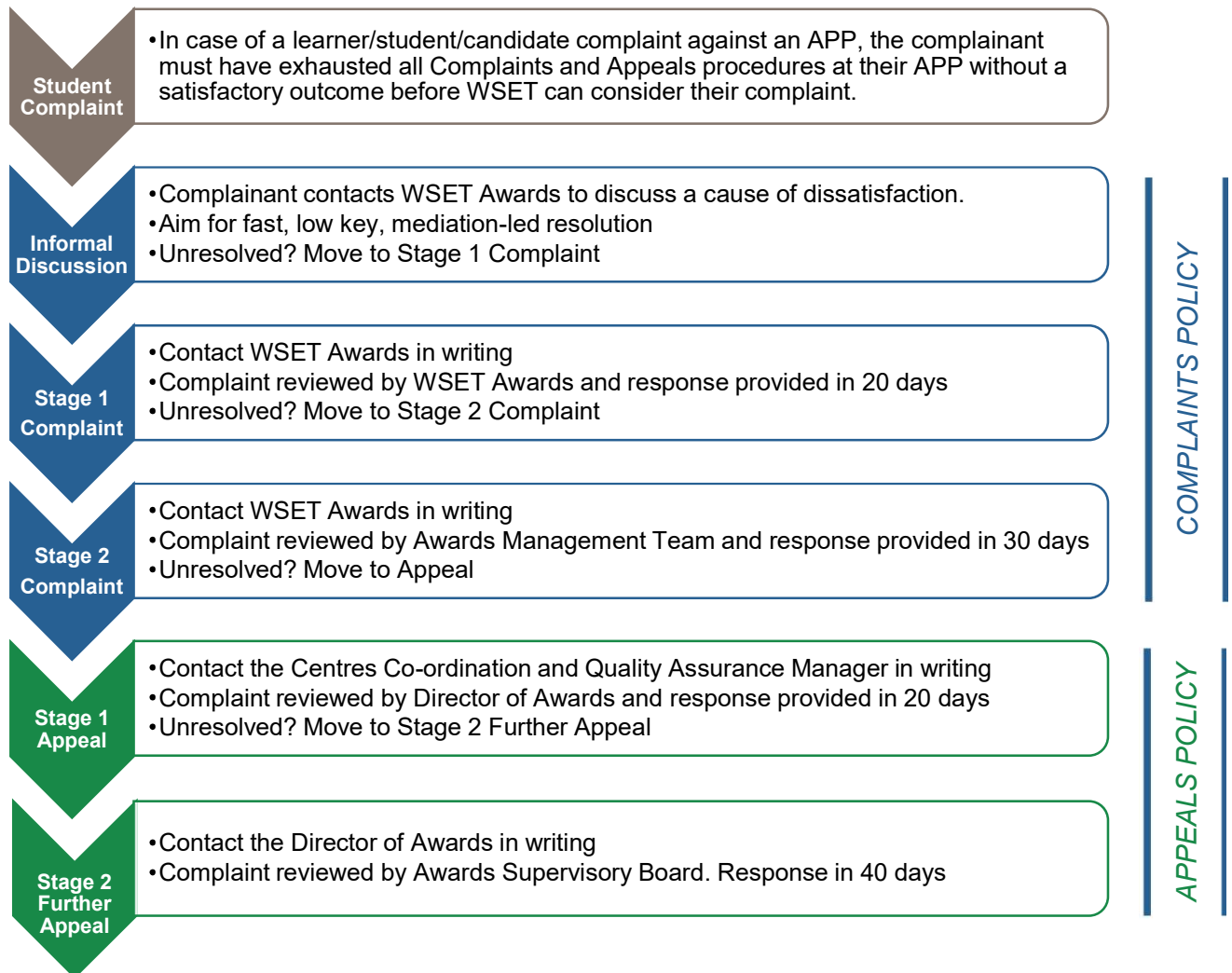


APPENDIX B: Policies

Complaints and Appeals Overview

Complaints and Appeals can be daunting and sometimes lengthy procedures. WSET Awards aims to make its policies on complaints and appeals as transparent and user-friendly as possible. This section of the Handbook contains the full policy documents on Complaints and on Appeals against WSET Awards' Decisions, the processes for which are summarised here:



Complaints Policy

WSET aims to provide a consistently excellent level of service to students and APPs. Whilst every care is taken to ensure high quality standards, there may be occasions where we fall short. Where this is the case, we would like the opportunity to improve our service by listening and responding, taking whatever action is needed to put mistakes right and to prevent them from happening again.

Policy aim and purpose

WSET Awards is committed to providing individuals directly affected by our services with the opportunity to provide feedback on whether or not standards have been met. Our customers must have confidence that they will be listened to, therefore all feedback received, both positive and negative, will be acknowledged.

The aim of this policy is to provide a clear and structured process which highlights who can make a complaint (the complainant), how they can make a complaint and what WSET Awards will do to seek a resolution to the complainant's satisfaction.

Therefore WSET Awards aims to ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as easy as possible
- An appropriate response is provided e.g. an explanation, apology or action taken
- Complaints are properly documented and reviewed to improve service

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by WSET, a member of its staff or a representative, affecting a stakeholder or group of stakeholders, especially WSET students/candidates and Approved Programme Providers.

Dissatisfaction may be associated with the service provided or with the way an individual perceives to have been treated by a WSET member of staff or representative, which may or may not be justified or associated with professional misconduct.

Equality of access and treatment

Through publication of this policy in the APP Handbook and on the WSET Global Campus, individuals can access information about complaints procedures. We are committed to ensuring all individuals have equal access to this information. The act of filing a complaint will in no way prejudice the complainant. Complainants will be guaranteed confidentiality unless they waive that right, but should be aware that while WSET Awards will not divulge their name, the circumstances of the complaint could potentially make them identifiable to other parties involved in the investigation.

Who can make a complaint?

Complaints can be made by an individual stakeholder or group of stakeholders who have been adversely affected by or have witnessed, the cause of dissatisfaction, or someone acting on behalf of the affected stakeholder (referred to as third parties).

Third parties submitting a complaint on behalf of the complainant may only do so with written permission to represent the complainant and their interests. This must be presented to and accepted by WSET Awards.

Students/candidates wishing to raise dissatisfaction about services provided by a WSET Approved Programme Provider (APP) must address their concern directly with the APP. Only when the APP's full complaints procedure has been followed and the complainant continues to remain dissatisfied with the outcome should they contact WSET Awards.

Anonymous complaints

Receiving a complaint from an unidentified source potentially limits WSET Awards' power to effectively investigate that complaint. However, if an anonymous complaint is received, WSET will consider if there is enough information in the complaint to enable further investigation. The decision on whether to pursue the complaint rests with the Head of Quality and Compliance.

How to make a complaint

Informal process

We recognise that most individuals who are dissatisfied will want a problem to be addressed as quickly as possible; therefore an informal approach may be appropriate. The informal approach aims to resolve the concern quickly, keep matters low key and enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been directed.

Therefore the complainant should contact WSET Awards for an informal discussion, in response to which we will aim to resolve the concern by providing an explanation, apology or another desirable outcome.

If a concern cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, the formal complaints procedure should be followed. It might be necessary to provide further information to ensure the complaint is fully understood, thoroughly investigated and allow for a comprehensive response to be provided.

Formal process

Stage 1

Formal complaints are submitted in writing and marked for the attention of the Head of Quality and Compliance, who will assign a Case Officer responsible for the initial investigation. When submitting a complaint, the complainant must provide the following:

- Name, address and contact information
- Full details of the complaint i.e. the cause of dissatisfaction with operations, actions or behaviour
- All supporting information i.e. relevant documentation, dates, locations, any witnesses
- Details of any previous attempts to resolve the identified dissatisfaction
- What action or response they seek to resolve the dissatisfaction.

WSET Awards log the complaint and will acknowledge the complaint in writing within **3 working days** of receipt, advising the name of the Case Officer responsible for handling the complaint.

Complaints will be investigated by the Case Officer who may contact the complainant or any other named parties for further information as required. The complainants name will not be mentioned to third parties or their identity otherwise revealed unless permission to do so has been obtained in advance.

A response, including explanation and resolution, will be provided within **20 working days** of the Case Officer being assigned (i.e. the date of the initial acknowledgement). However, where the complainant wishes their name to be withheld from an investigation, WSET Awards will not be able to provide information on the outcome other than to inform the complainant that it has been completed. Exceptionally (e.g. in especially complex or serious complaints, or where a key party is out of contact for a period of time) it may be necessary to extend the duration of the investigation. In that case, the complainant will be notified and given a revised timescale. The outcome will be recorded and incorporated into WSET Awards' Continual Improvement Plan.

Stage 2

Following Stage 1, if a complaint remains unresolved, the complainant should notify the Head of Quality and Compliance in writing that they wish to pursue the complaint to the next stage. The complaint will be referred to a member of the Awards Management Team for further investigation. Acknowledgement of further investigation

will be provided to the complainant in writing within **3 working days**, and the complainant will be notified of the individual responsible for the investigation. WSET Awards will log the further complaint.

The member of the Awards Management Team will conduct a further investigation into the cause of dissatisfaction, after which they will communicate directly with the complainant and provide an explanation and resolution. This will be communicated to the complainant within **30 working days** of the Stage 2 acknowledgement email. The duration of further investigation will depend on the nature and severity of the complaint and the complexity of the response required. In some cases the investigation may take longer and in such instances, the complainant will be notified of the revised timescale. The outcome will be recorded and incorporated into WSET Awards' Continual Improvement Plan.

Appeals

If the complainant continues to remain dissatisfied with the response provided by the Awards Management Team, the next step will be to submit an appeal, in line with the **Policy on Appeals against WSET Awards' Decisions**. All appeals must be received within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint outcome from the Awards Management Team.

Policy on Appeals against WSET Awards' Decisions

WSET Awards operates an appeals policy to ensure that decisions taken by its staff are open to review in order to identify and rectify any errors. *This policy does not apply to appeals against examination results for which a separate procedure exists.*

Who can appeal?

Appeals can be made by an individual stakeholder or group of stakeholders who have been adversely affected by a decision made by WSET Awards (the appellant), including anyone dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint made according to WSET Awards' Complaints Policy.

Appeals may also be made by someone acting on behalf of the affected stakeholder (referred to as third parties). Third parties submitting an appeal on behalf of the appellant may only do so with written permission to represent the appellant and their interests. This must be presented to and accepted by WSET Awards.

Procedure

Stage 1

Formal appeals are submitted in writing and marked for the attention of the WSET's Head of Quality and Compliance (HOQC) at qa@wsetglobal.com. The HOQC will log the appeal and pass it to the Director of WSET Awards (the 'Director') for investigation.

The appeal must be submitted within **10 working days of the cause of dissatisfaction** and the complainant must provide the following:

- Name, address and contact information
- Full details of the appeal i.e. the Awards' decision that has caused dissatisfaction
- All supporting information i.e. WSET Awards' personnel involved, relevant documentation, dates, locations, any witnesses
- Details of any previous attempts to resolve the identified dissatisfaction
- What action or response they seek to resolve the dissatisfaction.

WSET Awards will log the appeal and acknowledge it in writing within **3 working days** of receipt. The Director will investigate the appeal by conducting a complete and thorough review of the evidence on which the original decision was taken, compared to the criteria and/or policies against which this evidence was measured.

The Director will respond to the appellant in writing within **20 working days** of the acknowledgement of the appeal, providing an explanation and resolution. The duration of further investigation will depend on the nature and severity of the complaint and the complexity of the response required. In some cases the investigation may take longer and in such instances, the appellant will be notified of the revised timescale. The outcome will be recorded and incorporated into WSET Awards' Continual Improvement Plan.

Stage 2: Further Appeal

Further Appeal

Any appellant unsatisfied with the findings of their appeal may request that this be reviewed. Requests for review must be put in writing to the Director no more than **10 working days** following notification of the appeal findings. Requests received outside of this timeframe will not be reviewed. The Director will log the further appeal and will acknowledge receipt within **3 working days**. The further appeal will be passed to the Awards Supervisory Board (ASB) for review.

The ASB will contact the appellant in writing within **40 working days** of the acknowledgement of the appeal, providing an explanation and resolution. The outcome will be recorded and incorporated into WSET Awards' Continual Improvement Plan.

Conflict of Interest Policy

As a regulated awarding organisation, WSET Awards is required to identify, monitor and manage actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest ('Conflicts of Interest'). This is essential to safeguard the integrity of WSET qualifications and promote confidence in WSET Awards processes.

This policy applies to all WSET Awards staff and to any individual acting on behalf of WSET Awards. APPs must have their own conflict of interest policy which complements the provisions set out below.

Definition of Conflict of Interest

A Conflict of Interest exists where an individual has interests or loyalties that could adversely influence their judgement, objectivity or loyalty to WSET Awards when conducting activities associated with WSET qualifications.

Examples of Conflicts of Interest in the context of an awarding organisation include:

- The undertaking of any assessment of candidates by an individual who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment for any or all individuals concerned;
- The undertaking of any moderation of assessment of candidates by an individual who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment for any or all individuals concerned;
- The tutoring of candidates by an individual involved in the assessment process;
- The undertaking of a WSET qualification by any individual employed by an APP;
- The undertaking of a WSET qualification by any individual employed by WSET Awards;
- The invigilation of a WSET assessment by any individual involved in the delivery of training leading to the assessment;
- The coaching of candidates by any individual involved in the assessment of candidate scripts or the authoring of examination questions;
- The employment by an APP of individuals engaged in the delivery of taught programmes or in the role of Internal Assessor in another APP;
- The investigation of a non-compliance incident by someone who is unable to act impartially.

Some of these Conflicts of Interest can be managed and are therefore acceptable. For example, the marking of WSET Level 3 tasting assessments by Internal Assessors is verified by WSET Awards to mitigate the risk of a Conflict of Interest. Similarly, where an employee of the WSET or one of its APPs undertakes a WSET qualification, measures can be put in place to maintain the integrity of the assessment, provided this has been notified to WSET Awards in advance.

Some Conflicts of Interest cannot be managed and are not acceptable. For example, it would be inappropriate for an individual involved in the authoring of examination questions or the compilation of examination papers to teach or coach students.

Identification of Conflicts of Interest

Any individual involved in the delivery of WSET qualifications who becomes aware of a Conflict of Interest must inform the Head of Quality and Compliance (HOQC) in writing immediately. Conflict of Interest declarations will be recorded by WSET Awards on the Conflicts of Interest Register.

Please note that any APP who fails to declare a Conflict of Interest may be in breach of its terms of approval and sanctions may be applied in accordance with the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy. Where a Conflict of Interest is identified by WSET Awards rather than the individual(s) concerned, the HOQC will take steps to mitigate the effect of the Conflict of Interest and may apply sanctions to an APP in accordance with the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

Management of Conflicts of Interest

WSET Awards has procedures in place to manage specific Conflicts of Interest. These include the exclusive involvement of WSET Awards staff in the creation of all assessment materials, moderation of all internal assessments conducted by APPs and moderation of all written examinations not marked by optical mark readers. Other Conflicts of Interest will be managed on a case-by-case basis. The HOQC has responsibility for the management of Conflicts of Interest relating to the work of WSET Awards. The members of the WSET Senior Management Group have responsibility for the management of conflicts of interest relating to functions of the Wine and Spirit Education Trust's functions as a whole.

The HOQC will consult with the Director to agree how to mitigate any Conflict of Interest. The Director will decide when and how Conflicts of Interest and the steps taken to mitigate them should be escalated within the Wine & Spirit Education Trust, to the Board of Trustees or to the Regulator.