

## **THE GRADED QUALIFICATIONS ALLIANCE (GQAL) APPROACH TO CUSTOMER SERVICES.**

**GQAL's CUSTOMER SERVICES covers the following policies and procedures:**

1. Customer Services Statement.
2. Compliments Policy and Procedure
3. Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy and Procedure.
4. Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure.
5. Enquiry on Results Service Policy and Procedure.
6. Appeals Policy and Procedure.
7. Complaints Policy and Procedure.

### **1 CUSTOMER SERVICE STATEMENT**

**GQAL is committed to:**

- providing performance related qualifications and assessments that recognise the achievements of students and retain public credibility;
- developing effective working partnerships between the GQAL, entry centres, examiners/assessors, and the wider community that wish to use GQAL qualifications;
- recognising and respecting the needs and rights of all individuals;
- the continuous improvement of our programmes and services;
- providing clearly stated minimum standards for our services and evaluating our effectiveness in maintaining these.

**GQAL customers can expect to be:**

- treated by courtesy, respect and consideration;
- identified by name when communicated with;
- listened and responded to appropriately;
- dealt with efficiently, with integrity, fairness and professionalism;
- provided with relevant, accurate and up to date information when needed
- made aware of the standard of service we aim to provide;
- asked to feedback on a regular basis, and by a variety of means, to help us continue to develop our programmes and services;

**If a problem arises GQAL will:**

- wherever possible deal with the matter straightaway;
- advise you of what action can be taken when it cannot be dealt with immediately;
- advise you of any further steps you can take if you remain dissatisfied.

**The Ten Service Standards.**

GQAL seeks to continuously improve the way we work and the quality of service we provide. The following standards cover the services that we offer to centres, candidates and parents in the provision of qualifications. These services involve providing relevant information, answering enquiries and managing the examination and assessment process.

Standard 1.	Answer your letters clearly and within 15 working days of receipt.
Standard 2.	See you within 15 minutes of any pre-arranged time for appointments at our offices.
Standard 3.	Provide regular information about our qualifications and services.
Standard 4.	Provide enough notice to ensure no cohort is impacted by any significant changes to assessment and examination requirements.
Standard 5.	Provide enough notice of the withdrawal of a specification to ensure any cohort that has started the qualification can complete it.
Standard 6.	Consult users regularly about services and report on findings.
Standard 7.	Have a complaints and compliments procedure and send you information about it on request.
Standard 8.	Take all reasonable steps to make services accessible to everyone (including people with special needs and disability).
Standard 9.	Provide professional, courteous and efficient treatment.
Standard 10.	Clarity in explaining our position. We will answer your questions in a clear and concise manner. We will explain how decisions were made and convey this information in understandable language.

## **2 COMPLIMENTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

GQAL values compliments, these will always be fed back to appropriate personnel. They are invaluable for maintaining and improving our reputation and therefore contribute to our community of professional practitioners. They provide us with the evidence to develop our qualification base.

Please send your comments to:

**Post to:** Helen Mence, Responsible Officer, GQAL, International Arts Centre, Garden Street, Leicester. LE1 3UA

**Email to:** Helen@btda.org.uk

### **3 REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

#### **General Principles**

GQAL will take reasonable care to:

- provide valid alternative arrangements for access to examinations and assessment;
- give attention to the assessment where specific circumstances have arisen at or near to the time of assessment that were not provided for by prior reasonable adjustments;
- ensure that neither a reasonable adjustment or special consideration gives an unfair advantage over other candidates;
- ensure that a reasonable adjustment or special consideration does not reduce the validity or reliability of the examination or assessment;
- ensure that the provision of a reasonable adjustment or special consideration does not mislead the users of the qualification about the candidate's attainment;
- ensure that the provision for a reasonable adjustment or special consideration does not compromise the integrity or credibility of the qualification;
- determine a reasonable adjustment or special consideration in relation to the defined needs of individual candidates;
- consider the candidate's usual methods of learning and producing work when making decisions on a reasonable adjustment or special consideration

#### ***Reasonable Adjustments Procedures***

When entering candidates for an examination the centre/teacher should:

1. choose the examination, or the 'component within a qualification, which is most appropriate for the candidate with a known long-term or permanent disability or learning difficulty;
2. diagnose the requirements of each candidate individually making use of specialist advice from external sources, as appropriate;
3. ensure that the adjustments requested will assist the candidate to demonstrate their attainment without affecting or circumventing assessment requirements;
4. consider the candidate's normal way of learning and producing work as a basis for reasonable adjustments provided that this would not give the candidate an unfair advantage or compromise the integrity of the examination or assessment;
5. ensure that the candidate has experience of and practice in the use of the adjustments requested;
6. consult GQAL at the earliest opportunity in order to plan adjustments for a candidate with particular needs;
7. contact GQAL if there is any doubt surrounding the acceptability of proposed adjustments for a particular candidate;
8. ensure that all applications for reasonable adjustments have been agreed with GQAL in advance of an entry being made.
9. It should be noted that a candidate with an Education Health Care Plan (formerly Statement of Special Educational Need) does not qualify automatically for reasonable adjustments.
10. Failure to comply with the Regulations contained in this document may lead to a candidate's result being withheld.

Centres/teachers should send all specific enquiries, requests for advice and completed application forms directly to Helen Mence, Responsible Officer at the Graded Qualifications Alliance, Garden Street, Leicester. LE1 3UA.

## Guidance

- Reasonable adjustments apply to both permanent or long-term disabilities and learning difficulties, and to temporary disabilities, illness and indisposition's.
- In the case of temporary conditions GQAL should be contacted as soon as possible after the situation arises.
- If a temporary condition arises during the examination, the advice of GQAL should be sought, wherever possible, especially if the circumstances are unusual or distressing.
- Avoid making assumptions, on the basis of previous experience or hearsay, about the adjustments that may or may not be made.
- Judgements are made by GQAL according to the circumstances and needs of the individual candidate.
- In respect of permanent or long-term conditions, the most appropriate syllabus should be chosen. Whenever possible, the syllabuses and options available should be investigated and the one most suitable to meet the needs of the candidate chosen.
- Multiple disabilities. Many students with physical disabilities also have sensory difficulties or problems. If candidates have multiple disabilities, all the possibilities for meeting the assessment needs of the candidate should be considered.
- Before making an application for reasonable adjustments:
  - ~ consult any specialist LEA or other external advisory services available;
  - ~ consider whether the severity or effect of the particular disability is likely to change before the time of the examination;
- The impact of reasonable adjustments on other candidates should be taken into account and assistance to the Graded Qualifications Alliance should be given to ensure that these do not give the candidate an unfair advantage over other candidates or compromise the integrity of the examination.
- For some candidates, it may be permissible to use alternative forms of communication to give direction or instruction, or a hearing loop, although these should be kept to a minimum in accordance with examination regulations. Examples of alternative communication could be the use of British Sign Language to give instruction or direction, but only where this does not compromise a candidate's ability to perform the requirements of the examination. Where BSL is the primary means of communication for a deaf candidate, these candidates may have the support of a BSL/English interpreter to sign the instructions or directions to them, which are being given by the examiner/assessor. The teacher/centre is responsible for providing this. The BSL interpreter should be recruited with integrity by the centre/teacher and hold an appropriate qualification in sign language, have a good working knowledge of the content of the examination and must not be related to the candidate. A candidate should, wherever possible, have had previous experience of working with a BSL/English interpreter and should have used this arrangement during their classes.
- Candidates with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) (formerly Statements of Special Educational Need) do not necessarily qualify for reasonable adjustments. Where candidates have EHCP's action should be taken to ensure their possible needs are considered before the candidate commences the Programme of Study.
- In all cases, when consideration is being given to a candidate with Particular Needs (whether EHCPs or not), the Parents or Guardians of the candidate must be consulted about, and kept informed of the appropriateness of the award, the demands of a Programme of Study and the nature of the examination requirements before the candidate commences the Programme of Study.

- Careful consideration must be given to the resourcing implications of any reasonable adjustments, which may be agreed.
- The candidate must have had experience of, and practice in, the use of any reasonable adjustments, which are requested.
- If there is any doubt about the acceptability of the adjustments proposed, the awarding body should be consulted at the earliest opportunity and preferably before the Programme of Study is started.
- In the case of learning difficulties, there must be evidence of need and a history of provision during the Programme of Study. The evidence must take the form of one of the following:
  - ~ details from the Education Health Care Plan (formerly Statement of Special Education Need);
  - or
  - ~ a relevant diagnostic report confirming a learning disability produced by an educational psychologist or other appropriately qualified and competent person.
- The evidence must be held by the centre and made available to the Graded Qualifications Alliance on request.

### **Evidence Requirements**

Historical evidence of the candidate's needs and an indication of how these needs have been met during the Programme of Study must be provided to the Awarding Organisation. Centres will be expected to establish that the candidate's needs have been recognised over the duration of the Programme of Study and that the adjustments requested for the examination reflect past and present requirements.

In the case of learning difficulties, evidence of need should be confirmed by a history of provision during the Programme of Study within the school/college, supported by current medical/psychological evidence from a competent person to support the application. (A competent person is defined as a Medical Doctor, Chartered Psychologist or a Full/Affiliated Member of the Association of Educational Psychologists or person of similar professional and relevant standing.)

### **Submitting Applications**

Application is by letter to Helen Mence, Responsible Officer, Graded Qualifications Alliance, Garden Street, Leicester. LE1 3UA. This should be received at least 12 weeks before the intended date of examination. The letter must include the following information:

- Title of the award as entered;
- Date of Exam/Assessment;
- A full description of the reasons why reasonable adjustments are being requested for an individual named candidate;
- *Current* medical/psychological evidence from a competent person to support the application
- A description of all reasonable adjustments already made within the centre or school for the programme of study;
- The centres recommendations for reasonable adjustments and the ways that this will be provided by the centre for the examination/assessment;
- A declaration to say that the centre is satisfied that the information provided is accurate;

### **Additional Guidance for Candidates With Physical Or Other Disabilities**

The guiding principle in practical assessments must be safety at all times. Candidates must neither endanger other candidates nor endanger themselves. In every case centres must ensure that the Programme of Study and an Examination is suitable for the candidate and

not beyond his or her physical capabilities. This requires that the candidate's needs should have been recognised over a period of time and the adjustments proposed for the Programme of Study and Examination should reflect past and present need. If no previous adjustments have been made, centres must consider very carefully whether arrangements are justified. Where any doubt exists centres must contact GQAL before a candidate commences work on a Programme of Study leading to an examination.

The centre must avoid misleading the parents, students and other interested parties about the candidate's likely acceptance for the examination and the level of attainment possible. Where an examiner/assessor has reasonable grounds for believing that candidates might either endanger other candidates or endanger themselves the examiner/assessor is required by GQAL not to proceed with the examination and to inform GQAL immediately that this is the case.

Reasonable adjustments are intended to enable the candidate to demonstrate his or her level of attainment, but the centre must ensure and the examiner/assessor must be satisfied that they do not give the candidate an unfair advantage over other candidates in the same examination.

### **Special Consideration Procedures**

#### **Eligibility**

1. A candidate who is fully prepared for assessment will be eligible for special consideration if:

- (a) performance in a component is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the candidate, e.g. recent personal illness, accident, bereavement, serious disturbance during the examination (but see paragraphs 3(a) below);
- (b) reasonable adjustments which were made in respect of a permanent or long-term disability proved inappropriate or inadequate.

2. A candidate will not be eligible for special consideration if:

- (a) any part of the examination is missed due to personal arrangements including holidays or unauthorised absence from any examination component;
- (b) no evidence is supplied by the centre that the candidate had been affected at the time of the examination by a particular condition e.g. chronic hay fever.

3. Candidates, either individually or as groups, will not be eligible for special consideration if:

- (a) preparation for a component is affected by difficulties during the course of study e.g. disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes in or shortages of staff, industrial disputes;
- (b) the effect on the final assessment cannot be reliably quantified by the awarding body.

Following an application for special consideration GQAL may make an exceptional circumstance award, provided that additional appropriate pre-existing evidence of attainment is available.

#### **How To Apply**

The centre is responsible for discussing the possible need for special consideration with the examiner/assessor before the examination starts. The examiner/assessor and centre must be satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt that the case of an individual candidate is genuine. The examiner/assessor will notify GQAL (if possible before the examination starts) the examiner/assessor will send GQAL a confidential written report about the circumstances. The centre must submit a letter requesting special consideration to GQAL as soon as possible after the examination and not later than 2 days after the date of the examination. This letter must provide medical or other appropriate evidence to support the request.

### **Submitting Applications**

- Application is by letter to Helen Mence, Responsible Officer, Graded Qualification Alliance, Garden Street, Leicester. LE1 3UA. The letter must include the following information:
- Title of the award as entered;
- Date of examination/assessment
- A full description of the adverse circumstances on the date of the examination/assessment;
- Where appropriate current medical/psychological evidence from a competent person to support the application;

### **General Guidance On Applications For Reasonable Adjustments Or Special Consideration**

- State precisely the nature of the disability or indisposition and its effects in relation to assessment.
- Specify any information/evidence enclosed with the application which will assist understanding of the case.
- Specify your recommendations for the reasonable adjustments needed by the candidate. Be as precise as possible. Remember, it is the centres responsibility to recommend and subsequently provide the reasonable adjustments being requested.
- You are advised, wherever possible, to consult a specialist advisory service or other external service on the most appropriate adjustments for the candidates concerned.
- Provide details of all reasonable adjustments already made within the school or centre for the Programme of Study and indicate any support that is usually available to the candidate during teaching.
- Specify for how long such adjustments have been made for the candidate. If none have been made put 'NONE'.
- Complete the declaration. It is the responsibility of the centre to verify the accuracy of the information required to support the request and subsequently provide the reasonable adjustments agreed.
- Enclose copies of current (e.g provided within the previous two years) medical/psychological evidence from a competent person to support the application. (A competent person is defined as a Medical Doctor, Chartered Psychologist or a Full/Affiliated Member of the Association of Educational Psychologists or person of similar professional and relevant standing.)
- The supporting evidence from a competent person must clearly indicate why the candidate has learning difficulties or particular needs severe enough to warrant reasonable adjustments. The person must indicate whether, in their judgement, the examination is appropriate for the candidate. Any other information to be taken into account such physical, perceptual, attentional or co-ordination difficulties and any relevant emotional factors must be commented on and the results of recognised tests relating to these supplied.

### **Aegrotat Awards**

- An aegrotat award for incomplete study is an unclassified award that may be conferred in exceptional circumstances such as when a student's ability to complete an award is compromised by sudden circumstances.
- An Aegrotat award may be made to a candidate who is prevented by illness or other medical reasons or by circumstances that could not have been predicted or anticipated from completing an examination or final assessment.
- It is the responsibility of the Centre to immediately notify the Responsible Officer of GQAL of the likelihood of an Aegrotat award being applied for and to ensure that the

reasons or circumstances are fully documented and supported by evidence, which will be passed to the Responsible Officer of GQAL without undue delay.

- The Responsible Officer of GQAL, having considered the relevant facts (which should include satisfactory medical certification or other appropriate evidence) may recommend that an Aegrotat award be made.
- In doing so, the Responsible Officer of GQAL should be satisfied that the candidate's prior performance shows beyond reasonable doubt that he/she would have passed but for the illness/event which occurred.
- The Responsible Officer should be satisfied that the candidate is unlikely to be able to return to complete his/her examination or assessment at a later date within a reasonable period.
- If it is agreed that an Aegrotat award be made, the Responsible Officer shall require the candidate to confirm in writing that they are willing to accept an Aegrotat award.
- Notification of the candidate's signed confirmation of willingness to accept an Aegrotat award shall be provided before an Aegrotat award is made.
- Where the candidate is a minor the signature of the Parent or Guardian will also be required in confirmation that an Aegrotat award is to be accepted.
- Where the candidate is unwilling to do so, the Responsible Officer shall endeavour to make appropriate arrangements for the learner to complete or re-take the examinations/assessments concerned.
- An Aegrotat award shall not state it to be a Pass, Pass with Merit or Pass with Distinction but clearly state that it is an Aegrotat award.
- An Aegrotat award does not necessarily entitle the holder to any credits or exemptions which might otherwise be associated with the award concerned.

### **Appeals/Complaints Against Our Decision For Reasonable Adjustments Or Special Consideration.**

If an appeal is to be made against GQAL's decision for reasonable adjustments and special consideration it must be made in writing to the Responsible Officer within 30 days of receipt of notification of a decision **as a complaint**. The Responsible Officer will refer the appeal to a GQAL Appeals Panel who will deal with it in accordance with the Appeals Policy.

#### **4 MALPRACTICE AND MALADMINISTRATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

GQAL acknowledges its responsibility to deal with any issues of malpractice or maladministration on the part of candidates, centre staff or any others involved in providing their qualifications.

GQAL is obliged to investigate all cases of malpractice or maladministration in liaison with the parties concerned. If an investigation results in evidence of malpractice or maladministration, GQAL will take the necessary steps to ensure that the candidates' interests are protected as far as is reasonably possible, this may include making arrangements for re-assessment or re-certification. GQAL will take action to prevent a reoccurrence of the malpractice or maladministration and where necessary will impose an appropriate sanction.

##### **What Is Malpractice?**

Malpractice is defined as any activity or practice, which deliberately contravenes regulations and compromises the integrity of the assessment process and/or the validity of certificates. For the purpose of this policy this term also covers misconduct.

The categories listed below are examples of potential malpractice. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

- Plagiarism of any nature by candidates.
- Disruptive behaviour by candidates.
- Cheating in an examination.

Anybody who suspects malpractice at any time must immediately **report** their findings to the Responsible Officer

##### **What Is Maladministration?**

Maladministration is defined as any activity or practice, which results in non-compliance with regulations. Anybody identifying cases of maladministration should report them to the Responsible Officer.

The categories listed below are examples of potential maladministration Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

- Failure to adhere to our candidate registration and certification procedures
- Failure to comply with centre approval criteria (where these apply) or examination requirements
- Failure to maintain auditable records, eg certification claims
- Fraudulent claim for certificates
- Intentional withholding of information from us which is critical to maintaining the rigour of quality assurance
- Deliberate misuse of our logo
- Submission of false information to gain a proxy or a qualification
- Failure to adhere to the requirements of our *Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy*.

Anybody who suspects maladministration at any time must immediately **report** it to the Responsible Officer

We would expect centres approved by GQAL to carry out their own initial investigations into any suspected malpractice. We will provide guidance and support to centres to put arrangements in place to prevent and investigate malpractice.

##### **Malpractice And Maladministration Reports**

The **report** is received by the Responsible Officer who reviews it and decides whether:

- there is sufficient evidence to launch an investigation
- more evidence is needed before an investigation can be launched
- there is insufficient evidence for an investigation

### **The Malpractice Report**

In the case of a **report** of suspected malpractice the Responsible Officer must be informed immediately, followed up by the information below:

- centre name
- teacher name
- candidate's name and registration number
- title and number of the qualification affected
- date(s) suspected malpractice occurred
- full nature of the suspected malpractice
- the full detail and results of any investigation carried out by the centre or anybody else involved in the case, including any mitigating circumstances
- written statements from those involved in the case; e.g. witness statements
- date of the report and the informant's name, position and signature.

The Responsible Officer will review the report, decide whether to recommend further investigation and respond to the informant within 5 working days to set out the initial findings and decision based on one of the three options above.

Should the Responsible Officer wish to launch an investigation they will carry out the following action.

### **Appointing The Investigation Team**

The Responsible Officer will invite members of the Examination Standards Committee to take part in the investigation. A requirement for members of the investigation panel will be that they:

- have no personal interest in the case;
- have not had any previous dealings with those involved in it.

Members of the investigation panel will be expected to confirm their objectivity in the investigation and any potential conflicts of interest should be stated in advance of the investigation. Should there be a potential conflict of interest the Responsible Officer may decide to remove that person from the panel depending on the nature of the conflict.

### **The Investigation Process**

The team will look through all the evidence presented and carry out further investigation to establish the nature of the malpractice and establish the facts of the case. They may need to:

- carry out site visits should failure of security or confidentiality of premises be in question;
- interview those involved to establish the facts of the case should there be discrepancies in the facts from different viewpoints;
- request further information from those involved.

After reviewing all the evidence, the team will come to a decision (this has to be a majority decision within the group if not unanimous) and inform the Responsible Officer. The team should report its findings formally to the Examination Standards Committee who will ratify the decision before the parties involved are informed of the decision.

Those involved will normally be informed within 30 days unless there is a reason why the investigation cannot be completed within that time, e.g. in some cases the investigation may take longer if GQAL deems it necessary to carry out site visits. In such instances, GQAL will advise all parties concerned of the likely revised timescale. If this is the case the team should inform the Responsible Officer who will in turn inform the parties involved of the delay and expected new timescale.

GQAL expects all parties, who are either directly or indirectly involved in the investigation, to fully co-operate. In instances where a centre or its candidates do not co-operate, GQAL may have no alternative but to take action against those involved for non-compliance. Possible actions for non-compliance can be found in GQAL's Sanctions Policy. During the investigation the review process may involve:

- a request for further information from those involved;
- interviews (face to face or by telephone) with those involved in the investigation;
- arranging for authorised personnel to carry out a site visit.

### **Referring Matters To The Board Of Directors**

There may be instances where the Examination Standards Committee wishes to refer the decision about the investigation to the Board of Directors. In all cases of malpractice the Responsible Officer will report any investigations and outcomes to the Board of Directors for note. However, in cases where the Board of Directors is called on to make or ratify a decision by the Examination Standards Committee, the majority vote will apply.

### **Outcome Of The Investigation**

GQAL will consider all factors put forward by the centre or the candidate in determining the appropriate sanctions. GQAL's Sanctions Policy provides information about the range and degree of sanctions that may be imposed. These will be determined in proportion to the scale and type of malpractice.

#### **~ candidate malpractice**

If the investigation confirms that candidate malpractice has taken place, GQAL may impose one or more of the following sanctions on the candidate:

- disallowing all or part of the candidate's external assessment marks,
- not issuing the candidate's certificate(s),
- disqualification from the qualification.

#### **~ teacher or centre malpractice**

If the investigation confirms that centre or teacher malpractice has taken place, GQAL may impose sanctions on the centre in accordance with our Sanctions Policy including:

- suspension of a centre's approval status or teacher membership status for all GQAL qualifications,
- suspension of candidate registration for the qualification,
- suspension of the certification service for the qualification.

#### **~ examiner malpractice**

If an examiner is reported to be colluding with candidates, the evidence will be passed to the Responsible Office and will be closely monitored. If collusion is corroborated, then the examiner will be dismissed from the examining panel and the candidates in question will be re-examined.

### **Referring Matters To The Regulatory Bodies**

The Responsible Officer will inform the regulators if a malpractice investigation is taking place, where appropriate GQAL will agree the appropriate course of action with the regulator. GQAL will co-operate with the regulators should it be decided that they need to participate in or in exceptional cases lead the investigation. There may involve:

- a request for further information from those involved;
- interviews (face to face or by telephone) with those involved in the investigation;
- arranging for authorised personnel to carry out a site visit.

In cases where certificates for qualifications approved by the regulatory authorities are deemed to be invalid, we will inform the centre, the candidate and the regulatory authorities

of the reasons why they are invalid and provide details of action to be taken for reassessment and/or certification.

### **Reporting The Outcome To The Parties Involved**

After an investigation, the team will produce a draft report for the centre to check for factual accuracy. Any subsequent amendments will be agreed between the centre and us.

Once the report has been ratified by the Examination Standards Committee, and the Board of Directors, it will be made available as a final report to the centre, and to the regulatory authorities and other external agencies as required.

We will advise all interested parties of the outcome of our investigation within 10 working days of making our decision.

If an independent/third party notified us of the suspected or actual case of malpractice, we will inform them of the outcome.

### **Imposing And Monitoring Sanctions**

Any sanctions imposed will be decided by the Examination Standards Committee and ratified by the Board of Directors. Those involved will be informed as part of the reporting process.

Sanctions will be imposed based on the scale and nature of the malpractice and will be imposed in a proportionate manner as outlined in the Sanctions Policy.

The Responsible Officer will monitor the agreed sanctions. Any actions that need to be taken as part of these sanctions will be monitored by the Responsible Officer and reported to the Board of Directors.

Should any additional measure be required (e.g. for continued non-compliance during the monitoring period) the Responsible Officer will request a decision to be made by the Board of Directors to extend the sanction finish date or escalate them.

Either at notification of a suspected case of malpractice or at any time during the investigation, GQAL reserves the right to suspend any claims for candidate certification submitted by the centre involved.

### **Appeals Against Our Decision To Impose Sanctions**

If an appeal is to be made against GQAL's decision to impose sanctions, it must be made in writing to the Responsible Officer within 30 days of receipt of notification of a sanction. The Responsible Officer will refer the appeal to a GQAL Appeals Panel for a final decision.

## **5 ENQUIRIES ON RESULTS SERVICE POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

<b>TIMELINES</b>
Results, certificates and profiles will be issued within 6 working weeks of the examination date.
All applications for enquiries about results will be acknowledged within 7 working days of receipt.
Requests for a clerical re-check for an individual candidate will be responded to within 7 working days of receipt.
Requests for a review and re-mark for an individual candidate will be responded to within 14 working days of receipt.
Requests for a review and moderation for a group of candidates will be responded to within a 6 working week period from receipt.

This is a service provided by GQAL and sits outside the appeals process. The Enquiries on Results Service may only be requested by the Head of the Centre, on behalf of candidates or parents. All enquiries about results must only be made to GQAL. All applications for the Enquiries on Results Service will be acknowledged within 7 working days of receipt. If you

have not received an acknowledgement within this period, you should inform GQAL's Head Office immediately.

Three levels of enquiries are available to Centres that have entered candidates for GQAL Awards:

**Level 1. Clerical re-check**

A full clerical re-check including the provision of a statement of the marks by assessment criteria for an individual candidate.

**Level 2. Review and re-mark**

A review of the mark records and a re-mark of the examination for an individual candidate by the Independent Assessor, a full clerical re-check and statement of marks by assessment criteria.

**Level 3. Review and moderation**

Review and moderation of all the mark records for a group of candidates, by a moderator together with a full clerical re-check and statement of marks by assessment criteria. Centres should bear in mind that if the results are deemed to be correct as issued there is a charge made for this service. Details of current fees can be found in the fees section of the GQAL's website. Only one review and re-mark will be allowed for each candidate's result.

Centres may in addition, request a review and moderation of all the mark records for a group of candidates.

**Applications For Enquiry On Results Service Must Be:**

- (a) submitted to GQAL by the Head of Centre responsible for the candidate's entry;
- (b) submitted within two working weeks of the receipt of the results. *(Centres are advised that they should submit enquiries as soon as possible after the results have been issued. Requests received after the time allowed will not be accepted);*
- (c) accompanied by a consent form and a letter stating the reasons for the enquiry.

GQAL will not consider:

- (a) any telephone requests for Enquiries on Results Service;
- (b) any direct requests for Enquiries on Results Service from candidates or their parents.

**Outcome Of Enquiries On Results Service**

GQAL will provide written notification to the Centre of the outcome of the enquiry. If the outcome of an enquiry is considered by GQAL to bring into question the accuracy of the results for other candidates in that or other groups, the outcome of the original enquiry will be notified to the Centre and GQAL will extend the enquiry to include any other candidates who may have been affected. The Centre will be notified of the further investigation and the outcome.

As a consequence of a change in the Final Award GQAL will:

- (a) notify the Centre at once in writing;
- (b) make no charge for the candidate enquiry fee where a grade is amended or, in the case of the review and moderation service, charge a proportion of the total fee as is appropriate to the circumstances;
- (c) issue a revised statement of results and/or issue a revised certificate where necessary, when the original certificate has been returned.

In cases where a clerical check, review, re-mark or moderation reveals inaccurate marking or a clerical error, marks may be confirmed, lowered or raised and the award of a Pass, Merit or Distinction may also be confirmed, lowered or raised. Centres must advise candidates and or parents of these possible outcomes and the candidate's informed consent must be sought before any application is submitted. Please note that by counter-

signing and submitting an application form the Centre confirms that the candidate and parent(s) are aware of the possible outcomes and has consented to the application. It is the responsibility of the Head of Centre to ensure that all candidates involved in enquiries about results are aware of and accept the possible outcomes of an enquiry.

## **Detailed Description Of The Enquiry On Results Service**

### **1. Clerical re-check**

This will consist of the following:

- a) a re-check that all assessment criteria have been marked;
- b) a re-check that the marks have been properly transferred from the assessment documentation;
- c) a re-check that the marks for the award have been correctly recorded in the computer system;
- d) a re-check that any adjustments, if applicable, have been correctly applied;
- e) a re-check on the grade boundaries;
- f) a re-check on the application, where appropriate, of any allowances, e.g. those resulting from special consideration.

### **2. Review and re-mark**

This will consist of the following:

- a) a clerical re-check consisting of all items 1 above;
- b) a check on the applicable Independent Assessor standardisation records and the Centre standardisation records;
- c) a review of the assessment documentation and the original marks awarded for assessment criteria undertaken against the approved mark scheme for the examination, by the Assessment Standards Officer who will confirm or amend the original marks.

### **3. Review and moderation**

This is a review and moderation of all the mark records for a group of candidates by a moderator, together with a full clerical re-check and statement of marks by component and assessment category and consists of:

- a) a complete review, including clerical checks, by the Assessment Standards Officer and an independent expert, of all stages in the examination process prior to the issue of the results for a group of candidates.
- b) a check on the applicable Independent Assessor standardisation records, Centre standardisation records and standardisation archive materials;
- c) a written report from the original Independent Assessor;
- d) the provision to the centre of a report by the Assessment Standards Officer on the results of the review;
- e) the provision of the moderated final scores.

*NB. When a review and moderation has been requested, no request for a clerical check, review or re-mark of the examination results for an individual candidate entered for that group will be accepted.*

### **Appeals To GQAL Against The Outcome Of The Enquiries On Results Service.**

After the outcome of an Enquiry on Results Service has been reported, the Head of Centre may appeal against the decision. Appeals on behalf of an individual candidate or a group of candidates can only be made by the Head of Centre responsible for the entry. All appeals must be made in writing and in accordance with the requirements set out in the Appeals Procedure.

### **Alteration Of Final Scores And Awards Following Enquiries On Results Service.**

The lowering of a subject grade following an enquiry, or any subsequent appeal will only apply;

- i) if the marks for an assessment criterion are lowered;
- ii) if the enquiry is initiated by the Centre.

If for any reason a review or re-mark is initiated by GQAL, final scores can only be confirmed or raised.

It is essential that any candidate involved in an enquiry or any subsequent appeal about a GQAL Examination is made fully aware of the potential outcomes. GQAL strongly suggests that this information is made available to candidates in writing and **require** that formal written consent is received from the candidate (if over the age of 18 years) or from the parent or guardian in the case of a minor. A suggested template for this purpose is available from Head Office. Centres may adapt it for their own use, for example by incorporating the name of the School or College. A copy of the signed consent form should be sent when the enquiry about results is initiated.

By signing the application form for an enquiry, the Head of the Centre is confirming to GQAL that the candidate has been fully informed of the possible outcomes and has given consent to the enquiry being made.

The consent of candidates is not formally required before an enquiry is made about the results for a group of candidates or examination session. However, GQAL recommends that candidates should be made aware that the Centre intends to make an enquiry and that this may result in the final scores for any or all the candidates involved, being confirmed, raised or lowered.

## **6 APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

<p><b>TIMELINES</b></p> <p>The Appeals process consists of the final stage open to Centres on behalf of candidates after having used the Enquiry on Results service.</p> <p>Appeals must be submitted, in writing, by the Centre within 14 working days of the date on which notification of the final outcome of the Enquiry upon Results is received by the Centre. All applications for appeals will be acknowledged within 7 working days of receipt.</p>
<p><b>Stage 1 Appeal</b></p> <p>The appellant will be informed of the result of the appeal within a 5 working week period from the date on which the appeal was received.</p> <p>The Centre will need to notify GQAL within 14 working days of the Stage 1 outcome if it wants to progress to Stage 2.</p>
<p><b>Stage 2 Appeal</b></p> <p>The appellant will be advised of the date of the hearing within a 4 working week period from the date on which the appeal was received.</p>
<p>The appellant will be informed of the result of the appeal within 5 working days of the date of the hearing.</p>

The Appeals Procedure is the final approach open to Centres after having used the Enquiry on Results service.

Centres should bear in mind that there is a charge made for this service should the Appeal be turned down. Details of current fees can be found in the fees section of the GQAL's website.

Appeals must be submitted in writing, by the Centre to the Responsible Office of GQAL within 14 working days of the date on which notification of the final outcome of the Enquiry on Results is received by the Centre.

Formal notification of the intention to appeal should include the following information:

- (a) Name(s) and Identification number(s) of candidate(s);
- (b) Grades;
- (c) Date of Independent Assessment;
- (d) Simple statement of the reason(s) for making the appeal;
- (e) Full description of the reason for appeal.

Where the Centre considers that a common issue applies to a number of candidates from the centre, a joint application for those candidates should be made.

Receipt of this notification will be acknowledged in writing.

### **Appeals Procedure Summary**

The focus of the Appeals Procedure is to establish whether or not GQAL, in making awards, has used procedures that were fit for the purpose and whether it applied them properly and fairly, in arriving at judgements of candidate performance.

The procedures open to investigation includes the full range of processes involved in and leading to the award of a final score and the result obtained in a GQAL examination, including marking, standardisation, moderation and any subsequent Enquiries on Results. An Appeal will not involve a review of the examination scores as that will have already been completed during the Enquiry on Results service. The Appeals Process can be in two stages.

### **Stage One Appeal Procedure**

This will involve a review of the case by a member of GQAL who has had no previous knowledge of the case. The outcome of the review will be reported in writing to the Responsible Officer who will communicate this to the Centre.

The review may

- (i) confirm the award made by GQAL
- (ii) require GQAL to take appropriate remedial action or
- (iii) involve broader recommendations being made to GQAL.

If the Centre remains dissatisfied, they may, on written request to GQAL within 14 working days of the outcome of Stage One being notified, ask to progress to Stage Two.

### **Stage Two Appeal Procedure**

If the Centre remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage One of the Appeal Procedure, a written request to proceed to Stage Two should be made within 14 working days to the Responsible Officer of GQAL. At this time the Centre should indicate the names of those who will represent the Centre and provide such information and evidence as the Appeals Panel may require. At the same time, relevant officers of GQAL will be asked to provide GQAL documents in support of their view. The completion of Stage Two of the Appeals Process represents the final point in the appeals against decisions of GQAL.

Stage Two involves the hearing of the case by a specially convened Appeals Panel of GQAL and one person independent of GQAL. The appeal will be considered at a formal hearing during which the issues will be fully reviewed and considered. The Appeals Panel will make a decision, on behalf of GQAL, at the end of the hearing and the outcome, together with reasons for its findings, will be sent to the Responsible Officer who will forward this to the Centre within five working days.

Normally the Centre will be asked to provide representatives whose role will be to set out the basis of the appeal and call on witnesses to give supporting statements or other evidence in relation to the case being made. GQAL will also be asked to nominate officers to present its views and may also nominate witnesses to call on. The Responsible Officer will collate all of this information and make it available to the Centre, to GQAL officers and to Panel Members in advance of the date of the hearing.

Centres should bear in mind that if the results are deemed to be correct as issued there is a charge made for this service. Details of current fees can be found in the fees section of the GQAL's website.

### **At the Hearing**

The hearing will be normally chaired by the Chair of the Advisory Council.

The Chair will rule on any matters of relevance or procedure during the hearing. The case on behalf of the appellant(s) will be presented by their nominee, and on behalf of GQAL by a nominated officer.

- i. The order of business will normally proceed as follows:
- ii. The Centre shall set out their case in the presence of GQAL representatives and witnesses, calling upon the notified witnesses as appropriate.
- iii. All members of the Panel GQAL shall have the opportunity to ask questions of the nominees and witnesses.
- iv. GQAL representatives shall set out their case in the presence of the appellant(s) and witnesses and may call upon notified witnesses on their behalf.
- v. All members of the Panel GQAL shall have the opportunity to ask questions of the nominees and witnesses.
- vi. GQAL representatives shall have the opportunity to sum up their case.
- vii. The appellant shall have the opportunity to sum up her/his case.
- viii. All representatives and witnesses shall withdraw, and the Appeals Panel will deliberate in private.

- ix. In the event that the Appeals Panel members require clarification on any matter, all parties will return to allow relevant points to be addressed.
- x. A record of the proceedings will be made.

The members of the Appeals Panel will come to a decision, taking a vote if necessary. The Chairperson will have the casting vote if necessary. The Panel and Chair will take advice from the Independent person who will not have a vote. The Responsible Officer shall note the decision and the reasons given. The Appeals Panel will either refuse the appeal (thus confirming the original award) or uphold it and require the officers to take appropriate action. When appropriate, the panel may make broader recommendations to GQAL as a whole.

#### **After the Hearing**

The decision of the Appeals Committee and the underlying reasons will be conveyed to both parties by the Responsible Officer within five working days of the hearing and reported to GQAL's Board of Directors at its next meeting.

## **7 COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

We value feedback of how we can improve our service. All complaints will be handled sensitively and efficiently.

If you are not satisfied with our service, please follow the procedure below to enable us to respond to your complaint as quickly as possible.

The complaints procedures do not deal with examination results as these are dealt with by the Enquiries on Results and Appeals process.

GQAL does not normally investigate complaints received more than six months after occurrence.

To enable us to process your complaint effectively please provide us with as much of the following information as you can:

- your name and address;
- centre name and number, if relevant;
- an email address;
- candidate numbers, if relevant;
- the qualification and specification code your complaint relates to, if relevant;
- a clear description of your complaint;
- copies of any relevant correspondence.

<b>Timelines</b>
<b>Complaint</b> Complaints must be submitted, in writing, within 14 working days of the date of the occurrence/incident. All complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt.
The complainant will be informed of the result within a 5 working week period from the date on which the complaint was received. The Complainant should notify GQAL within 14 working days of the outcome if they want to appeal.
<b>Appeal</b> The appellant will be advised of the date of the hearing within a 4 working week period from the date on which the appeal was received.
The appellant will be informed of the result of the complaint appeal within 5 working days of the date of the hearing.

Complainants should bear in mind that if the complaint or appeal is turned down there is a charge made for the service. Details of current fees can be found in the fees section of the GQAL's website. Complaints must be submitted in writing to the Responsible Office of GQAL within 14 working days of the occurrence/incident.

### **Complaint Procedure**

This will involve a review of the case by a member of GQAL who has had no previous knowledge of the case.

The outcome of the review will be reported in writing to the Responsible Officer who will communicate this to the Centre.

The review may

- (i) turn down the complaint
- (ii) require GQAL to take appropriate remedial action or
- (iii) involve broader recommendations being made to GQAL.

If the Centre remains dissatisfied, they may, on written request to GQAL within 14 working days of the outcome of the Complaint Process being notified, ask to progress to Complaint Appeal.

### **Complaint Appeal Procedure**

At this time the Centre should indicate the names of those who will represent the Centre and provide such information and evidence as the Appeals Panel may require.

At the same time, relevant officers of GQAL will be asked to provide GQAL documents in support of their view. The completion of Complaint Appeal represents the final point in the appeals against decisions of GQAL. The Complaint Appeal procedure involves the hearing of the case by a specially convened Appeals Panel of GQAL and one person independent of GQAL. The appeal will be considered at a formal hearing during which the issues will be fully reviewed and considered.

The Appeals Panel will make a decision, on behalf of GQAL, at the end of the hearing and the outcome, together with reasons for its findings, will be sent to the Responsible Officer who will forward this to the Centre within five working days.

Normally the Centre will be asked to provide representatives whose role will be to set out the basis of the appeal and call on witnesses to give supporting statements or other evidence in relation to the case being made. GQAL will also be asked to nominate officers to present its views and may also nominate witnesses to call on. The Responsible Officer will collate all of this information and make it available to the Centre, to GQAL officers and to Panel Members in advance of the date of the hearing.

### **At The Hearing**

The hearing will be normally chaired by the Chair of the Advisory Council.

The Chair will rule on any matters of relevance or procedure during the hearing. The case on behalf of the appellant(s) will be presented by their nominee, and on behalf of GQAL by a nominated officer.

The order of business will normally proceed as follows:

- (i) The Centre shall set out their case in the presence of GQAL representatives and witnesses, calling upon the notified witnesses as appropriate.
- (ii) All members of the Panel GQAL shall have the opportunity to ask questions of the nominees and witnesses.
- (iii) GQAL representatives shall set out their case in the presence of the appellant(s) and witnesses and may call upon notified witnesses on their behalf.
- (iv) All members of the Panel GQAL shall have the opportunity to ask questions of the nominees and witnesses.
- (v) GQAL representatives shall have the opportunity to sum up their case.
- (vi) The appellant shall have the opportunity to sum up her/his case.
- (vii) All representatives and witnesses shall withdraw and the Appeals Panel will deliberate in private.
- (viii) In the event that the Appeals Panel members require clarification on any matter, all parties will return to allow relevant points to be addressed.
- (ix) A record of the proceedings will be made.

The members of the Appeals Panel will come to a decision, taking a vote if necessary. The Chairperson will have the casting vote if necessary. The Panel and Chair will take advice from the Independent person who will not have a vote. The Responsible Officer shall note the decision and the reasons given. The Appeals Panel will either refuse the appeal (thus confirming the original award) or uphold it and require the officers to take appropriate action. When appropriate, the panel may make broader recommendations to GQAL as a whole.

### **After The Hearing**

The decision of the Appeals Panel and the underlying reasons will be conveyed to both parties by the RO within five working days of the hearing and reported to GQAL's Board of Directors at its next meeting.

GQAL reserve the right to cease dealing with the complaint if the correspondence is considered frivolous, vexatious or offensive.

The decision of the Appeals Panel if final, though the complainant can refer the complaint to the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual).

Their address is: Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator, Spring Place, Coventry Business Park, Herald Avenue, Coventry. CV5 6UB

### **Learners, Parents, Carers.**

Under normal circumstances we are unable to receive complaints directly from Learners, Parents or Carers.

Please discuss your concerns with the Head of Centre or Examinations Officer in the first instance and they will be able to act on your behalf.

If you remain unhappy with your results or feel that they are incorrect, and the Enquiries on Results procedure has been invoked, your teacher is in the best position to help you further.

If your concerns relate to the teaching of one of our qualifications or a decision made by your Centre, each Centre is required to have their own internal complaints and appeals process which you should follow.

If you have been through this process and remain dissatisfied, you may bring your concern to our attention.

### **Complaints About Teaching; Centre Administration, Management And Organisation.**

Complaints about the quality of teaching; Centre administration, management and organisation should not be made to GQAL. Any complaints about the quality of teaching; Centre administration, management and organisation should be made to either the Head of Centre (where the teacher is employed by, or attached to, an organisation) or to the association that the teacher is a member of (where the teacher is not employed by, or attached to, an organisation).

### **Confidentiality.**

In the event of GQAL receiving an anonymous complaint we try to confirm the allegation by a separate investigation before taking it up with those responsible. The outcome of the investigation will remain confidential between GQAL and the Centre apart from where statutory requirements are involved e.g. safeguarding, fraud. It is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details, though you may ask us not to divulge them.

GQAL will investigate complaints from whistle-blowers in accordance with relevant whistle blowing legislation.

### **Contacting GQAL.**

We encourage customers to put their concerns in writing.

**Post to:** Helen Mence, Responsible Officer, Graded Qualifications Alliance, Garden Street, Leicester. LE1 3UA

**Email to:** Helen@gqal.org.uk

**Phone to:** 0116 2624122

<b>Recommended</b>	<b>Advisory Council</b>	<b>11/10/2017 &amp; 01/03/2017</b>
<b>Approved</b>	<b>Board of Directors</b>	<b>20/09/2017 &amp; 08/03/2017</b>
<b>Next Review</b>		<b>September 2020</b>