

## Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy & Procedure

### 1. Purpose

It is the policy of Gatehouse Awards (GA) to acknowledge and, if appropriate, respond to comments and compliments in a timely manner, as well as to resolve any complaints as quickly as possible. The organisation carefully considers all types of feedback received, and endeavours to learn from it so that service can be continually improved.

The purpose of this procedure is to set out the steps which must be followed when anyone submits a comment, a compliment or a complaint to GA about any of its services and the steps GA will take when responding to such feedback.

### 2. Scope

This procedure applies to all Approved Centres, Representatives, Partners, Customers, Clients and Candidates who use the services of GA or its Centres.

If a complaint is received regarding the service received from a Centre of GA, this will only be considered after that Centre's complaints procedure has been exhausted and then only in relation to complaints directly related to GA qualifications.

### 3. Definitions

A comment is defined as an idea, suggestion or opinion on how GA could improve its services.

A compliment is defined as positive feedback about a service provided by GA.

A complaint is defined as a formal expression of dissatisfaction made by anyone who has reason to raise a complaint regarding the service received from, or conduct of, GA as an Awarding Organisation or one of its Approved Centres.

It is not possible to provide a definitive list of examples of complaints, but the following are examples of situations that would constitute a complaint:

- Incorrect invoicing
- Lack of response to queries
- Delay with receipt of certificates
- Non-compliance with stated GA process e.g. not adhering to published timescales or processes

## 4. Exceptions

This policy does not cover any **anonymous complaints** received where the complainant cannot be contacted for further information. Should a complainant request it, however, GA will endeavour to ensure that their identity is kept confidential.

Any complaints or notifications of suspected malpractice received anonymously **may** be investigated at the discretion of GA, if there is sufficient evidence to warrant this.

A separate 'Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure' is in force and sets out the parameters of investigation and treatment of any allegations made under it.

If GA have reason to believe that a complaint received is **malicious or vexatious** in nature it may be rejected on that basis without further investigation and the complainant informed of that decision. The complainant would then need to provide sufficient evidence to prove that the complaint has been made in good faith.

This policy and associated procedures are not meant to be another mechanism for employees to raise private grievances about their personal employment situation. Such matters will be dealt with in line with grievance procedures.

## 5. Procedure

### 5.1. General Statement

It is important that all Centres, Customers, Clients and Candidates are fully aware of this procedure.

GA will carry out a review of the policy at least every two years, and revise it, if necessary, in response to feedback or good practice.

Records of comments, compliments and complaints made are used for the following purposes:

- To review the approach GA takes to the development, delivery and awarding of our qualifications
- To inform improvements to the service within development, delivery and awarding of qualifications
- To enable changes to be made where elements of the service have been identified as non-compliant, not fit for purpose or providing poor customer satisfaction
- To inform GA' self-assessment process and contribute to a quality improvement plan
- To enable GA to gather evidence which may be required when informing Ofqual of events or incidents which may have had adverse effects or could potentially lead to adverse effects

## 5.2. Making a Comment

If an individual wants to make a comment about a GA service, this can be provided either verbally or in writing. If they want a verbal comment to be dealt with in accordance with this procedure, this must be clearly indicated at the time the comment is made. Written comments should be addressed to the Quality Assurance Manager, who will record it and ensure that it is acknowledged within 2 working days, and if a response is required, it will be provided within 10 working days.

## 5.3. Offering a Compliment

If an individual wants to offer a compliment about a GA service, this can be done either verbally or in writing. If they want a verbal compliment to be dealt with in accordance with this procedure, this must be clearly indicated at the time the compliment is made. Written compliments should be addressed to the Quality Assurance Manager, who will record it and ensure that it is acknowledged within 2 working days, and if a response is required, it will be provided within 10 working days.

## 5.4. Making a Complaint

### 5.4.1. Informal Complaint

Sometimes an individual may have an informal complaint that could be resolved quickly. These can be made verbally or in writing (including email). Where a complaint is fully resolved within two business days of it being received, such a complaint will not be recorded by GA on the complaints log.

Informal complaints must be made within 10 working days of the incident being complained about.

If a complaint cannot be resolved as above, it will move to being treated as a 'formal' complaint.

### 5.4.2. Formal Complaint

A formal complaint should be made in writing, clearly stating the nature of the complaint and must be addressed to the Quality Assurance Manager at GA offices within 10 working days of the incident taking place (or of the exhaustion of the Centre's complaints process, where applicable). If the complainant is unable to submit the complaint in writing, the complaint may still be accepted and written record will be made by GA.

If a complaint is made about the service provided in a territory where GA operates via a Country Representative, it should be addressed to the Representative who will forward it to GA on behalf of the complainant.

An acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint will be sent to the complainant by the GA Quality Assurance Manager within 2 working days.

The Quality Assurance Manager will either investigate the complaint or will assign it to the most appropriate member of staff for investigation, ensuring that the appointed individual has no personal interest in the outcome of the process.

The appointed member of staff will carry out an investigation and review all the documentation, before reaching a decision. If a decision cannot be reached based on the information available, the member of staff investigating the complaint will arrange for the complainant and / or any other person to be contacted to obtain further information if required.

An investigation into a complaint should normally be completed within 20 working days. If an investigation will take longer than this, the complainant will be informed in writing of the explanation and revised timetable for the response.

The possible outcomes of a complaint are:

- Complaint upheld and appropriate action will be taken to remedy the situation
- Rejection of the grounds of complaint with clearly stated reasons

If the investigation is completed by a member of staff other than the Quality Assurance Manager, the Quality Assurance Manager will be provided with a copy of the final decision and will update the records accordingly.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they can take the matter further by asking for the complaint to be escalated to the appropriate manager who will evaluate all the information and ensure the correct process has been carried out.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome after escalating their complaint, they can contact the appropriate regulator providing evidence that they have instigated GA' complaints procedure in the first instance.

### **1.5 Monitoring**

All comments, compliments and formal complaints received during the previous three months will be presented to the Governing Body.

### **1.6 Notifications to Ofqual**

Where GA has administered the Complaints process and has identified any adverse effect or incident which could lead to further adverse effects such as sanctions, criminal or disciplinary proceedings or evidence of malpractice or maladministration, GA will promptly notify Ofqual.

GA will not delay in informing Ofqual and will ensure that all information is provided and details of the steps GA will take in order to correct or mitigate any adverse effects.

<b>Document Specification:</b>	
Purpose:	To set out the way in which GA handles any comments, compliments and complaints received in respect of the service it offers
Accountability:	GA Governing Body
Responsibility:	Quality Assurance Manager
Version:	7.1
Effective from:	March 2022
Indicative Review date:	March 2024
Links to Ofqual GCR	D4
Other relevant documents:	GA Terms and Conditions of Business GA Whistleblowing Policy GA Centre Handbook