

NCTJ Complaints policy and procedure

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1. Purpose

The NCTJ is committed to providing high-quality learning and training services and ensuring complaints are resolved as quickly and effectively as possible. This policy outlines the procedure for raising and handling complaints from centres, learners, and other stakeholders.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all complaints relating to the qualifications, end-point assessments, and services offered directly or indirectly by the NCTJ.

This policy does not cover appeals against NCTJ decisions; these are handled under our appeals policy. If a complaint is actually an enquiry or appeal, we will inform the relevant party and address it under the appropriate policy or in accordance with the approach outlined in the NCTJ's customer service statement.

If you are unhappy with how an exam or assessment was conducted and suspect malpractice or maladministration, please report your concern following the NCTJ's malpractice and maladministration policy.

3. Definitions

Learners: Encompasses students, apprentices, or distance learners, at any stage of their journalism training.

Centres: Encompasses training providers, HEIs, FE colleges and commercial centres.

4. Policy statements

4.1 Principles

This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

Fair treatment: All complaints will be addressed in a fair and transparent manner.

Accessibility: The complaints procedure is accessible to all stakeholders.

Confidentiality: Complaints will be handled with sensitivity and discretion.

Timely response: Complaints will be acknowledged within two working days and resolved, where possible, within 15 working days.

Continuous improvement: Feedback from complaints will inform improvements in NCTJ services.

4.2 Roles and responsibilities

- NCTJ centres:
 - Ensure staff and learners are aware of this policy.
 - Have their own internal complaints and appeal process relating to the delivery and assessment of NCTJ qualifications/units and/or end-point assessments.
- Learners must complete the centre complaints and appeals process before escalating their complaint to the NCTJ. The NCTJ reserves the right not to consider complaints from individuals about a service or activity being delivered by a centre, if the individual has not followed to a conclusion the centre complaints and appeals process.
- NCTJ staff: Address informal complaints and guide stakeholders through the complaints process.
- NCTJ head of awarding: Oversee the complaints process and ensure compliance with this policy.

5. Procedures

This procedure covers all complaints about administration, administrative support, the learning materials and courses provided by the NCTJ and allegations of discrimination and harassment.

If your complaint is about an NCTJ-accredited course or apprenticeship training provider, you should in the first instance contact the centre, setting out the nature of your complaint, and have followed to a conclusion their own complaints policy and procedure.

If your complaint relates to an allegation of discrimination or harassment, then it should be addressed to the NCTJ head of awarding. If the complaint involves the head of awarding it should be addressed to the NCTJ chief executive.

We do not investigate complaints if you have known about the problem for more than three months before complaining.

5.1 How to submit a complaint

- For centres: Complete the complaint form in your NCTJ Creatio account.
- For others: Submit complaints in writing to info@nctj.com or by post to:
The New Granary, Station Road, Newport, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB11 3PL.

Include the following details:

- A clear explanation of your complaint.
 - Full name and NCTJ URN number (if applicable).
 - Centre name and course (if applicable).
 - Copies of relevant supporting documentation.
- The NCTJ will acknowledge the complaint within two working days.
 - Full response will be provided within 15 working days, unless further information or investigation is required. 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.

Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. However, it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us, and if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences, please inform us that you do not wish for us to divulge your identity. If it helps to reassure you on this point, we can confirm that we are not obliged (as recommended by the regulators) to disclose information if to do so would be a breach of confidentiality and/or any other legal duty. Information about a complaint will only be given to people directly involved and everyone involved will be advised of the need for confidentiality.

5.2 Escalation of complaint

If, following our full response, you feel that your complaint has not been adequately addressed then you have the right to appeal in writing to the NCTJ chief executive setting out the reasons for your continued dissatisfaction. You must do this within 14 days of receiving the response to your complaint. The matter will then be dealt with via the relevant stage 1 appeals process which is outlined in the NCTJ's appeals policy.

5.3 Complaints brought to our attention by the regulators

If the regulators notify the NCTJ about failures that have been discovered in the assessment process or other activities of another awarding organisation or end-point assessment organisation (EPAO), these will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints in accordance with the procedures in this policy to ascertain if the same issue could affect NCTJ qualifications or end-point assessments.

5.4 Successful complaints and/or issues brought to our attention by the regulators

If any part of a complaint is upheld, we will respond to the complainant accordingly and give due consideration to how we can improve our service and arrangements.

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 who has been affected by that failure.
- Correct, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure.
- Ensure that the failure does not recur in the future.

5.5 Unreasonable behaviour

The NCTJ values the right of complainants to be heard and is committed to treating everyone with courtesy, respect, and consideration, as outlined in our customer service statement. However, unacceptable behaviour, such as aggressive or abusive language, unreasonable contact, harassment of staff, or excessive demands, makes it difficult to address complaints effectively. Unacceptable behaviour is judged by its impact on the recipient, regardless of intent.

Any such actions will be reported to the chief executive and recorded in our complaints log. The NCTJ will investigate the matter under its complaints and/or malpractice policies.

Depending on the outcome, sanctions against the individual may be applied which may include restricting further contact to written correspondence or, in extreme cases, ceasing all dealings with the individual. Any such decisions will be communicated to the complainant in writing.

5.6 Information requests

Some complaints may be combined with a request for personal information. This would constitute a data subject access request and will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

If a complainant makes repeated requests for personal data that they believe the NCTJ still holds about them, they must provide the NCTJ with any details it requires to identify and locate the additional data. If the complainant cannot provide such details, the NCTJ cannot carry out any further searches.

6. Regulatory references

UK regulators require all awarding organisations to establish and maintain their compliance with regulatory conditions and criteria. As part of this process, policies that relate to NCTJ's status as an awarding organisation will reference any conditions and criteria that they address.

This policy addresses the following regulatory criteria and conditions:

Regulator	Regulatory document	Conditions of Recognition
Ofqual	General Conditions of Recognition	C2; D3; D4; I2
CCEA	General Conditions of Recognition	C2; D3; D4; I2
Qualifications Wales	Standard Conditions of Recognition	C2; D3; D4; I2

7. Review arrangements

The NCTJ will review this policy annually as part of the NCTJ's annual self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary, in response to customer, learner or regulatory feedback.

If you would like to feedback any views, please contact us via the details provided at the end of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed in September 2025.

8. Contact us

Any queries in relation to the contents of this policy, please contact our head of awarding.

Telephone: 01799 544014

Email: info@nctj.com