

# Complaints policy

CIH Awarding Organisation

## Introduction

The Chartered Institute of Housing AO (CIH AO) aims to provide efficient and effective services and whilst every care will be taken to ensure that these are of good quality. The CIH AO accepts that, on occasions, complaints will be made.

If you are dissatisfied with any element of our service you have the right to complain. However, before you make a formal complaint we would suggest that you talk to us informally in the first instance to see if your concerns can be resolved straightaway. You can e-mail [accreditation@cih.org](mailto:accreditation@cih.org) or telephone 02476 851 742. If your complaint cannot be informally resolved a more formal process is detailed below.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the CIH AO, or our staff, affecting a learner, centre or external contractor. CIH AO will not consider complaints about assessment decisions; these should be treated as an appeal using the centre/provider appeals process before escalating to the CIH AO appeals process.

The CIH AO will treat complaints positively and recognises that they are a means of identifying improvements which can be made to our standards and ways of working. The CIH AO will deal with complaints quickly and will take prompt action to resolve the complaint and take steps to ensure that complaints of a similar nature do not arise in the future.

Centres and providers must have a policy and procedure for dealing with complaints. The centre/provider and learners must follow this internal policy before referring to CIH AO. If there is an allegation of malpractice or maladministration refer to the CIH AO policy.

Learners in the first instance must follow the centre/provider policy on complaints. If the complaint is not resolved this can be escalated to CIH AO.

External contractors must aim to resolve their complaint with their CIH AO contact in the first instance, before referring to the CIH AO complaints policy.

## **Confidentiality**

We will aim to ensure that your complaint remains confidential but some circumstances may not allow us to maintain this confidentiality, in these situations we will discuss this with you.

## **Making a formal complaint**

The stages of our complaints process are:

### **Stage 1**

Formal complaints can be submitted via email to [accreditation@cih.org](mailto:accreditation@cih.org), telephone 02476 851 742 or in writing to CIH AO, Octavia House, Westwood Business Park, Westwood Way, Coventry, CV4 8JP and should include:

- The full name, address and contact details of the person making the complaint.
- The detail of the complaint i.e. the specific reason for the complaint and any supporting information.

In making a complaint, we advise that you:

- Demonstrate your attempt to seek resolution informally first.
- Be clear, accurate and truthful in your explanation.
- Indicate what might be a satisfactory resolution for you.
- Respect the legal, regulatory and other constraints, such as data protection, placed on CIH AO.

CIH AO will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days. The complaint will be formally logged and allocated to an appropriate member of staff to investigate.

The member of staff will:

- Commence an investigation into your complaint.
- Maintain a case file and auditable records.
- Aim to resolve your complaint within 14 working days.
- But if it is going to take longer you will be informed detailing why it is taking longer to resolve and providing a date by which a resolution will be provided.

The outcome of the investigation will detail the complaint, actions taken and resolutions required where appropriate.

## Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, you should direct your complaint to the CIH Head of Professional Standards in writing.

The Head of Professional Standards will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days and give an initial explanation of how your complaint will be dealt with.
- Review the investigation and processes that have undertaken in relation to your complaint.
- Maintain a case file and auditable records.
- Aim to respond within 8 working days.
- But if it is going to take longer you will be informed detailing why it is taking longer to respond and providing a date by which a response will be provided.

Please note that the decision of the Head of Professional Standards is final.

## Continuous improvement

Where a complaint is upheld CIH AO will take appropriate preventative and/or corrective action. All complaints are reported and reviewed internally by the CIH AO to ensure continuous improvement to our standards and ways of working and where relevant reported to the Professional Standards Committee.



## Further information

### Ofqual

If your complaint relates to a qualification regulated by Ofqual you may complain directly to Ofqual if you have exhausted CIH AO complaints policy. Please refer to the following link which will explain how you can do this <http://ofqual.gov.uk/complaints-and-appeals/>

### Qualifications Wales

If your complaint relates to a qualification regulated by Qualifications Wales you may complain directly to Qualifications Wales if you have exhausted CIH AO complaints policy. Please refer to the following link which will explain how you can do this <http://qualificationswales.org/regulation/complaints/?lang=en>

### Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Accreditation

If your complaint relates to a qualification regulated by SQA accreditation you may complain directly to SQA accreditation if you have exhausted CIH AO complaints policy. Please refer to the following link which will explain how you can do this <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/25071.html>

### Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

Users of public bodies<sup>1</sup> in Scotland have the right to complain to the SPSO as the final arbitrator. Users have to exhaust the public bodies own complaints procedure before the SPSO will consider their complaint, and it must usually have been raised within the previous 12 months. The complaint cannot be under consideration in a court of law.

The SPSO defines a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more customers about [the colleges] action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by [the college] or on its behalf'.

The SPSO will not consider complaints about academic decisions, such as the outcome of an assessment. These types of complaints should be treated as an appeal and should follow CIH AO appeals processes. Please refer to the following link <http://www.spsso.org.uk/>

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<sup>1</sup> The SPSO's rules apply only to public bodies e.g. FE colleges and local authority centres. Students at centres that are not public bodies will not be able to escalate their complaints to SPSO.