

Complaints Policy

Introduction

This document sets out our complaints policy and procedure and is intended for our centres, learners and all interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from VetSkill.

We value the centres delivering our qualifications and the learners who undertake them. Accordingly, our aim is to provide them with excellence of service and to address lapses in our service delivery promptly and effectively.

Should you feel you have encountered a level of service that is below both your and our expectations, please raise any concerns you may have with us immediately so that we may address them and use your experience to improve our systems and/or approach.

Scope

This policy covers complaints from learners, centres or members of the public in relation to the qualifications and associated services offered by VetSkill.

It is not to be used to cover appeals in relation to decisions made by VetSkill. These areas are covered by our Appeals Policy. Should a complaint be submitted which is in fact an assessment enquiry or an appeal, we will inform the relevant party that the issue is being considered, where appropriate, in accordance with the approach outlined in our Customer Service Statement or Appeals policy.

If you are unhappy about the way an examination or assessment was delivered and conducted and suspect malpractice or maladministration may have occurred, you should send your concern to us in accordance with the arrangements in our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

Centre's responsibility

As a VetSkill centre, you should take all responsible steps to ensure that staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications, and learners, are aware of the contents of this policy. Your centre must have a complaints handling procedure and appeals process in place to deal with complaints from learners about the services they receive from your centre. Where an individual is dissatisfied with a service or activity being delivered by a centre, s/he must first of all go through the centre's complaints process before bringing the matter to VetSkill's attention.

Review arrangements

We will review the policy and its associated procedures annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer, learner or regulatory feedback (e.g. to align with any appeals and complaints process established by the regulators) and any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received.

If you would like to provide us with feedback, please contact us via the details provided at below.

How should I complain?

Most complaints arise from simple misunderstandings. All of our staff have been trained to help our customers, so you should first try to sort out any problem at the earliest opportunity by speaking to the person who dealt with you. If they cannot help or you wish to speak to someone else, you can ask to speak to our Standards Manager. If this is not possible, or if you are not satisfied with the help provided by the Standards Manager, please send a written complaint, normally within one month of the event you are complaining about, and address it to us at the contact details outlined at the end of policy.

Learners and/or members of the public who wish to complain about a level of service provided by a centre (college or training provider) at which they have taken a VetSkill qualification should have exhausted their centre's own complaints process before bringing the complaint to us. However, in exceptional circumstances, learners can make the complaint directly to us. This should only occur where a learner feels there was a significant breach by the centre of our various procedures.

If I complain what details do I have to give?

When you contact us, please give us your full name, contact details including a daytime telephone number along with:

- a full description of your complaint (including the subject matter and dates and times if known);
- any names of the people you have dealt with so far;
- copies of any papers or letters to do with the complaint

A complaints form is available for individuals to complete and submit to VetSkill. Please access this via our website: www.vetskill.com or alternatively request from priority@vetskill.com.

We treat all complaints sensitively, however if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences please inform us that you do not wish for us to divulge your identity during our investigations. You must, however, give us your name and contact details; we cannot investigate anonymous complaints.

Complaints brought to our attention by the regulators

Where the regulators notify us about failures that have been discovered in the assessment process or other activities of another awarding organisation, these will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints in accordance with the procedures below to ascertain if the same issue could affect VetSkill qualifications.

What will happen to my complaint?

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 48 hours, letting you know who is investigating your complaint.

Our Standards Manager will be responsible for ensuring the investigation is carried out in a prompt and effective manner and in accordance with the procedures in this policy. S/he will allocate a relevant member of staff to lead the investigation and establish whether or not issue relating to the complaint has occurred.

At all times we will ensure that VetSkill personnel assigned to the investigation have the appropriate level of training and competence and that they have had no previous involvement or personal interest in the matter. If the Standards Manager has an involvement in the complaint matter they will not be responsible for allocating a member of staff to carry out the investigation or for overseeing and managing the investigation.

We aim to investigate the complaint within 10 working days. If your complaint is more complex, or involves people who are not available at the time, we may extend this to 20 working days. We may contact you within this period to seek further information or clarification (in some instances we may recommend a meeting). At the end of the investigation we shall write/email to inform you of our decision.

Successful complaints and/or issues brought to our attention by Ofqual and/or other regulators

If any part of your complaint is upheld we will respond accordingly and give due consideration to how we can improve our service and arrangements. For example, by reviewing our procedures to assess the impact on our qualification development, delivery or awarding arrangements and assessment process (if relevant) or arranging for staff training. In extreme circumstances, internal disciplinary procedures may be exercised where the performance or behavior of our staff is deemed at serious fault.

In situations where a complaint has been successful, or where an investigation following notification from the regulators indicates a failure in our processes, we will give due consideration to the outcome and will take appropriate actions such as:

- identify any other learner and/or centre who has been affected by that failure
- correct, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure, and
- review and amend our arrangements, where appropriate, to reduce the likelihood that a similar failure will reoccur in the future.
- start internal disciplinary procedures against a member of our staff if we found their behaviour was seriously at variance with our internal procedures and arrangements

What if I am not happy with the reply?

If you disagree with the decision the first point of contact is the Standards Manager.

If you remain unhappy with our decision following investigation of your complaint you can, where relevant, take the matter through our appeal arrangements, outlined in our Appeals Policy. If, after you have exhausted our appeals arrangements, you are still unsatisfied with the outcomes, you can complain/appeal directly to the relevant regulatory authority for the qualification (e.g. Ofqual in England)

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our Standards Manager on 01480 278584 or email them at priority@vetskill.com