

NCTJ Appeals policy

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1. Purpose

This policy outlines how centres and learners can appeal NCTJ decisions. It also outlines the process NCTJ follows when responding to enquiries and appeals.

2. Scope

The policy covers:

- Appeals from learners or centres about an assessment decision where NCTJ procedures were not applied consistently or fairly.
- Appeals from centres regarding an NCTJ decision on their application to offer an NCTJ qualification.
- Appeals from centres about an NCTJ decision on their application to become an approved exam centre.
- Appeals from centres regarding the content of an NCTJ centre monitoring report.
- Appeals from centres or learners about the NCTJ's decision to refuse reasonable adjustments or special considerations.
- Appeals from centres or learners about sanctions or actions taken by the NCTJ following a monitoring visit, malpractice investigation, or decision to amend a result due to malpractice or maladministration.
- Appeals from centres or learners about an NCTJ decision made after investigating a complaint.
- Appeals if you believe the NCTJ has not applied its procedures properly, consistently or fairly.

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 appeals will be addressed in a fair and transparent manner.

Accessibility: The appeals procedure is accessible to all stakeholders.

Confidentiality: Appeals will be handled with sensitivity and discretion.

Timely response: Appeals will be acknowledged within specific timeframes as outlined in this policy document.

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

Appeals must follow the process outlined in this policy.

Fees apply to appeals but may be refunded if the appeal is successful. Please see the NCTJ's current fees list on its website at www.nctj.com.

The policy is divided into two sections:

Section A – Enquiries and appeals of assessment results

This section details the process to follow to enquire about NCTJ exam results or lodge a stage 1 appeal relating to exam results for a learner or group of learners

Section B – All other appeals

This section details the process to follow to lodge an appeal regarding a decision taken by the NCTJ in any other circumstance e.g. complaints, malpractice/maladministration, reasonable adjustments, special considerations, accreditation, exam centre approval etc.

4.2 Fees

Fees are applicable for this service, but will be refunded appropriately where an appeal is successful. Please see the NCTJ's current fees list on its website at www.nctj.com

4.3 Regulatory notifications

If regulators inform the NCTJ about issues found in another awarding organisation or end-point assessment organisation (EPAO), we will check if similar issues could affect our own assessment processes and arrangements.

4.4 Roles and responsibilities

- NCTJ centres:
 - Ensure staff and learners are aware of this policy.
 - Have their own internal appeal process relating to the delivery and assessment of NCTJ qualifications/units and/or end-point assessments.
- Learners must complete the centre 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 appeals process.
- NCTJ Staff: Must ensure all appeals are handled consistently and fairly.

5. Procedures

Appeals can only be made after internal centre processes have been completed.

5.1 Section A - Enquiries and appeals of assessment results

5.1.1 Reviewing feedback before an enquiry or appeal

Before submitting an exam enquiry or appeal, learners and centres are encouraged to review the exam script(s) alongside the examiner's feedback (if applicable). For centre-marked units, tutors are required to give direct feedback to learners.

For end-point assessments, learners and centres should review the submission against the assessor's feedback (if applicable).

If more information is required about a learner's performance in an NCTJ assessment, an enquiry may be raised.

5.1.2 Raising an enquiry about exam results

Individual learners

1. Individual learners are encouraged to request a full exam report in the first instance. This provides a detailed report of their examination or assessment performance. This report provides a specific guide to strengths and weakness in each assessment component. Fees apply for this service. Please check the NCTJ website (www.nctj.com) for the latest fees.

2. Learners, or their centre on the learner's behalf, must request a full exam report within **two weeks** of the results being published. Application forms can be downloaded from the NCTJ website (www.nctj.com).
3. Full exam reports are issued within **two weeks** of receiving a written application.
4. The report helps learners understand how the final result was arrived at, providing a breakdown of marks and full feedback. If learners still have questions, they should first discuss the report with their tutor (or the NCTJ if they are a distance learner or external learner). In many cases, this will clarify how the final grade was determined.
5. If questions remain, the learner or centre may appeal the assessment result by applying to the NCTJ within **two weeks** of receiving the exam report. The appeal should be sent by email to exams@nctj.com.

It is recommended to request a full exam report before starting the formal appeals process.

Centres

If a centre has a general concern about a group of assessment results, they should contact the NCTJ within **two weeks of the results being published**. The NCTJ will review the issue to see if it can be resolved before starting the formal appeals process.

5.1.3 Stage 1 – Appeal of an assessment result

Fees apply for this service. Please check the NCTJ website (www.nctj.com) for current fees. Group appeal fees depend on the number of learners involved. Contact the NCTJ for more details.

Learners should be supported by their centre when appealing an assessment result(s). If the assessment was marked by a centre tutor, the learner must first complete the centre's own appeals process before appealing to the NCTJ. All other appeals should be submitted directly to the NCTJ.

If a centre appeals on a learner's behalf, written permission from the learner is required, as grades can go up or down following an appeal.

A learner, or a centre on the learner's behalf (with the learner's consent) may request a stage 1 appeal from the NCTJ within **four weeks** of the results being published, or within **two weeks** of receiving an exam report.

How to submit a stage 1 appeal

- Centres must complete the 'appeal form' on their NCTJ Creatio account and submit it within the required timeframes.
- Learners appealing directly must submit a written appeal to the NCTJ (exams@nctj.com) with relevant details. For example:
 - learner name(s) and NCTJ URN(s)
 - date(s) the learner(s) received notification of the NCTJ's decision
 - title of the NCTJ qualification, unit or end-point assessment affected, or nature of service affected
 - full nature of the appeal and reasoning
 - contents and outcome of any investigation carried out by a centre relating to the issue.

The NCTJ will not consider any telephone requests for enquiries about results or appeals.

- The NCTJ will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 48 hours of receiving it.

What is involved in a stage 1 appeal?

A stage 1 appeal will be carried out by a senior examiner, who was not involved in the original marking or moderation. A stage 1 appeal will include the following as appropriate a:

- Full clerical re-check.
- Review of the original marks awarded for each component undertaken against the approved mark scheme for the assessment – marks may be confirmed or amended appropriately.
- Full re-mark of the individual(s) assessment submission.
- Feedback report from the appeal examiner.

Communication of outcome of stage 1 appeal

The NCTJ aims to respond to stage 1 appeals within **20 working days**. Group appeals may take longer, and in such cases, the NCTJ will provide a revised timescale.

What counts as a successful appeal?

NCTJ qualifications/units: A successful appeal results in an increase in the overall grade. A change in the percentage mark that does not affect the grade is not considered a successful appeal.

End-point assessments: A successful appeal results in an increase from Fail to Pass or increase in the attainment band achieved e.g. from Pass to Distinction. Any changes to the mark outside of these parameters will not be considered a successful appeal.

If the learner or centre is unhappy with the stage 1 outcome, they can proceed to stage 2, where an independent review of NCTJ procedures will be carried out.

5.1.4 Stage 2 – Independent review of an assessment appeal

Fees apply for this service. Check the NCTJ website (www.nctj.com) for current fees.

If following the conclusion of a stage 1 appeal you decide to proceed to stage 2, the learner (or their centre with the learner's consent) must submit a written appeal to the NCTJ within **two weeks** of receiving the stage 1 outcome.

How to submit a stage 2 appeal

Centres must complete the 'appeal form' on their NCTJ Creatio account and submit it within the required timeframe.

Learners appealing directly must submit a written appeal to the NCTJ.

The NCTJ will arrange an independent review of its procedures.

What is involved in a stage 2 appeal?

A stage 2 appeal will be carried out by an independent reviewer who is - not an NCTJ employee, examiner, or someone connected to the organisation. They will have relevant expertise and no personal interest in the appeal decision.

The independent reviewer will check whether the NCTJ applied its procedures fairly, appropriately, and consistently, in line with this policy.

The independent reviewer's decision is final in relation to how the NCTJ consider such appeals. You will receive the outcome in writing within **20 working days**.

If the learner or centre is still unhappy with the outcome of the appeal following stage 2 of the appeals process, they can raise the matter with the relevant regulator, such as Ofqual.

5.2 Section B – All other appeals

5.2.1 Stage 1 - Appeals

To appeal a decision made by the NCTJ relating to any case other than assessment results, such as: complaints, malpractice/maladministration, reasonable adjustments, special considerations, accreditation, exam centre approval etc., the following process must be followed:

If a centre appeals on a learner's behalf, written permission from the learner is required.

A learner, or a centre on the learner's behalf (with the learner's consent) may request a stage 1 appeal from the NCTJ within **four weeks** of the date the NCTJ informs you of the decision.

Learners should be supported by their centre when appealing an assessment result(s). If the assessment was marked by a centre tutor, the learner must first complete the centre's own appeals process before appealing to the NCTJ. All other appeals should be submitted directly to the NCTJ.

Appeals for disqualification in remote exams

Learners or centres can only appeal a disqualification from a remote NCTJ exam if they believe the malpractice and maladministration policy was not followed correctly. This includes cases where the NCTJ did not apply procedures consistently or fairly. At stage 1 this will be investigated by an NCTJ senior manager who was not involved in the original disqualification decision. At stage 2, an independent review of NCTJ procedures will be carried out.

How to submit a stage 1 appeal

- Centres must complete the 'appeal form' on their NCTJ Creatio account and submit it within the required timeframes.
- Learners appealing directly must submit a written appeal to the NCTJ (exams@nctj.com) with relevant details. For example:
 - learner name(s) and NCTJ URN(s)
 - date(s) the learner(s) received notification of the NCTJ's decision
 - title of the NCTJ qualification, unit or end-point assessment affected, or nature of service affected
 - full nature of the appeal and reasoning

- contents and outcome of any investigation carried out by a centre relating to the issue.
- Upon receipt of the appeal, the relevant NCTJ senior manager – depending on the nature of the appeal – will acknowledge receipt within 48 hours.

What is involved in a stage 1 appeal?

An appropriate NCTJ senior manager – depending on the nature of the appeal – will undertake a review of the appeal submitted. There is no fee for this service. In all instances the NCTJ will ensure that the person carrying out a stage 1 appeal does not have a personal interest in the decision being appealed.

Communication of outcome of stage 1 appeal

The NCTJ aims to respond to stage 1 appeals within **20 working days**. Please note that in some cases the process may take longer, for example if a centre visit or interviews are required. In such instances, we will contact all parties concerned to inform them of the likely revised timescale.

The NCTJ will inform the appellant of our decision, which will be either:

- Amending the original decision based on the new evidence provided.
- Upholding the original decision, with an explanation of the reasons. The appellant must confirm within 14 days whether they accept this decision or wish to proceed to stage 2 of the appeals process.

If the learner or centre is unhappy with the stage 1 outcome, they can proceed to stage 2, where an independent review of NCTJ procedures will be carried out.

5.2.2 Stage 2 – Independent review of appeal

Fees apply for this service. Check the NCTJ website (www.nctj.com) for current fees.

If following the conclusion of a stage 1 appeal you decide to proceed to stage 2, the learner (or their centre with the learner's consent) must submit a written appeal to the NCTJ within **two weeks** of receiving the stage 1 outcome.

How to submit a stage 2 appeal

Centres must complete the 'appeal form' on their NCTJ Creatio account and submit it within the required timeframe.

Learners appealing directly must submit a written appeal to the NCTJ.

The NCTJ will arrange an independent review of its procedures.

What is involved in a stage 2 appeal?

A stage 2 appeal will be carried out by an independent reviewer who is - not an NCTJ employee, examiner, or someone connected to the organisation. They will have relevant expertise and no personal interest in the appeal decision.

The independent reviewer will review evidence from the above stages and assess if the NCTJ applied its procedures fairly, appropriately, and consistently, in line with this policy.

The independent review process may involve a:

- Discussion with the appellant or the learner and NCTJ personnel
- Request for further information from the appellant, the learner or NCTJ personnel
- Centre visit by authorised NCTJ personnel.

The independent reviewer's decision is final in relation to how the NCTJ consider such appeals. You will receive the outcome in writing within **20 working days**.

If the learner or centre is still unhappy with the outcome of the appeal following stage 2 of the appeals process, they can raise the matter with the relevant regulator, such as Ofqual.

5.3 Successful appeals and regulator investigations

If an appeal is successful or Ofqual (or another regulator) identifies a failure in procedures, the NCTJ will take appropriate action, including:

- Updating records for the affected learner(s) or centre.
- Identifying and correcting errors for other affected learners, or minimising the impact where correction is not possible (e.g. amending results after investigation).
- Reviewing and improving processes and policies to prevent similar issues in the future.
- Refunding fees for a successful appeal of learner results.

The NCTJ will also cooperate with any further investigations and agree on necessary corrective actions with the relevant regulator.

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	I1, I2, I3, I4
CCEA	General Conditions of Recognition	I1, I2, I3, I4
Qualifications Wales	Standard Conditions of Recognition	I1, I2, I3, I4

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