ certification issues
 - (ii) the conduct of the assessment
 - (iii) Availability of adequate assessment opportunities in which to demonstrate competence, and to equal opportunities and access issues.
 - (iv) performance and knowledge evidence when set against Cotswold Assessments assessment criteria as specified within the qualification.

3. Responsibilities:

- 3.1 Cotswold Assessments will make all candidates aware of their right to appeal against decisions made by assessors or to raise a complaint about aspects of the performance of Cotswold Assessments.
- 3.2 Cotswold Assessments will make the Complaints and Appeals Summary and Notification Form available to all candidates upon request.
- 3.3 Cotswold Assessments will aim to resolve complaints or appeals through the administration team initially in accordance with this policy. This does not preclude candidates from taking their dispute or appeal further if they are dissatisfied with the initial outcome. Cotswold Assessments would then appoint an independent investigator to look into the concern and to recommend a course of action to resolve the dispute.

- 3.4 Only written complaints and appeals will be processed in accordance with this procedure. The candidate will be supplied with the 'Complaints and Appeals Notification Form' and asked to return this to Cotswold Assessments as soon as possible.
- 3.5 The administrator logs the initiation and progress of the dispute or appeal on the 'Complaints and Appeals Progress Form'.
- 3.6 The administrator if necessary, will (within 15 working days of receipt) appoint an appropriate Investigating Officer.
- 3.7 Cotswold Assessments is responsible for payment of the Investigating Officer.
- 3.8 The administrator will contact the plaintiff with the result and where necessary is responsible for negotiating resolution of complaints and appeals with the plaintiff and for signing off the 'Complaints and Appeals Progress Log'.

4. Process:

- 4.1 Written complaints and appeals are always acknowledged to the plaintiff without any prior judgement being made as to who may be in the wrong, and advised to the Assessor, Verifier or other interested parties as relevant.
- 4.2 Having first consulted any other interested/involved parties, the administrator will seek such further clarification from the plaintiff as may be necessary to proceed.
- 4.3 The Assessor/Verifier or other party against whom the complaint or appeal has been made is notified of the fact in writing and requested to respond in writing with their views so that a judgement can be made.
- 4.4 The outcome of any action to be taken is advised to the Assessor/Verifier and any other involved party and agreed before further contact is made with the plaintiff.
- 4.5 If necessary a suitable person may be appointed by the administrator (within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint or appeal) to investigate the issue and if necessary to produce a detailed written report and return to Cotswold Assessments within 15 working days of appointment (30 working days of receipt of the complaint or appeal).
- 4.6 The Investigating Officer is likely to be a Verifier with experience of quality assuring certificate of competence assessments and no prior involvement with the plaintiff.
- 4.7 Once the report has been received by the administrator the decision of Cotswold Assessments will be formulated and will be sent in writing to the plaintiff within 55 working days of the original complaint or appeal being received by Cotswold Assessments.
- 4.8 All plaintiffs, if not satisfied with the decision of Cotswold Assessments, have the right of appeal where Cotswold Assessments will appoint a neutral independent investigator to look into the complaint.

5. Periodic Review of Complaints and Appeals

- 5.1 The aim is to enable Cotswold Assessments to identify the root causes of avoidable/persistent areas of dispute or causes of appeal. This will allow the Centre to plan measures to reduce or eliminate these problems in the future and to save costs and anxiety arising from complaints and appeals.
- 5.2 All disputes and appeals received during the previous year will be reviewed by the Directors at Board Meetings.
- 5.3 A record will be kept of the review and findings and of any actions that can be taken to improve systems, operations or customer experience.

6. Retention of Records:

- 6.1 All relevant records are retained in the 'Complaints and Appeals File' for not less than three years from the date the dispute was received.

7. Cost of Complaints and Appeals:

- 7.1 There may be a charge for processing complaints or appeals by candidates.

8. Responsibilities:

- 8.1 Cotswold Assessments' Admin team is responsible for handling all complaints and appeals.
They are also responsible for appointing investigators.
- 8.2 The Admin team manager is responsible for reporting statistics, anomalies and any other relevant information relating to complaints and appeals to the Board of Directors.