

Appeals Policy

V4

Family:	Quality
Reviewed and Updated:	July 2026
Issue Date:	August 2026
Next Review Date:	August 2028



Purpose

The Skills Network is committed to ensuring that all learners, staff and other individuals involved in the delivery and quality assurance of its qualifications have access to a fair, transparent and timely appeals process.

This policy sets out the arrangements for challenging assessment, quality assurance and related qualification decisions where there is reason to believe that a decision has been made incorrectly, unfairly or without appropriate process.

The policy aims to:

- ensure appeals are managed consistently, fairly and impartially;
- provide a clear process for submitting, investigating and resolving appeals;
- protect the integrity and credibility of qualifications awarded by The Skills Network;
- support continuous improvement by identifying themes and lessons learned from appeals.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- learners undertaking qualifications or courses delivered by The Skills Network;
- assessors, tutors, trainers and Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs);
- managers and other staff involved in assessment, quality assurance, administration or the investigation of appeals.

This policy applies across all qualifications, programmes and learning provision delivered by The Skills Network.

Partnership Delivery

The Skills Network delivers learning through a range of delivery models, including direct delivery, subcontracted provision and external services partnerships.

For **directly delivered and subcontracted provision**, appeals relating to assessment, quality assurance and qualification decisions will be managed in accordance with this Appeals Policy.

For **external services provision**, appeals will normally be managed in accordance with the partner organisation's Appeals Policy. Where this applies, The Skills Network will advise the individual of the appropriate process and work collaboratively with the partner organisation as required to support the investigation.

This policy covers appeals relating to:

- assessment decisions;
- internal quality assurance decisions;
- academic integrity, authenticity of learner work and malpractice decisions;
- administrative decisions affecting assessment or certification;
- access to assessment, where appropriate;
- any other qualification-related decision made by The Skills Network that is subject to appeal.

This policy does not replace The Skills Network's Complaints Policy.

Concerns relating to service delivery, customer experience or staff conduct should normally be managed through the Complaints Policy unless they relate directly to an assessment or qualification decision.

Principles

All appeals will be managed in accordance with the following principles:

- **Fairness** - every appeal will be considered objectively, consistently and without bias.
- **Impartiality** - appeals will be investigated by individuals who have had no prior involvement in the original decision wherever reasonably practicable.
- **Timeliness** - appeals will be acknowledged, investigated and concluded as promptly as possible.
- **Transparency** - individuals will be kept informed throughout the process and provided with a clear explanation of the outcome.
- **Confidentiality** - information relating to appeals will only be shared with those directly involved in managing or investigating the appeal.
- **Continuous improvement** - themes and lessons learned from appeals will be used to strengthen quality assurance, assessment practice and learner experience.
- **Public accountability** - where qualifications are supported through public funding, appeals will be managed fairly and consistently to support the appropriate use of public funds and maintain confidence in qualification outcomes.

Grounds for Appeal

An appeal is a formal request for The Skills Network to review a decision relating to assessment, quality assurance or another qualification-related outcome.

Individuals may submit an appeal where they believe that:

- an assessment decision was inaccurate or inconsistent with the assessment requirements;
- assessment evidence was not considered appropriately;
- the assessment process was not conducted fairly or in accordance with relevant procedures;
- an internal quality assurance decision was unreasonable or inconsistent;
- an administrative error has affected an assessment or certification outcome;
- a decision relating to academic integrity, plagiarism, authenticity of learner work, artificial intelligence (AI) or malpractice has been made incorrectly;
- they were not provided with a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills or competence; or
- there has been a procedural error that may have affected the outcome.

Appeals should clearly explain the grounds for the appeal and include any supporting evidence available at the time the appeal is submitted.

An appeal cannot be made simply because an individual is dissatisfied with an assessment outcome where there is no evidence that the assessment process or decision was incorrect or unfair.



Learner Appeals

Learners have the right to appeal assessment and qualification-related decisions where they believe the decision has not been made fairly, consistently or in accordance with the relevant assessment requirements.

Where appropriate, learners are encouraged to discuss concerns with their assessor in the first instance, as many issues can be resolved quickly through clarification or review. This informal discussion does not affect the learner's right to submit a formal appeal.

Where a learner wishes to submit a formal appeal, they must:

- submit the appeal in writing to **Quality.Team@theskillsnetwork.com**;
- do so within **7 working days** of being notified of the decision they wish to appeal;
- clearly explain the reasons for the appeal; and
- provide any supporting evidence they wish to be considered. Upon receipt of a formal appeal:
 - the Quality Team will acknowledge receipt within **2 working days**;
 - an independent investigator will be appointed;
 - the investigator will review all relevant evidence, which may include assessment records, learner work, quality assurance documentation and discussions with relevant individuals;
 - the learner will be kept informed if additional time is required due to the complexity of the investigation.

The Skills Network aims to provide a written outcome within **10 working days** of acknowledging the appeal. Where this is not possible, the learner will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with an updated timescale.

All appeal records will be retained securely in accordance with organisational record management requirements.

Staff Appeals

Assessors, tutors, trainers and Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) have the right to appeal decisions arising from internal quality assurance activities where they believe a decision has been made incorrectly, inconsistently or without appropriate evidence.

Examples may include:

- moderation or internal quality assurance outcomes;
- assessment decisions overturned through quality assurance activity;
- sampling decisions;
- quality monitoring outcomes; or
- other decisions directly affecting assessment or quality assurance practice.

Individuals are expected to discuss any concerns with the person who made the original decision in the first instance to seek an informal resolution wherever possible.

Where an informal resolution cannot be reached, a formal appeal may be submitted.

Formal staff appeals must:

- be submitted in writing to **Quality.Team@theskillsnetwork.com**;
- be received within **7 working days** of the original decision;
- clearly explain the grounds for the appeal; and
- include any supporting evidence.

The Quality Team will:

- acknowledge receipt within **2 working days**;
- appoint an impartial investigator who has had no prior involvement in the decision wherever reasonably practicable;
- review all relevant evidence and speak with appropriate individuals where necessary; and
- provide a written outcome within **10 working days**, unless additional time is required due to the complexity of the investigation.

Appeals will be considered objectively and will not disadvantage any individual for raising a genuine concern in good faith.

Appeal Investigation Process

All formal appeals will be investigated fairly, objectively and without unreasonable delay.

The investigation will normally be undertaken by an appropriate member of the Quality Team who has had no previous involvement in the original assessment, quality assurance activity or decision being appealed.

The investigation may include, where appropriate:

- reviewing assessment evidence and assessment records;
- reviewing internal quality assurance or moderation records;
- considering relevant organisational policies and awarding organisation requirements;
- speaking with the individual submitting the appeal and any staff involved in the original decision;
- seeking additional evidence or clarification where required.
- Individuals involved in the appeal are expected to cooperate fully with the investigation and provide accurate information when requested.

Throughout the investigation, The Skills Network will:

- keep the appellant informed of progress;
- advise where additional time is required to complete the investigation;
- ensure all evidence is considered before reaching a decision; and
- maintain appropriate confidentiality throughout the process.

All appeal documentation will be retained securely in accordance with organisational record management and data protection requirements.

Appeal Outcomes

Following completion of the investigation, the appellant will receive a written outcome explaining the decision and the reasons for it.

Appeals may be:

Upheld

Where an appeal is upheld, The Skills Network will take appropriate action to correct the original decision. This may include, where applicable:

- amending assessment or quality assurance decisions;
- reviewing certification arrangements;
- updating learner records;
- providing further guidance or training to staff;
- reviewing procedures to prevent similar issues occurring in future.

Partially Upheld

Where some aspects of an appeal are accepted but others are not, the outcome will explain which elements have been upheld and any actions that will be taken.

Not Upheld

Where an appeal is not upheld, the written outcome will explain the reasons for the decision and the evidence considered during the investigation.

Where appropriate, the outcome will also explain any further right of escalation available to the appellant. Lessons learned from appeals will be reviewed by the Quality Team and shared with relevant teams where appropriate to support continuous improvement.

Escalating an Appeal

The Skills Network aims to resolve all appeals through its internal appeals process.

Where an individual remains dissatisfied after receiving the final internal appeal outcome, they may request that the appeal is escalated where this is permitted by the relevant awarding organisation.

Requests to escalate an appeal must:

- be submitted in writing to **Quality.Team@theskillsnetwork.com**;
- be received within **5 working days** of the internal appeal outcome being communicated;
- explain the reasons why the individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome.

Where an appeal is eligible for escalation, The Skills Network will:

- provide information about the relevant awarding organisation's appeals process;
- submit the required documentation to the awarding organisation where appropriate;
- act as the centre contact throughout the external appeals process; and
- implement any actions or recommendations resulting from the awarding organisation's decision.

The decision of the awarding organisation will normally represent the final stage of the appeals process. The Skills Network will cooperate fully with awarding organisations and regulators during any external appeal investigation and will implement any required corrective actions arising from the outcome.

Where an appeal is the responsibility of a partner organisation, The Skills Network will support the referral of the appeal to the appropriate organisation and will work collaboratively to ensure the individual is informed of the process and outcome.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Skills Network is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly, with dignity and respect throughout the appeals process.

Appeals will be managed consistently, objectively and without discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or any other protected characteristic.

Reasonable adjustments and appropriate support will be considered throughout the appeals process to ensure that learners, staff and other individuals are able to participate fully and fairly.

This policy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to help ensure it promotes equality, removes unnecessary barriers and supports an inclusive approach to managing appeals.

Roles and Responsibilities

Individuals submitting an appeal - Submit appeals within the published timescales, clearly explain the grounds for appeal, provide any supporting evidence available and cooperate with the investigation where required.

Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) - Make fair, evidence-based assessment and quality assurance decisions, maintain accurate records and cooperate with appeal investigations where requested.

Managers - Support staff involved in appeals, ensure improvement actions are implemented where required and promote consistent assessment and quality assurance practice.

Quality Team - Manage the appeals process, acknowledge appeals, appoint an appropriate investigator, conduct investigations impartially where required, communicate outcomes, maintain appeal records, monitor themes and trends, and recommend or implement improvements arising from appeals.

Awarding Organisations - Consider escalated appeals in accordance with their published appeals procedures where an appeal falls within their remit.

Monitoring and Review

The Skills Network will maintain records of all formal appeals, including the nature of the appeal, the outcome and any actions identified.

Appeal records will be retained securely and made available to awarding organisations, regulators or other authorised bodies upon request, including during external quality assurance or monitoring activities where appropriate.

Appeals will be monitored to identify recurring themes, emerging risks and opportunities for improvement. Findings may be used to inform:

- quality assurance and quality improvement activities;
- staff development and standardisation;
- policy and procedure reviews;
- learner experience improvements; and
- organisational governance and assurance.

Where appropriate, outcomes and trends arising from appeals will be reported through The Skills Network's quality governance arrangements to support oversight, assurance and continuous improvement.

Where qualifications are supported through public funding, monitoring arrangements will also support the fair, transparent and appropriate use of public funds by helping to ensure assessment and qualification decisions remain accurate, consistent and evidence-based.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where required due to changes in legislation, regulatory requirements, awarding organisation requirements or organisational practice. Lessons learned from appeals will be shared with relevant teams to support continuous improvement and reduce the likelihood of similar issues arising in the future.

