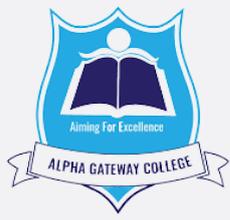




Alpha Gateway College
Aiming for excellence

Complaints and Appeals Policy

Sept 2021



Our Aim

Alpha Gateway College (AGC) is committed to providing a quality service for its learners/staff and working in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of all. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our learners, customers and staff members, and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

A complaint is defined as an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction. The person making the complaint may not necessarily refer to it as being a “complaint”, but it will still be treated as such where the above definition applies.

Complaints concerning assessment practice will be dealt with through our appeals procedure which is aligned to awarding body requirements.

Provision of apprenticeships is regulated by the ESFA and inspected by Ofsted. Our complaints procedure aligns to the requirements outlined within their applicable funding rules, contract requirements, and inspection frameworks. All apprentices, prospective apprentices, employers, parents (where applicable) and local partners will be made aware of the complaint procedure. The process is embedded into our apprentice induction, within employer contracting and published on our website. All complaints are dealt with appropriate discretion and sensitively.

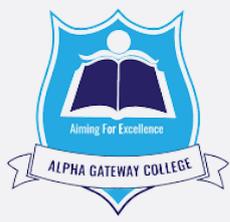
We aim to ensure that

- making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
- we respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc;
- We learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally and dealt with quickly. Our aims are to:

- resolve informal concerns quickly;
- keep matters confidential wherever possible;
- enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been

referred.
An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.



Complaints

Complaints can be raised informally (e.g. in day-to-day conversation with staff), which should be dealt with immediately to prevent any escalation of dissatisfaction. However, where this is not always possible, our escalation process will look to resolve complaints to a satisfactory outcome.

First Point of Contact

The first point of contact for complaints and disputes [Radha Cheemungtoo] will be included in the employer's written agreement and the apprentice's commitment statement. Employers and learners will be encouraged to refer complaints and disputes to the first point of contact, although they have the option to refer complaints to any other member of staff if they should so choose. Complaints can be received in several ways, e.g. face to face, by email, in a formal letter, or by phone. It is therefore important to know the correct way to deal with a complaint to ensure satisfactory resolution.

Apprenticeship Helpline

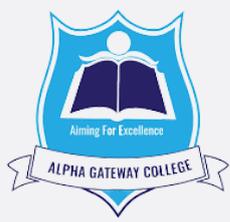
Learners, prospective learners and employers will also be made aware of the Apprenticeship Helpline service, including the email address and phone number, should they wish to access any independent and impartial advice about apprenticeship entitlements and obligations. Details of the Apprenticeship Helpline will also be included in the employer's written agreement and the apprentice's commitment statement.

Process

Where a complaint is received it should be documented and forwarded by the member of staff who has received the complaint to a member of the Management Team. The complaint is then formally logged and investigated.

Complainants must receive a response within 5 working days outlining suggestions to resolve their complaint. They will receive an acknowledgement within 2 working days of receipt of their complaint and a response within 5 working days outlining suggestions to resolve the complaint. They must be kept informed should their complaint take longer than 5 working days to investigate and respond to.

A manager allocated by the Senior Leadership Team will investigate the complaint. Where a complaint is made against a specific member of staff the investigating manager will ensure that the complaint is handled in line with our internal HR policies and procedures. Managers cannot investigate complaints where the grievance in question relates to their own conduct. In this instance an alternate manager will lead the investigation.



Complaints

The investigating manager will seek to establish all pertinent facts regarding the grievance, if need be by reviewing relevant documentation and holding interviews with relevant parties. On completion of the investigation the manager responsible will send a formal response in writing to the complainant. The response will detail the findings from the investigation, and any resolution offered to the complainant, if applicable.

All stages and decisions will be recorded centrally on the complaints log, electronic records will be retained of the complaint investigation. If no further correspondence is received from the complainant within one month of the formal response from the investigating manager, then the complaint will be closed.

Complaint Decision Appeals

Every complainant has the right to appeal against a decision made under this procedure, if they are not satisfied with the outcome or the resolution offered. Any appeal should be made within 1 month of the complainant being informed of the initial decision and must be in writing. The complainant may approach any member of staff for help in formulating their appeal. The appeal will then be passed to the Centre Manager to review.

The Centre Manager will review the original complaint and response, conducting a further investigation if necessary, which will be undertaken within 5 working days of the appeal being submitted. The Centre Manager will inform all parties of their appeal decision within 2 working days of it being reached. If an outcome cannot be reasonably reached within this timescale, then the Centre Manager will notify all parties of the indicative time required to reach a resolution, ensuring that this is achieved at the earliest opportunity.

Where a complaint cannot be resolved through the internal procedure the complainant has the option to escalate their complaint to the ESFA. The ESFA will not normally investigate a complaint until our internal procedure has been exhausted.

ESFA complaints team can be contacted by email at complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk or in writing to Customer Service Team, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT.



Complaints

Reporting

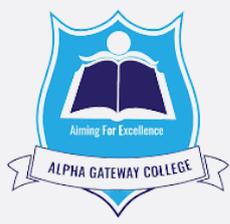
Each investigating manager must log the complaint information on our internal Complaints Log. The Lead Quality Manager will produce a report regularly reviewing the number of complaints received, the category/nature of complaints and the resolutions derived which will be provided to the senior management team. The Lead Quality Manager is then responsible for identifying actions and adding them to the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to reduce the likelihood of any similar future complaints arising.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding

All complaints will be treated with due sensitivity and confidentiality, without undue fear of reprisal or repercussion. We will work to instil a culture through which learners and employers feel confident to make a complaint where they have any perceived grievance.

The Senior Leadership Team will give due consideration to any aspects of confidentiality and sensitivity associated with any complaint in determining how any investigation will be conducted, with the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners always being paramount. Where the complaint relates in any way to a safeguarding issue, our Lead Safeguarding Officer will be consulted in terms of the most appropriate way to proceed. Where appropriate / necessary, the complainant's anonymity will be reasonably protected.

Any personal and/or sensitive data which may be requested/obtained in the course of any investigation will be securely stored and processed in strict accordance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/67. Any data held or processed will only be used for the purpose of dealing with complaints and for monitoring and will be deleted/destroyed once the complaint is resolved. Only staff directly involved with the complaint / investigation / resolution will be given access to such data. Learners and employers may request a copy of our Data Security Policy if they have any questions or reservations about how their data may be handled.



Appeals

Appeals against internal assessment decisions (centre assessed marks)

Alpha Gateway College is committed to ensuring that whenever its staff mark candidates' work this is done fairly, consistently and in accordance with the awarding body's specification and subject-specific associated documents.

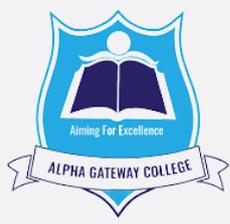
Alpha Gateway College ensures that all centre staff follow a robust Assessment Policy. This policy details all procedures relating to non-examination assessments, including the marking and quality assurance processes which relevant teaching staff are required to follow.

This procedure confirms Alpha Gateway College compliance with JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres 2019-2020 (section 5.7) that the centre will:

- have in place and be available for inspection purposes, a written internal appeals procedure relating to internal assessment decisions and to ensure that details of this procedure are communicated, made widely available and accessible to all candidates
- before submitting marks to the awarding body inform candidates of their centre assessed marks and allow a candidate to request a review of the centre's marking

Candidates' work will be marked by staff who have appropriate knowledge, understanding and skill, and who have been trained in this activity. Alpha Gateway College is committed to ensuring that work produced by candidates is authenticated in line with the requirements of the awarding body. Where a number of subject teachers are involved in marking candidates' work, internal moderation and standardisation will ensure consistency of marking.

On being informed of their centre assessed marks, if a candidate believes that the above procedures were not followed in relation to the marking of his/her work, or that the assessor has not properly applied the mark scheme to his/her marking, then he/she may make use of the appeals procedure below to consider whether to request a review of the centre's marking.



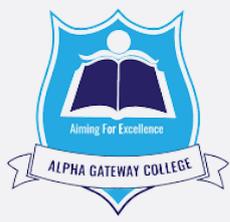
Appeals

Alpha Gateway College will

- ensure that candidates are informed of their centre assessed marks so that they may request a review of the centre's marking before marks are submitted to the awarding body.
- inform candidates that they may request copies of materials (for example, a copy of their marked work, the relevant specification, the mark scheme and any other associated subject-specific documents) to assist them in considering whether to request a review of the centre's marking of the assessment.
- having received a request for copies of materials, promptly make them available to the candidate within 10 working.
- provide candidates with sufficient time in order to allow them to review copies of materials and reach a decision.
- provide a clear deadline for candidates to submit a request for a review of the centre's marking. Requests will not be accepted after this deadline. Requests must be made in writing within 10 working days of receiving copies of the requested materials
- allow 10 working days for the review to be carried out, to make any necessary changes to marks and to inform the candidate of the outcome, all before the awarding body's deadline.
- ensure that the review of marking is carried out by an assessor who has appropriate competence, has had no previous involvement in the assessment of that candidate and has no personal interest in the review.
- instruct the reviewer to ensure that the candidate's mark is consistent with the standard set by the centre.
- inform the candidate in writing of the outcome of the review of the centre's marking.

The outcome of the review of the centre's marking will be made known to the Head of Centre. A written record of the review will be kept and made available to the awarding body upon request.

The moderation process carried out by the awarding bodies may result in a mark change, either upwards or downwards, even after an internal review. The internal review process is in place to ensure consistency of marking within the centre, whereas moderation by the awarding body ensures that centre marking is line with national standards. The mark submitted to the awarding body is subject to change and should therefore be considered provisional.



Appeals

Appeals against the centre's decision not to support a clerical check, a review of marking, a review of moderation or an appeal

This procedure confirms Alpha Gateway College's compliance with JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres 2019-2020 (section 5.13) that the centre will:

- have available for inspection purposes and draw to the attention of candidates and their parents/carers, a written internal appeals procedure to manage disputes when a candidate disagrees with a centre decision not to support a clerical re-check, a review of marking, a review of moderation or an appeal

Following the issue of results, awarding bodies make post-results services available.

Candidates are also informed of the arrangements for post-results services before they sit any exams and the accessibility of senior members of centre staff immediately after the publication of results by their assessor as part of examination prep and booking confirmation.

If the centre or a candidate (or his/her parent/carer) has a concern and believes a result may not be accurate, post-results services may be considered.

The JCQ post-results services currently available are detailed below.

Reviews of Results (RoRs):

- Service 1 (Clerical re-check)

This is the only service that can be requested for objective tests (multiple choice tests)

- Service 2 (Review of marking)

Priority Service 2 (Review of marking)

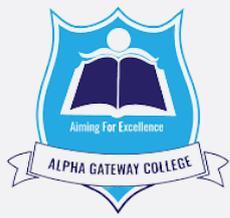
This service is only available for externally assessed components of GCE A-level specifications (an individual awarding body may also offer this priority service for other qualifications)

- Service 3 (Review of moderation)

This service is not available to an individual candidate

Access to Scripts (ATS):

- Copies of scripts to support reviews of marking
- copies of scripts to support teaching and learning



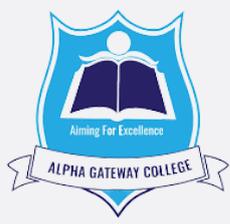
Appeals

Where a concern is expressed that a particular result may not be accurate, the centre will look at the marks awarded for each component part of the qualification alongside any mark schemes, relevant result reports, grade boundary information etc. when made available by the awarding body to determine if the centre supports any concerns.

For written components that contributed to the final result, the centre will:

- Where a place a university or college is at risk, consider supporting a request for a Priority Service 2 review of marking
- In all other instances, consider accessing the script by:
 - a- (where the service is made available by the awarding body) requesting a priority copy of the candidate's script to support a review of marking by the awarding body deadline or
 - b- (where the option is made available by the awarding body) viewing the candidate's marked script online to consider if requesting a review of marking is appropriate
- Collect informed written consent/permission from the candidate to access his/her script
- On access to the script, consider if it is felt that the agreed mark scheme has been applied correctly in the original marking and if the centre considers there are any errors in the marking
- Support a request for the appropriate RoR service (clerical re-check or review of marking) if any error is identified]
- Collect informed written consent from the candidate to request the RoR service before the request is submitted
- Where relevant, advise an affected candidate to inform any third party (such as a university or college) that a review of marking has been submitted to an awarding body

Written candidate consent (informed consent via candidate email is acceptable) is required in all cases before a request for a RoR service 1 or 2 (including priority service 2) is submitted to the awarding body. Consent is required to confirm the candidate understands that the final subject grade and/or mark awarded following a clerical re-check or a review of marking, and any subsequent appeal, may be lower than, higher than, or the same as the result which was originally awarded. Candidate consent must only be collected after the publication of results.



Appeals

For any moderated components that contributed to the final result, the centre will:

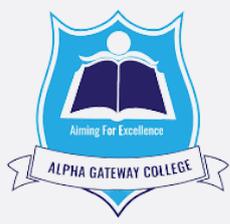
- Confirm that a review of moderation cannot be undertaken on the work of an individual candidate or the work of candidates not in the original sample submitted for moderation
- Consult the moderator's report/feedback to identify any issues raised
- Determine if the centre's internally assessed marks have been accepted without change by the awarding body – if this is the case, a RoR service 3 (Review of moderation) will not be available
- Determine if there are any grounds to submit a request for a review of moderation for the work of candidates in the original sample

Where a candidate disagrees with a centre decision not to support a clerical re-check, a review of marking or a review of moderation, the centre will:

- For a review of marking (RoR priority service 2), advise the candidate he/she may request the review by providing informed written consent (and the required fee) for this service to the centre by the deadline set by the centre
- For a review of marking (RoR service 1 or 2), first advise the candidate to access his/her script to support a review of marking by providing written permission for the centre to access the script (and any required fee) for this service to the centre to submit this request
- After accessing the script to consider the marking, inform the candidate that if a request for a review of marking (RoR service 1 or 2) is required, this must be submitted by the deadline set by the centre by providing informed written consent (and the required fee) for this service to the centre to submit this request
- Inform the candidate that a review of moderation (RoR service 3) cannot be requested for the work of an individual candidate or the work of a candidate not in the original sample

If the candidate (or his/her parent/carer) believes there are grounds to appeal against the centre's decision not to support a review of results, an internal appeal can be submitted to the centre by submitting a request to the Student Services team at least 10 working days prior to the internal deadline for submitting a request for a review of results.

The appellant will be informed of the outcome of their appeal within 15 working days of their appeal submission.

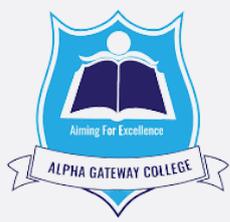


Appeals

Following the RoR outcome, an external appeals process is available if the head of centre remains dissatisfied with the outcome and believes there are grounds for appeal. The JCQ publications Post-Results Services and JCQ Appeals Booklet (A guide to the awarding bodies' appeals processes) will be consulted to determine the acceptable grounds for a preliminary appeal.

Where the head of centre is satisfied after receiving the RoR outcome, but the candidate (or his/her parent/carer) believes there are grounds for a preliminary appeal to the awarding body, a further internal appeal may be made to the head of centre. Following this, the head of centre's decision as to whether to proceed with a preliminary appeal will be based upon the acceptable grounds as detailed in the JCQ Appeals Booklet. Candidates or parents/carers are not permitted to make direct representations to an awarding body.

The internal appeal should be made in writing to the Student Service team and submitted to the centre within 10 working days of the notification of the outcome of the RoR. Subject to the head of centre's decision, this will allow the centre to process the preliminary appeal and submit to the awarding body within the required 30 calendar days of receiving the outcome of the review of results process. Awarding body fees which may be charged for the preliminary appeal must be paid to the centre by the appellant before the preliminary appeal is submitted to the awarding body (fees are available from the exams officer). If the appeal is upheld by the awarding body, this fee will be refunded by the awarding body and repaid to the appellant by the centre.



Monitoring & Review

The purpose of monitoring is to provide assurance that the agreed approach is being followed – this ensures we get things right for patients, use resources well and protect our reputation. Our monitoring will therefore be proportionate, achievable and deal with specifics that can be assessed or measured.

Key aspects of the procedural document that will be monitored:

- The quality and timeliness of the responses to complaints or appeals received within an academic year.
- The log of complaints & appeals. The written information regarding complaints/appeals
- Annually, at the end of July (end of
- academic year)
- A sample of at least 10% of complaints raised within an academic year will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team

Where monitoring identifies deficiencies actions plans will be developed to address them.

Arrangements for Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed every year or more frequently if significant changes to apprenticeship requirements are made nationally.

Latest Review: September 2021

Reviewer: Victoria Meguille Soyam

Next review: September 2022