

BuildASkill Ltd
Building for the Future



Complaints Policy

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Policy statement

BuildASkill Ltd takes all complaints and suggestions seriously. As part of its commitment to high-quality service, BuildASkill Ltd listens to, records, acts on information received and provides appropriate feedback. This process ensures that all concerns/comments are dealt with professionally and are resolved as soon as possible.

This complaints policy has been developed to:

- Be easily accessible.
- Be simple to understand and use.
- Allow speedy handling with established time limits for action.
- Keep people informed of progress.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Provide information to managers so that services can be improved.

Scope

To provide an opportunity for customers and/ or learners to make complaints to BuildASkill about its services or delivery partners. The intended audience for this document is:

- BuildASkill Ltd Board of Trustees.
- BuildASkill Ltd staff associated with GQA provision.
- Learners.
- Qualification Regulators.
- Industry Regulators.

Purpose

BuildASkill Ltd aims to deal openly, fairly and effectively with any comment or complaint about services, and to offer an appropriate remedy to any learner who is adversely affected by a service which fails to deliver to BuildASkill Ltd standards.

Making a complaint

What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as any specific concern about the provision of a programme of study or related support service and may be made by a learner or a group of learners.

In general terms, it is an expression of dissatisfaction about the group's action or lack of action or a specific concern about the provision of a study programme, support service, administrative system or policy operated by or on behalf of BuildASkill Ltd.

BuildASkill Ltd strongly encourages the informal resolution of complaints at the earliest opportunity, and before this formal procedure is required.

What is not considered a complaint?

- Academic assessment, for example, grades and marks. BuildASkill Ltd Appeals Policy for Learners covers these.
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination. BuildASkill Ltd Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy covers these.
- Any attempt to reopen or reconsider a complaint BuildASkill Ltd have concluded or given their final decision on.
- Matters of public interest which should be dealt with under the Whistleblowing Policy.

Who can make a complaint?

- Any person affected by BuildASkill Ltd services.
- Third party complaints will be considered, it is encouraged that a third party with a complaint approach BuildASkill Ltd directly. If we are provided with clear authority that a representative is acting on your behalf, we can accept such a complaint.
- Anonymous complaints/suggestions will be considered, dependent on the seriousness of the complaint and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources. However, BuildASkill Ltd is unable to respond to anonymous comments.

When should I complain?

It is important that any complaint is timely. The longer the delay, the less likely it is that BuildASkill Ltd will be able to investigate your complaint properly. Complaints can be made at any time up to 6 months from the actual end date of your course as stated in our records.

If you are a candidate and are considering raising a complaint, you should reflect on whether you have fulfilled your own responsibilities, both in terms of meeting commitments and through behaviour which shows consideration for others. If, for example, your problem has arisen partly through non-attendance, or failing to read information provided, it may be more difficult to sustain a complaint.

In conducting the procedures to investigate complaints set out below, BuildASkill Ltd may invite you to meet staff. At all such meetings, you will be permitted to be accompanied by a friend: for example, a fellow learner or a contact from outside BuildASkill Ltd such as a member of the family. BuildASkill Ltd must be notified of the name and affiliation of the person concerned in advance of the meeting.

If you intend to bring someone from outside BuildASkill Ltd to such meetings, you must seek approval from BuildASkill Ltd in advance. It is not normally necessary to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, but if you do decide to seek approval to be accompanied by such a person, BuildASkill Ltd reserves the right to include a legally qualified colleague to participate in the meeting. The accompanying person will not be permitted to present your case, but will be in attendance to support you and to clarify issues as appropriate.

If your complaint is not based on the grounds specified in this Policy or accompanied by appropriate supporting evidence, BuildASkill Ltd will inform you that no action will be taken. You will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter and you may, if you so wish, pursue the matter further with the awarding body GQA. The complaint should be submitted via email to

info@ggaqualifications.com , and provide full details of the complaint they wish to make. Supporting evidence may be provided.

Where complaints are received anonymously or from third parties, it will be at the discretion of the Centre Coordinator, in consultation with the Quality Assurance Manager, to determine whether the complaint will be considered and, if so, how.

BuildASkill Ltd recognises that remedies available in respect of complaints might include compensation and/or a change in practices and procedures and may lead to disciplinary action.

BuildASkill Ltd will also be prepared to meet expenses reasonably incurred by a successful complainant, subject to its prior approval of specifications of the nature of the expenses claim and the maximum sum involved.

The underlying principles of the BuildASkill Ltd 's Complaints Procedure, which should be respected by all those involved in the procedure are that:

- complaints will be treated seriously, fairly, as expeditiously as possible and in a consistent fashion.
- complaints will be treated in a rigorous and fair manner with sensitivity and with a minimum stress to all parties concerned.
- confidentiality will be respected throughout.
- submission of a complaint will not lead to recrimination or adversely affect academic progression provided it is made in good faith and not maliciously.
- there is a right for any decision to be subject to further review, including at the final stage, reference to GQA; and
- the use of the Complaints Procedure does not affect a learner's right to pursue legal remedies externally.

Procedure

Informal Complaints – Stage 1

If you are dissatisfied with the service or treatment, you receive you should first raise the matter with a member of staff. Tell them exactly what you are unhappy about and ask for their help in putting it right. Most problems will be resolved quickly and informally in this way.

Issues raised verbally to a member of staff will be, wherever possible, dealt with immediately by the staff member. However, there may be some instances where the complaint is referred to the appropriate line manager or the Quality Assurance Manager.

Formal Complaints – Stage 2

Where it has not been possible to satisfactorily resolve matters informally, a formal complaint should be submitted to BuildASkill Ltd.

This approach provides the fastest and most accurate way to feedback to us.

Should any other member of staff be sent details of a complaint directly, then these will be forwarded to the Quality Assurance Manager as soon as possible in order for the complaint to be formally logged and processed.

Only when the Quality Assurance Manager receives the complaint will the response timescales provided within this policy apply.

To ensure a prompt response the complaint must be specific and comprehensively documented. The complainant should present full details, including:

- name and address of the complainant,
- any relevant documentation, dates, locations and witnesses as appropriate
- any previous unsuccessful attempts at resolution
- what reasonable steps should be taken to resolve the complaint.

The complainant should expect to receive an acknowledgement of their written complaint within three working days.

Complaints will be allocated to an appropriate investigating officer within BuildASkill Ltd who will investigate in a thorough, objective and transparent manner and provide feedback.

The complainant will normally receive a response from the investigating officer within twenty-one working days setting out the result of the investigation and any actions that will be taken. However, where complaints involve complex or multiple complaints, in order to ensure that the investigation process is complete and robust, investigations may take longer.

If the investigation is likely to exceed twenty-one working days, we will contact the complainant and tell them when we expect a response to be available.

Communication with the complainant will be via their preferred route, i.e. post, email, etc. If a preferred route isn't indicated, the response will be via the medium that the complaint was initially sent.

Appeal - Stage 3

If a Stage One complaint is closed but it is felt that the complaint remains unresolved, complainants can make a formal appeal. Any comments about the way in which the complaint was dealt with, or any appeal against the findings and/or actions, should be made in writing to the Quality Assurance Manager and Centre Coordinator, setting out the grounds for appeal, within five working days of receipt of the outcome. The request should include:

- the original reference number of the original complaint.
- full and specific details of why the complainant wishes to appeal the Stage One decision

The appeal will be acknowledged prior to any investigation.

The Quality Assurance Manager and Centre Coordinator will appoint a senior investigating officer to review the evidence and respond to the complainant within five working days of being

appointed. Where appeals involve complex or multiple complaints, in order to ensure that the investigation process is complete and robust, investigations may take longer.

If the investigation is likely to exceed five working days, we will contact the complainant and tell them when we expect a response to be available.

The outcome of the appeal is the final decision of the college and no further internal investigation will take place relating to this specific complaint.

Complaints that cannot be resolved by BuildASkill Ltd

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the way BuildASkill Ltd has dealt with their complaint after exhausting the complaints process, they may also wish to complain in writing to GQA. The complaint should be submitted via email to info@gqaqualifications.com, and provide full details of the complaint they wish to make. Supporting evidence may be provided.

BuildASkill Ltd will support any legitimate external review of an investigation into a complaint, whilst being mindful of the Data Protection Act.

Upheld complaints

Complaints that are upheld receive an internal action plan to prevent future incidents of the same nature. Upheld complaints are recorded and monitored on an annual basis.

If a complaint is about a member of staff

If a complaint is in relation to a member of staff, BuildASkill Ltd's Human Resources team will be notified at the same time as the complaint is formally recorded.

Complaints against staff

Any investigation that is conducted under the formal stages of the Complaints Procedures, and where an allegation against a member of staff is involved, must be conducted in accordance with principles that ensure a balance between the interests of the complainant and those of the member of staff involved. These principles include the expectation that there will be:

- an assumption of no fault until the balance of evidence from the investigation demonstrates otherwise.
- respect for the dignity of the individuals involved.
- the right of the member of staff to be told of the complaint and to know of the evidence presented by the complainant.
- the right of the member of staff to respond to the complaint and the evidence and to be accompanied by a colleague staff member in any investigatory meetings or at any stage of the Complaints Procedure.
- the right of the member of staff to know the outcome; and
- the right of the member of staff to have confidentiality preserved where there is any consequential action involving the employee.

Where a complaint involving an allegation of misconduct by a member of staff is upheld this may form the basis of further action under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Whilst the complainant has the right to be told of the outcome of the complaint and any compensatory decisions taken, the complainant has no right to be informed of action taken under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Staff involvement in investigation and as witnesses

It is the expectation of BuildASkill Ltd that members of staff will support the operation of this Procedure. It follows therefore that staff members who are called as witnesses to appear before the complaints review panel, or who are involved at any stage in the investigative process, are required to cooperate fully with the process whether called on behalf of BuildASkill Ltd or by the person making the complaint.

In exceptional circumstances a staff member may request permission to be excluded from an investigation or to not be required to appear as a witness before the complaints review panel. Where it is the view of the responsible officer at Stage 3 that the evidence that can be provided by the staff member is more important to the resolution of the complaint than the objections of the staff member, then the staff member will be required to participate in this process. Failure to do so may constitute a disciplinary offence.

Praise and Suggestions

Praise and suggestions are also welcome and valuable to BuildASkill Ltd as a whole. These comments are recorded and passed on to the relevant department and/or person.

Data Protection

BuildASkill Ltd is mindful of its requirement to comply with Data Protection requirements and, where personal information of someone considered as an adult may be discussed in a complaint, we will request permission to proceed from the person(s) involved.

Where it is impractical to obtain a letter of consent, a response will be sent directly to the person(s) involved, rather than the nominated complainant. The complainant will be informed of this.

General Points

Anonymous feedback cannot receive a formal response but may still be recorded and investigated.

Abusive feedback containing offensive language is not tolerated. Whilst it is recognised that some communication may be written in anger, it is unlikely that abusive communication containing offensive language will be taken seriously.

The person investigating must have had no prior direct involvement in the matter.

As part of the investigative process, the Quality Assurance Manager (or alternate) may need to conduct a meeting with the complainant, in which case a note of the meeting will be taken and the learner will have the right to representation.

Following investigation of the complaint the Quality Assurance Manager will provide a written response to the learner and that response will be copied to the appropriate member(s) of staff concerned or responsible for the matter giving rise to the complaint.

This response will normally be provided within twenty working days of the complaint being lodged, except where good reason can be demonstrated for requiring a longer period, in which case the learner will be notified of the delay and of an expected response date.

The response will indicate whether the complaint has been upheld and will, where appropriate, identify any action to be taken as a consequence, or the reason for the decision to reject the complaint. It will also notify the student of his/her right to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure, where the complaint has not been upheld.

Where a complaint is not upheld, the complainant will receive a Completion of Procedures Letter and may pursue the matter further with the awarding body GQA.

External Providers

Complaints about courses delivered in partnership with other training providers will be investigated following BuildASkill Ltd 's Complaints Policy. Any complaints sent to these providers will be forwarded to the Quality Assurance Manager to be investigated appropriately. The outcome of such investigations will be shared with the specific partner.

Complaints relating to External Service Providers should be made directly to the manager concerned.

How we value feedback

BuildASkill Ltd takes the view that complaints provide valuable feedback that allows us to improve our service. All complainants have the opportunity to raise matters of concern without risk of being disadvantaged, discriminated against or victimised as a result of making a complaint. All complaints, whether formal or informal, will be recognised and dealt with sympathetically and constructively. Confidentiality will be always maintained.

In addition to wanting to deal quickly and effectively with any complaints, BuildASkill Ltd is also very pleased to receive praise or suggestions for how things can be improved.

Reporting

The Quality Assurance Manager will use the records to report at regular intervals to GQA on all complaints, suggestions and compliments and produce an annual summary of customer feedback.

An annual report will be completed each year in order to report on, and analyse, key metrics. A resultant Quality Improvement Plan will ensure that the outcomes of complaint investigations remain a key driver of Quality Improvement.

Data Retention

Complaints, praise and suggestions received by BuildASkill Ltd will be securely retained for a total period of seven years. The information retained will include:

- All correspondence relating to the praise/suggestion/complaint.
- All items relating to the decision being made for each stage of the process.

The retention of information is in accordance with the BuildASkill Ltd 's Document Retention & Storage Policy.

This policy can be freely accessed by any stakeholder via our website: <http://buildaskill.im/>