



cpcab

The only awarding body
run *by* counsellors
for counsellors

2023 - 2024

CPCAB Complaints Policy



CPCAB Policy on Complaints

1. Introduction

At CPCAB we are committed to maintaining standards across our recognised centres so that the public can have confidence in us and our qualifications. All CPCAB recognised centres are required to have a complaints procedure which is available to candidates. This CPCAB policy explains when to complain to a centre and when to complain to CPCAB, as well as how to make a complaint. We strongly recommend that you make every effort to resolve things informally first as this could be the most productive way forward.

2. Scope and Limitations of the Complaints Procedure

There are clear divisions of roles between CPCAB as the awarding organisation and its recognised centres.

CPCAB will investigate:

- Allegations of malpractice¹ or serious maladministration relating to the CPCAB qualification² (see footnote) including the issuing of invalid certificates.
- Complaints directed against CPCAB (see 3, below)
- Complaints that have been through your centre's own complaints process without a satisfactory outcome (see 4, below).

CPCAB cannot usually investigate (and you should take up with your centre) complaints about:

- Any aspect of your learning experience, including fees;
- Decisions about admission to/exclusion from a training course;
- Complaints or appeals against internal assessment. For appeals against external assessment, please see [CPCAB's Appeals Policy](#).
- Vexatious or unreasonable complaints (see section 9).

It is the centre's responsibility to make their complaints policy available to their candidates; if you contact CPCAB directly about centre-related concerns you will normally be referred back to the centre (although see section 4).

3. Complaints Against CPCAB

Complaints against CPCAB are taken very seriously. A formal complaint against CPCAB must be submitted, signed, and dated, within 40 working days from the date of the incident that gave rise to it. It will be considered by a panel of core staff who are not directly involved with the complaint and may involve an external consultant. You will receive a formal response; see section 6 for time scales.

¹ Malpractice is defined as any act by candidates or staff that threatens the integrity and/or validity or assessment and certification leading to a recognised qualification.

² Maladministration is defined as a lack of care, judgment, or competence by any person(s) involved in the development, delivery, assessment, or award of CPCAB qualifications. On-going maladministration could constitute malpractice.

4. Complaints Against a Centre

If you have gone through your centre's own complaints procedure in full and still are not satisfied, you can ask CPCAB to carry out a review. You should tell us how the centre handled the complaint, what steps were taken to resolve it (including informal ones) and the final outcome, together with the information listed in section 5. The limitations outlined in section 2 will still apply but we are able to review:

- Whether the centre has handled the complaint according to its own published procedures;
- Whether the centre has followed CPCAB's guidelines;
- Whether there has been any malpractice or serious maladministration relating to the CPCAB qualification.

5. How to Make a Complaint

To make a complaint please complete our [online complaints form](#) which will guide you towards providing us with the information required to investigate your complaint. This is CPCAB's preferred format for submission of complaints. We require the following information:

- Name, position and contact details of who is bringing the complaint;
- Name and position of who is the subject of the complaint;
- A clear description of the complaint and summary of the facts including a timeline;
- Qualification titles and candidate learner number(s) if applicable;
- Any relevant supporting documents;
- And, importantly, what you hope to achieve from the complaint.

CPCAB's ability to investigate your complaint may be delayed or prevented if the above information is not provided clearly.

When a complaint is formal, whether it is directed at CPCAB or is a review of a complaint against a centre, we ask for all contact to be in writing (email is fine) so that we can track all correspondence accurately. Please note that if you appoint legal counsel to represent you in your complaint, future correspondence will normally be addressed to your representative and we will be unable to engage directly with you in further discussion.

6. CPCAB's Response to a Complaint

On receipt of a formal letter of complaint (or complaints form):

- **Within 10 working days** CPCAB will acknowledge receipt.
We will appoint a panel, made up of CPCAB staff who aren't directly involved with the complaint. The panel will include core members plus any specialist staff who may need to have an input and may include an independent consultant. The panel will look at each aspect of your complaint and investigate further if appropriate. Please note that where the complaint is against a centre, they will also be notified of the complaint and approached for related evidence/information.
- **Within 15 working days** we will let you know if the complaint is outside our remit, and why.
- **Within 40 working days** we expect to have completed the complaints procedure. Where a complaint is identified as complex, the complainant will be notified in writing and an appropriate timescale advised where this may exceed beyond 40 working days.

If we are not able to meet any of these deadlines, we will keep you informed of progress.

At the end of the panel's investigation, we will send you a formal letter giving you the panel's findings although we may not be able to let you know what we have asked of the centre as a result of the complaint. Please note that the centre will also be notified of the outcome of the investigation.

CPCAB does not refund candidate registration or centre fees in relation to the outcome of this procedure. If a complaint is upheld which has an impact on other learners, any actions that are identified will be applied equally and fairly to all who have been affected.

7. Appeals

We will accept an appeal against the panel's response within a total of 30 working days from the date of our formal outcome letter. The appeal will be heard by a panel of staff not previously involved in the complaint and will determine whether the correct processes were followed. The same time scales for the appeal will apply as for the original complaint (see section 6). You should give clear reasons for appealing against the panel's initial handling of the complaint. There is no fee for an appeal made in respect of a complaint panel outcome.

8. Escalation of your complaint

If, at the end of CPCAB's investigation and handling of your complaint you are still not satisfied, you are able to escalate the complaint to the relevant regulator: Ofqual, Qualifications Wales or CCEA Regulation. The regulators will normally refer a complaint that has not gone through the recognised channels back to CPCAB or the relevant centre.

9. Vexatious or unreasonably persistent complaints

CPCAB adopts the following definition and the identified characteristics for vexatious or unreasonably persistent complainants *"For us, unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants are those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the organisation's consideration of their, or other people's, complaints"*.

Examples of vexatious or unreasonably persistent behaviour include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of CPCAB's remit or within the scope of this complaints procedure.
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaint's investigation process or insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with this complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Denying or changing statements that were made at an earlier stage.
- Submitting falsified documents from themselves or others.
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff or expecting immediate responses.
- Submitting repeat complaints with minor additions/variations.
- Refusing to accept the decision; repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence.
- Making unjustified complaints about staff or seeking to have them replaced.
- Making threatening or abusive comments towards CPCAB staff.
- Pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with various members of staff and/or organisations.

Please be aware that raising a vexatious complaint may involve sanctions, which may include notification to the regulators, other awarding organisations or professional associations.

CPCAB reserves the right to draw a vexatious or unreasonably persistent complaint to a close without further consultation.

10. Other CPCAB Policies

These policies may also be helpful. They can be downloaded from the CPCAB website; [Malpractice and Maladministration Policy](#); [Sanctions Policy](#); [Whistleblowing Policy](#); [Appeals Policy](#).

This Complaints Policy and Procedure replace all previous CPCAB complaints policies and procedures and is reviewed at least annually by CPCAB as part of its regular documentation update.

CPCAB 2023