

CCEA Regulation – Making a complaint

Complaints about organisations and qualifications regulated and assessed in Northern Ireland can be directed to the Regulation Team within CCEA. A list of awarding organisations and qualifications we regulate can be found on the [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#).

Making a complaint about CCEA Regulation

If your complaint is about CCEA Regulation please write to the Complaints Manager using the details set out on the [Complaints page](#) of the CCEA website.

Types of complaints we can deal with

We expect you to have already complained to the awarding organisation before coming to CCEA Regulation. We also expect that the awarding organisation will have had an opportunity to resolve your complaint.

You can complain to us about:

- an awarding organisation's alleged failure to comply with our [regulations](#), see below for examples
- the award of a regulated qualification by a recognised awarding organisation – see [Examination Procedures Review Service](#)
- issues that could undermine public confidence in regulated qualifications

Examples of the types of complaint we can look into include:

- customer service issues, including how the awarding organisation has handled your complaint
- registration procedures for candidates and centres
- certification procedures for candidates
- potential or actual malpractice by someone involved with the exam or assessment

If we can't deal with your complaint, we will tell you and, where possible, suggest an alternative agency or organisation. Some examples where we may not be able to assist include:

- we have already dealt with a complaint about the issue
- there are ongoing legal proceedings relating to your complaint
- the issue does not fall under CCEA Regulation's remit, for example, if the complaint is about an assessment taken outside of Northern Ireland or if your complaint is about the quality of teaching or training by a school or college – you should complaint to the school or college involved

If you are a school or college appealing against an assessment decision or a candidate's results for GCSE or A level you can make an application to the [CCEA Examination Procedures Review Service](#) by writing formally to the Head of Regulation.

What happens when I make a complaint?

Stage 1 (informal) If you think your complaint can be resolved easily and you know who can assist you please contact the relevant person with CCEA Regulation. This can be done by phone or in writing. We will try to resolve your complaint immediately or agree to contact you within 5 working days with an outcome. If we need longer we will contact you and let you know when you can expect a response.

If you don't know the name of who to contact within CCEA Regulation you should email the CCEA Regulation at ccearegulation@ccea.org.uk

Stage 2 (formal) If you are unhappy with the outcome of your stage 1 complaint or wish to make a formal complaint directly without going through stage 1, please contact the Complaints Co-ordinator in CCEA Regulation at ccearegulation@ccea.org.uk

It is helpful to receive your complaint in writing so that we have a clear understanding of the concerns you are raising. However, if you wish to make a complaint over the telephone, we can document your complaint and then write to you to confirm our understanding of your complaint. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days and a full response will be issued within 20 working days. If we need longer we will write to you to explain why and let you know when you can expect a response.

Stage 3 (Review of outcome of stage 2) If you are unhappy with the outcome of your stage 2 complaint please contact the Head of Regulation who will arrange an independent review of your complaint be carried out. We would ask you to put this request in writing providing as much detail as possible. Your request for review will be acknowledged within 5 working days and a full response will be issued within 20 working days. If we need longer, we will write to you to explain why and let you know when you can expect a response.

What do I need to tell CCEA Regulation?

You will need to provide us with some specific information to help us review your complaint, as follows:

- Which awarding organisation are you complaining about?
- Which qualification and subject does your complaint refer to?
- Have you complained to the awarding organisation already and, if so, when did you complain?
- If you have already complained, please provide a copy of the final letter which confirms you have completed the awarding organisation's complaints procedure.
- What you think the awarding organisation did wrong and how has this affected you? Please provide a clear explanation of what happened and when.

- What do you think the awarding organisation should do to put things right?
- Your details (name, address, email address and phone number)

If you have any documents to support your complaint, please include copies. Please do not send original documents. We will store any information you send us securely.

What to expect

Where we investigate your complaint, we may request more information. As part of our investigation, we will:

- contact the awarding organisation which is the subject of your complaint to request a response and copies of any relevant documentation if necessary;
- review all relevant information and consider it in relation to relevant requirements; and
- give all parties the opportunity to clarify elements of the complaint, where necessary.

When we believe we have enough information to make a fair decision, we will share a draft decision with you and the awarding organisation, and seek comments from both parties.

Possible outcomes

It may be that we are satisfied that the awarding organisation has met our requirements and we will close the complaint.

Examples of this include:

- we consider the organisation acted correctly in the first place
- the awarding organisation made mistakes, but we consider they have already done what we would expect to put things right for those affected

We may ask an awarding organisation to assure us about the course of action they will take. If we do not get appropriate assurances, we will consider whether any further action may be appropriate.

Examples of where we may do this include:

- the awarding organisation made mistakes, provided a poor service or maladministration
- the awarding organisation's actions has had a negative impact which has not yet been put right

Whether we decide to take action or not, we will write to let you know the outcome. We may be limited in what we can tell you where there are legal or confidentiality issues.

As a risk-based regulator, we use what we learn from complaints to focus on those awarding organisations who give us cause for concern.

Where appropriate, we may appoint an independent party to investigate a complaint.

Taking it further/what to do if you are not happy with the outcome

If you are not happy with our final response you can also ask the Northern Ireland Ombudsman to look into your complaint. Although you are able to approach the Ombudsman at any time, in most instances the complaint will not be accepted unless you have exhausted all procedures with CCEA Regulation.

Time limits for raising complaints

To help us resolve your complaint or concern please tell us what it is as soon as possible. The normal time limits we apply are:

- within 6 months of the incident giving rise to the problem; or
- within 6 months of you becoming aware that you have cause for complaint, provided it is not more than 12 months after the incident.

N.B in some circumstances it may not be possible to investigate a complaint raised a period of time after the incident as the evidence may no longer be available for review.

Contact details for raising a complaint:

CCEA Regulation Complaints Coordinator
CCEA
29 Clarendon Road
Clarendon Dock
Belfast BT1 3BG

Tel: 02890 261200

Email: ccearegulation@ccea.org.uk