

Appeals Policy

Introduction

This document sets out the policy and procedure that Ascentis-approved Centres or registered learners must follow when submitting appeals and the actions that Ascentis will take when responding to enquiries and appeals.

The policy covers Centres that are approved to deliver (and learners who are registered on) named Ascentis qualification(s) or unit(s). This includes Ofqual, CCEA and Qualifications Wales recognised qualifications, Access to HE Diplomas and customised Provision.

Centre Responsibilities

Centres should ensure that:

- Staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of Ascentis qualifications are aware of the contents of this policy
- Learners are made aware of the Ascentis appeals policy and procedures
- Relevant arrangements and documentation are in place relating to the Centre's internal appeals policy and procedures
- The internal appeal arrangements are accessible to learners if they wish to appeal against a decision made by the Centre.

Please note: if an individual learner wishes to appeal against a decision taken by their Centre, they must first of all go through the Centre's appeals process before bringing the matter to Ascentis.

Review Arrangements

We will review this policy as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary, in response to customer feedback or requests from, or good practice guidance issued by, the regulatory authorities.

Fees

We will charge you or your learners a fee of £50 to cover the administrative and personnel costs involved in dealing with appeals. This will be refunded should the appeal be successful.

Please see the separate fees that apply to Enquiry on Results requests in our Ascentis Product Catalogue, available on our website.

Areas Covered by the Policy

This policy covers appeals from:

- Centres in relation to an Ascentis decision concerning a Centre's application to offer an Ascentis qualification
- Centres concerning the contents of a Centre monitoring report
- Centres and/or learners relating to an Ascentis decision to decline a Centre's request to make reasonable adjustments or give special considerations
- Centres in relation to a sanction or action applied by Ascentis following a verification/moderation visit or investigation into malpractice or maladministration

- Centres or learners in relation to a decision to amend a learner/set of learners' results following a malpractice or malpractice investigation
- Centres relating to a decision made by Ascentis following an investigation into a complaint about a Centre
- Centres that believe that Ascentis has not applied its procedures consistently or that procedures were not followed properly, consistently and fairly.

Please note: Where learners and/or Centres want to lodge an appeal in relation to an assessment decision on the basis that Ascentis' procedures were not followed properly and fairly, please refer to the Enquiry about Results section of this policy.

The Procedure

The procedure set out below enables appeals to be received, considered and resolved in a fair and timely manner.

For provision regulated by Ofqual, CCEA and Qualifications Wales, the Centre/learner has 20 working days from the date they receive notification of a decision made by Ascentis in which to lodge an appeal against that decision.

For Access to Higher Education Diplomas, the Centre/learner has 20 working days from the date that the unit grade is confirmed. This will be the date of either internal moderation or external moderation, depending on arrangements made between Ascentis and the Centre. Learners should liaise with their course tutor or Access to HE Coordinator to confirm which of the above applies.

This includes appeals relating to assessment results decisions. Therefore, the Centre should advise learners/staff to retain their course and assessment evidence until they receive their results.

Learners who wish to appeal about their assessment results or about a related decision should either be supported by their Centre or should have exhausted their Centre's own appeals process before appealing to Ascentis. In the latter case, the Learner must provide evidence that they have first pursued an appeal with their Centre. It is expected that learners will only appeal directly to Ascentis in exceptional circumstances.

Submitting an Appeal

When submitting an appeal, please provide relevant supporting information such as:

- Centre name, address and contact number
- Learner name and Ascentis registration number
- Date(s) the Centre or learner received notification of Ascentis' decision
- Title and number of the Ascentis qualification affected or nature of service affected (if appropriate)
- Full nature of the appeal
- Contents and outcome of any investigation carried out by the Centre relating to the issue.

Enquiry about Results

An enquiry about results can be submitted to Ascentis in relation to assessment decisions made by head office or External Quality Assurers (EQAs) / Subject Moderators (SMs).

The Centre has a couple of options which Ascentis can undertake, these are:

- **Clerical Check** – This includes a re-calculation of results on the assessment and the transference of marks or a check that the necessary information has been considered in any assessment decisions made. This relates to Short Online Qualifications (SOQs) and Functional Skills (Awarding Body marked assessments only).

- **Marking/assessment review** – This includes a clerical check, as outlined above, as well as a review of the accuracy of marking against the mark scheme/assessment criteria where an EQA or SM has disagreed with the assessment decisions made within the centre.

For SOQs where the assessments are externally marked by Ascentis, an examination report on the individual performance of the learner, focusing on areas of strength and for development, will be supplied with the outcome from the review in order to support Centres with further teaching and learning. This will be supplied 30 days following the receipt of the request from the Centres.

A review of marking can be carried out for an individual learner or a cohort of learners. See the Ascentis Product Catalogue on the website for service charges.

To request an Enquiry about a Result on behalf of an individual learner or a cohort of learners, the centre will follow the procedure for submitting an appeal as outlined above.

Centres making appeals on behalf of learners must ensure that written consent of the learner(s) concerned is provided, as grades/results can go down as well as up as a result of the investigation. In this instance, Centres must also submit an Enquiry about Results – Candidate consent form, which is available on the Ascentis website.

Situations brought to Ascentis' Attention by the Regulator

Where a Regulator notifies Ascentis of failures that have been discovered in the assessment process of another awarding organisation, Ascentis will endeavour to review whether or not a similar failure could affect our own assessment processes and arrangements.

Initial Review of the Appeal Details

Upon receipt of all appeals, Ascentis will acknowledge receipt of the appeal as soon as possible and within **2 working days** and aim to respond fully to the initial review of the potential appeal **within 20 working days**. Please note that in some cases the review processes may take longer, for example, if a Centre visit is required. In such instances, Ascentis will contact all parties concerned to inform them of the anticipated timescale.

Stage One: Informal Assessment of all Potential Appeals

Ascentis will undertake an initial, informal assessment of all potential appeals to ensure the application is complete and to ascertain if the issue can be resolved before it goes to a formal appeal.

The informal assessment will be carried out by an Ascentis employee who:

- Has the appropriate authority
- Was not involved in the incident that is the subject of the appeal
- Has no personal interest in the decision subject to the appeal

Following the initial review of the potential appeal, Ascentis will write to the Centre/learner with details of the decision to either:

- a) Amend the original decision in light of the new rationale/evidence being put forward and which has now been reviewed

or

- b) Confirm no new information has come to light that requires an immediate reconsideration at this stage. The Centre/learner must then confirm to Ascentis, **within 10 days**, if they wish to proceed to the formal appeals process, which will be carried out by an independent party.

Stage Two: Appeals Panel

If the Centre/learner decides to proceed to the formal appeal stage, Ascentis will arrange for an independent review to be carried out by an Appeals Panel.

The panel will include:

- A minimum of three individuals
- At least one individual who is not employed by Ascentis
- Individuals with relevant competence and seniority to make a decision in relation to the appeal
- Individuals who have no personal interest in the outcome

The Appeals Panel will consider all the evidence collated at previous stages and evaluate whether or not Ascentis has applied its appeals procedures in a fair, appropriate, and consistent way, which is in line with the policy.

The formal appeal process may involve a:

- Discussion with the Centre or the learner and Ascentis personnel
- Request for further information from the Centre, the learner or Ascentis personnel
- Centre visit by authorised Ascentis personnel.

The Appeals Panel's decision is final in relation to how Ascentis will consider the outcome of such appeals. Ascentis will notify the Centre/learner of the outcome of the review within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal. If the Centre/learner is not satisfied with the outcome at this stage, they are entitled to raise the matter with the relevant qualification regulator.

Successful Appeals and/or Issues brought to our Attention by a Regulator

In situations where an appeal has been successful, or where an investigation following notification from the regulator indicates a failure in our processes, Ascentis will give due consideration to the outcome and will, as appropriate, take actions such as:

- Amend the record of the Centres or learners concerned
- Identify any other learners who have been affected by that failure and either:
 - a) Correct,
 - or
 - b) Where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure (e.g. amend the results for the learner(s) affected following an appropriate investigation).
- Review our associated processes and policies to ensure that the 'failure' does not recur in the future.

Ascentis will also cooperate with any follow-up investigations required by the qualifications regulators and, if appropriate, agree on any remedial action with them.

Relationship with Regulatory Requirements

As an Awarding Organisation, Ascentis is regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales, and CCEA. As an Access Validating Agency, Ascentis is regulated by QAA. This policy is designed to fulfil the requirements of the regulators we work with.

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please email qualityassurance@ascentis.co.uk

For Access to Higher Education (AHED) please email ahed@ascentis.co.uk

Please clearly mark your email 'Appeal Enquiry'