



Defence Awarding
Organisation



Complaints Policy

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Recognising Quality and Competence:

Supporting Defence with accreditation and specialist bespoke qualification opportunities

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Introduction

1. This document sets out our Complaints policy and procedure and is aimed at our Awarding Centres, DAO Learners and all interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from the DAO.
2. The DAO values all the Awarding Centres delivering DAO qualifications and the DAO Learners who undertake them. The DAO aims every day to exceed the expectations of our customers. The DAO are confident of providing a high-quality service and would be extremely disappointed if this was not the case.
3. Therefore, it is important that should Awarding Centres feel they have encountered a level of service that is below expectations that they raise any concerns they may have with the DAO immediately, so that the DAO may address them and learn lessons.

Scope

4. This Complaints policy covers DAO Learners, members of the public or Awarding Centres that may wish to make a complaint in relation to DAO qualifications and associated services offered by the DAO.
5. This policy is not to be used to cover appeals in relation to decisions made by the DAO. These and other areas are covered by our Appeals Policy. Should a complaint be submitted which is in fact an enquiry or an appeal, the DAO will respond to inform the relevant party that the issue is being considered, where appropriate, in accordance with the approach outlined in our Appeals policy.
6. If a DAO Learner is unhappy about the way an assessment was delivered and conducted and they or the Awarding Centre suspect Malpractice or Maladministration may have occurred, the Awarding Centre should send concerns to the DAO in accordance with the arrangements in the DAO Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

Awarding Centre's Responsibility

7. Awarding Centres should take all responsible steps to ensure that Awarding Centre staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of DAO qualifications, and DAO Learners, are aware of the contents of this policy and that the Awarding Centre has a complaints handling procedure and process in place to deal with complaints from DAO Learners about the services Awarding Centres provide¹. If an individual is unhappy about a service or activity being delivered by an Awarding Centre, they must firstly go through the Awarding Centre's complaints process before bringing the matter to the DAO.

Review Arrangements

8. The DAO will review the policy and its associated procedures annually as part of the DAO self-evaluation arrangements, and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer, DAO Learner or Regulatory feedback (e.g. to align with any appeals and

¹ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: C2.3\(l\)](#)

complaints process established by the Regulator(s)) and any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received².

9. If you would like to provide feedback about the policy, please contact us using the details provided at the end of this policy.

How should a Complaint be made?

10. All DAO staff have been trained to help DAO customers. Complaints should, where possible, be directed to the Awarding Centre in the first instance. Alternatively, Awarding Centres can raise and/or submit a complaint form found in the DAO Qualification Management System (QMS) at the earliest opportunity and as close to the incident date as possible (complaints received 30 days after the event will not be considered).
11. Non-users of the DAO QMS can send a written complaint, normally within one month of the event, and address it to the DAO Compliance Manager at the contact details provided at the end of this policy.
12. DAO Learners and/or members of the public who wish to complain about a level of service provided by the Awarding Centre at which they have taken a DAO qualification should have exhausted the Awarding Centre's own complaints process before bringing the complaint to DAO. However, DAO Learners can make a complaint directly to the DAO in exceptional circumstances where they feel there was a significant breach by the Awarding Centre of various DAO procedures (contact details provided at the end of this policy).

What details are required?

13. When contacting the DAO, please give your full name, contact details, including a daytime telephone number, along with:
 - a. a full description of your complaint (including the subject matter and dates and times if known);
 - b. any names of the people you have dealt with so far;
 - c. copies of any papers, letters or emails to do with the complaint.
14. Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. However, it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to the DAO, and if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences, please inform the DAO that you do not wish for us to divulge your identity.
15. While the DAO are prepared to investigate issues which are reported anonymously the DAO shall always try to confirm an allegation by means of a separate investigation before taking up the matter with those the complaint/allegation relates.

Complaints brought to the DAO's attention by the regulators

16. Where the regulators notify us about failures that have been discovered in the assessment process or activities of another Awarding Organisation, these will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints, in accordance with the procedure below, to ascertain if the same issue could affect DAO qualifications³.

² This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: I2.1](#)

³ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: I2.4](#)

What is the process for a complaint?

17. The DAO will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within **5 working days** and let you know who is investigating your complaint.
18. The DAO Compliance 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. They will allocate a relevant member of the DAO staff to lead the investigation and establish if the issue relating to the complaint has occurred⁴.
19. At all times the DAO will ensure that DAO personnel assigned to the investigation have the appropriate level of training and competence and they have had no previous involvement or personal interest in the matter⁵. If the DAO Compliance 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.
20. The DAO aim to investigate the complaint within **5 working days** after the acknowledgment has been sent. If the complaint is more complex or involves people who are not available at the time, the DAO may extend this to **10 working days**. The DAO may make contact within this period to seek further information or clarification (in some instances the DAO may recommend a meeting). At the end of the investigation the DAO shall write/email to inform them of the decision.

Successful complaints and/or issues brought to the DAO's attention by Ofqual

21. If any part of the complaint is upheld the DAO will respond to the complainant accordingly (via the complaint form they submitted in the DAO QMS or via email/letter if complained directly to the DAO) and give due consideration to how the DAO can improve the service and arrangements⁶. For example, by reviewing DAO procedures, DAO qualification development, delivery or awarding arrangements and assessment process (if relevant) or arranging for staff training.
22. In situations where a complaint has been successful, or where an investigation following notification from the Regulators indicates a failure in DAO processes⁷, the DAO will give due consideration to the outcome⁸ and will take appropriate ⁹ ¹⁰actions such as:
 - a. identify any other DAO Learner and/or Awarding Centre who has been affected by that failure,¹¹
 - a. correct, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure¹², and
 - b. review and amend DAO arrangements, where appropriate, to reduce the likelihood that the failure will reoccur in the future¹³.

⁴ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: A8.2\(a\) & \(b\)](#)

⁵ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: A8.3\(b\)](#)

⁶ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: I2.2](#)

⁷ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: I2.5](#)

⁸ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: I2.2](#)

⁹ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: I2.3](#)

¹⁰ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: I2.5](#)

¹¹ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: I2.3\(a\)](#)

¹² This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: I2.3\(b\)](#)

¹³ This meets the requirement for [Ofqual GCoR Condition: I2.3\(c\)](#)

- c. start internal disciplinary procedures against a member of DAO or Awarding Centre staff if it is found their behaviour was inappropriate in accordance with DAO procedures and arrangements.

What if complainant is not happy with the reply?

23. If the complainant disagrees with the decision the first point of call is the DAO Compliance Manager.
24. If still unhappy with the decision taken by the DAO in reviewing the complaint, where relevant, the matter will be taken through the DAO Appeal arrangements which are outlined in our Appeals Policy. If after the Appeals arrangements are exhausted and the complainant is still unsatisfied with the outcomes, they can complain/appeal directly to the relevant Regulatory Authority for the DAO qualification (e.g. Ofqual in England).

Centre Support

1. Policies for handling Enquiries, Appeals, Malpractice and Maladministration are available on the DAO website and the DAO Qualification Management System (QMS)
2. The DAO will work with Awarding Centres to deliver a customer-focused and professional service to DAO Learners. DAO policies are reviewed annually. Any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact the DAO Compliance Team via:

DAO website

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/defence-awarding-organisation>.

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