

1.0 Policy

To deliver its strategic policy aims of excellence in: Quality of Practice, the Learner Experience, Stakeholder Relationships, Innovation and Cost Management, Advance Assessments will comply with the Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition, in particular:

Condition D4 – Responding to enquiries and complaint procedures

This condition requires Advance Assessments to answer accurately, fully and within a reasonable time any reasonable enquiries received by it from users of qualifications and assessments.

The condition also requires Advance Assessments to: establish, maintain, publish and at all times comply with a written complaints procedure. The complaints procedure must in particular include procedures and timescales for –

1. (a) responding to complaints, and
2. (b) dealing with the subject matter of complaints.

Condition I2 – Compliance with Ofqual’s appeals and complaints process

The condition requires Advance Assessments to comply with the requirements of any appeals or complaints process established by Ofqual in the form in which it may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time and respond to Ofqual notifications and Advance Assessments’ internal reviews. In compliance with this condition Advance Assessments is committed to discover any failure on its part, identify any Learners affected and correct or mitigate effects, ensuring that failures do not recur.

In addition, Advance Assessments has a has a policy of complying with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. In particular when responding to any complaints, as described in this procedure, compliance with Quality Code core practices: Q5 and Q6.

Core practice Q5

The UK Quality Code sets out the following core practice:

The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.

Core practice Q6

The UK Quality Code sets out the following core practice:

The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.

The Advance Assessments complaint process has three possible stages:

- STAGE 1: Early Resolution
- STAGE 2: Formal Conciliation by Advance Assessments
- STAGE 3: Formal Review by the relevant regulatory body

2.0 Procedure

- 2.1 The Assessment Manager is responsible for implementation of this procedure.
- 2.2 **Making a complaint:** Any Learner, employer, training provider or Centre that has a complaint may contact Advance Assessments, through the contact details provided online. Advance Assessments requests that, where possible, complaints are directed to the email address: support@advanceassessments.co.uk
- 2.3 **Receiving a complaint:** Any Advance Assessment team member or Independent Assessor receiving a complaint, in any media type, from a learner, employer, training provider or centre must report this to the Assessment Manager. Complaints must be reported to the Assessment Manager by email within 24 hours of receipt. In this procedure the person making the complaint is known as the *complainant*. Where possible, every reasonable effort should be made to resolve the complaint by the Assessment Manager. In this This is part of STAGE 1: Early resolution. Details of all complaints received must be recorded on Form AA_OF_23A and counter-signed by the Assessment Manager or a director of Advance Assessments.
- 2.4 **Anonymous complaints:** Where a complaint is received anonymously through the Advance Assessments online system, the complaint should be treated as a Stage 1 complaint, as described below.
- 2.5 **Appeals:** Where the complaint takes the form of an appeal against the result of an assessment, a decision regarding Reasonable Adjustments or Special Considerations, or decisions relating to any action to be taken by Advance Assessments following an investigation into malpractice or maladministration, please refer to policy and procedure AA_OP_03, the Advance Assessments appeal policy and procedure.
- 2.6 **Conflict of Interest:** Where a complaint is related to the actions of the Assessment Manager, or a director, for example where he/she acted as the Assessor or Internal Verifier in the case of complaint, then a deputy with no relationship to the substance of the complaint and with appropriate competence must be appointed. The deputy may be from within Advance Assessments. Where it is not possible to appoint a deputy from within Advance Assessments that has no relationship to the complaint, an Advance Assessments Independent Reviewer will act as deputy and conduct the review process according to this procedure. This person is referred to as the '**Responsible Person**' within this procedure and the accompanying forms. The Responsible Person must have completed an Advance Assessments register of interests that is reviewed by a director, prior to reviewing the complaint.
- 2.7 **Stage 1:** The Assessment Manager (or his/her deputy) will review the complaint, acknowledge its receipt to the complainant, and arrange for the Responsible Person (which may also be the Assessment Manager) to meet with the complainant, face-to-face, by telephone or video link. This meeting will take place within 10 days of the complaint being reported to Advance Assessments. Should it not be possible to complete Stage 1 within this timescale (for example due to absence of parties involved or being able to fully review the complaint), the Assessment Manager (or his/her deputy) will notify the complainant within 10 days of the complaint being lodged, giving an estimation of the delay involved.
- 2.8 Complaints should always be taken seriously, unless or until evidence is provided that the complaint is not considered worthy of further investigation. At Stage 1, a record of the meeting described in item 2.6 should be made on an Advance Assessments Stage 1 Early Resolution of Complaint Record (AA_OF_23A). Present at the meeting will be the Assessment Manager (or his/her deputy), optionally a second member of Advance

Assessment staff, the complainant and a peer or trusted adviser that the complainant may wish to accompany her/him. No member of the Advance Assessments team that has a relationship with the subject of complaint may be present at the meeting. The person representing Advance Assessments is referred to as the 'Responsible Person' on Form AA_OF_23A. When completed, form AA_OF_23A must be stored in the dedicated complaints area on the Advance Assessments online platform.

This is part of STAGE 1: Early Resolution.

2.9 Stage 2: For complaints that cannot be resolved through items 2.7 and 2.8 in this procedure, the complainant may elect to lodge a formal complaint. In this case an Advance Assessments Formal Complaint Form (AA_OF_23B) must be completed by the complainant. Any supporting evidence that the complainant wishes to be considered as part of his/her formal complaint must be referred to in this form and appended to it. The Formal Complaint Form (AA_OF_23B) must be submitted by the learner, employer, training provider or centre within 14 days of the Stage 1 meeting described in items 2.7 and 2.8. The form will be supplied, on request, and is generally available in the 'Forms' section of the online platform, available to registered users. These are conditions of the formal complaint procedure. The learner, employer, training provider or centre that submitted the complaint form will be notified of its receipt within 3 days.

Formal Complaint Forms (AA_OF_23B) should be requested from:
support@advanceassessments.co.uk

Using this email address and form ensures that the Assessment Manager, or a director of Advance Assessments will receive the details and store records correctly. The Assessment Manager will provide to the complainant a dedicated area on the Advance Assessments online platform for the upload of completed Formal Complaint Form AA_OF_23B. Complainants should ensure that supporting evidence is complete as Advance Assessments may, at its discretion, refuse to consider supporting evidence submitted after the AA_OF_23B complaint form is received. Advance Assessments may also, at its discretion, refuse to consider formal complaints submitted outside the conditions described in this procedure.

This is part of STAGE 2: Formal Conciliation by Advance Assessments

2.10 For a complaint escalated to Stage 2, the Responsible Person will be required to independently investigate the nature of the complaint in order to establish the facts relevant to the complaint. At the discretion of the Responsible Person, further investigative meetings may be held to which the complainant may be invited. The complainant may bring one peer or trusted adviser to an investigative meeting. Following investigation, the Responsible Person will produce a written report on Form AA_OF_23C (Formal Conciliation of Complaint) that will provide a complete review of the background (including details of Stage 1), the nature of the complaint and its resolution. Completed Forms AA_OF_23A, Early Resolution of Complaint Record and AA_OF_23B, Formal Complaint Form, should be appended to this document. The report must be reviewed by a board member of Advance Assessments, that is independent of the substance of the complaint, or where that is not possible, an independent governor. This process should be completed in as timely fashion as possible and within 21 days of receipt of the Formal Complaint form. Should it not be possible to complete Stage 2 within this timescale (for example due to delays in the receipt of third-party evidence), the Assessment Manager (or his/her deputy) will notify the complainant within 21 days, giving an estimation of the further delay involved.

AA_OP_23
Advance Assessments Complaints Policy and Procedure

- 2.11 The Assessment Manager is required to review the Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition prior to each Stage 2 Investigation, to advise the Responsible Person and ensure that the Advance Assessments Complaints procedure complies with current best practice.
- 2.12 The final decision in respect of the Stage 2: Formal Conciliation must involve an Independent Governor of Advance Assessments who must counter-sign the completed form AA_OF_23C to indicate their involvement in the complaint review.
- 2.13 **Stage 3.** Where a Learner, employer or training provider is unsatisfied with the outcomes of Stage 2 of the Advance Assessments complaint process he/she may raise their complaint with the relevant regulatory body, which for apprenticeships assessed by Advance Assessments is Ofqual.

This is STAGE 3: Formal review by the relevant regulatory body

To progress a stage 3 complaint with Ofqual, please visit:

[Complaints procedure - Ofqual - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complaints-procedure-ofqual)

- 2.14 The Assessment Manager will maintain, online, a log of all complaints reported to him/her and make a report on concluded complaints at Practice Review, Improvement and Standardisation Meetings referred to in the Advance Assessments Qualification and Assessment Review, Improvement and Standardisation policy and procedure (AA_OP_07). Where a complaint identifies weaknesses or failures in internal processes, these actions will enable Advance Assessments to put in place actions to:
- 2.14.1 Identify any other Learner who has been affected by that failure
 - 2.14.2 Correct or, where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure
 - 2.14.3 Ensure that any weaknesses or failures do not recur.
- 2.15 The Assessment Manager will hold and maintain records of all complaints and their resolution in the dedicated area on the Advance Assessments online assessment system, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) for 10 years after the date of submission of the appropriate form, before disposal.
- 2.16 Additionally, the Assessment Manager is required to notify Advance Assessments General Practice Review meetings of any changes in Ofqual Conditions or notifications of best practice from Ofqual in order to maintain ongoing review of Advance Assessments practice, see General Practice Review Meeting procedure (AA_OP_20).

3.0 Forms associated with this procedure

- 3.1 Form AA_OF_23A – Early Resolution of Complaint Record
- 3.2 Form AA_OF_23B – Formal Complaint Form
- 3.3 Form AA_OF_23C – Formal Conciliation of Complaint Report

AA_OP_23
Advance Assessments Complaints Policy and Procedure

4.0 Document Revision History

4.1 Following improvement identifications and review with colleagues, the Assessment Manager is responsible for revisions of this policy/procedure and completion of the table below, before issue of the amended policy/procedure.

Date (most recent first)	Revision(s)	Reason for revision(s)	New Version Number	Approved by (Initial)
23/01/2023	<p>Item 2.6 'Independent Governor' replaced with the title 'Independent Reviewer'.</p> <p>Item 2.9 detail of the Formal Complaint Form (AA_OF_23B) being available in the 'Forms' section of the online platform, available to registered users.</p>	<p>Avoidance of conflict of interest concerns, in compliance with Ofqual conditions of recognition.</p> <p>Clarity.</p>	2023/01	G.M.
06/12/2021	New policy and procedure (AA_OP_23) created – derived from retired policy and procedure AA_OP_03 v2021/04	Ofqual requirement to separate complaints from appeals. Previous procedure combined complaints and appeals.	2021/01	G.M.