

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

This document sets out VetSkill’s complaints policy and procedure and is intended for centres, training providers, learners, apprentices and all interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from VetSkill.

VetSkill values the centres and training providers delivering our qualifications and apprenticeships, and the learners and apprentices who undertake them. Accordingly, our aim is to provide them with excellence of service and to address lapses in our service delivery promptly and effectively.

Should you feel you have encountered a level of service that is below both your and our expectations, please raise any concerns you may have with us immediately, so that we may address them and use your experience to improve our systems and/or approach.

2. Scope

This policy covers complaints from learners, apprentices, centres, training providers, employers or members of the public in relation to the qualifications, End-point Assessments, Registers and associated services offered or held by VetSkill.

It is not to be used to cover appeals in relation to decisions made by VetSkill. These areas are covered by VetSkill’s *Enquiries and Appeals Policy*. Should a complaint be submitted which is in fact an assessment enquiry or an appeal, we will inform the relevant party that the issue is

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being considered, where appropriate, in accordance with the approach outlined in VetSkill's *Customer Service Statement or Enquiries and Appeals Policy*.

If you are unhappy about the way an examination or assessment was delivered and conducted and suspect malpractice or maladministration may have occurred, you should send your concern to us in accordance with the arrangements in VetSkill's *Malpractice and Maladministration Policy*.

3. Centre or Training Provider's Responsibility

VetSkill centre's or training providers, should take all responsible steps to ensure that staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications and End-point Assessments, and learners and apprentices, are aware of the contents of this policy. Centre's and training providers must have a complaint handling procedure and appeals process in place to deal with complaints from learners or apprentices about the services received directly from the centre or training provider. Where an individual is dissatisfied with a service or activity being delivered by a centre or training provider, they must first of all go through the centre or training provider's complaints process before bringing the matter to VetSkill's attention.

4. Process

Most complaints arise from simple misunderstandings. All VetSkill staff have been trained to help our customers, so you should first try to sort out any problem at the earliest opportunity by speaking to the person with whom you have already been communicating. If they cannot help you, or you wish to speak to someone else, you can ask to speak to our Standards Team. If this is not possible, or if you are not satisfied with the help provided by the Standards Team,

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please send a written complaint, normally within one (1) month of the occurrence you are complaining about, using the contact details provided at the end of this policy.

Learners, apprentices, or members of the public, who wish to complain about a level of service provided by a centre or training provider at which they have taken a VetSkill qualification, should have exhausted this establishment's own complaints process before bringing the complaint to VetSkill. However, in exceptional circumstances, learners and apprentices can make the complaint directly to us. This should only occur where a learner or apprentice feels there was a significant breach, by the centre or training provider, of VetSkill procedures.

When you contact VetSkill, please give us your full name, a daytime telephone number and your email address, along with:

- a full description of your complaint, including the subject matter, and dates and times if known
- any names of the people you have dealt with so far
- copies of any documentation relating to the complaint.

A *Complaints Form* is available for individuals to complete and submit to VetSkill. Please access this via our website: www.vetskill.com or alternatively request a copy from priority@vetskill.com.

VetSkill treats all complaints sensitively, however it is sometimes necessary to contact a centre or training provider as part of the complaint investigation; please inform us if you do not wish for us to divulge your identity during our investigations. You must, however, give us your name and contact details; we cannot investigate anonymous complaints. Learner and or apprentice consent will always be sought before discussing their complaint with a centre or training provider.

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6. Complaints Brought to VetSkill’s Attention by Regulators

Where our regulators notify us about failures that have been discovered in the assessment process, or other activities, of another awarding organisation, these will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints, in accordance with the procedures below, to ascertain if the same issue could affect VetSkill qualifications or End-point Assessments.

7. Complaint Investigation and Timeline

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 48 hours, and let you know who is investigating your complaint.

Our Responsible/Accountable Officer will be responsible for ensuring the investigation is carried out in a prompt and effective manner and in accordance with the procedures in this policy. They will allocate a relevant member of staff to lead the investigation and establish whether or not issue relating to the complaint has occurred.

At all times we will ensure that VetSkill personnel assigned to the investigation have the appropriate level of training and competence, and that they have had no previous involvement or personal interest in the matter.

We aim to investigate the complaint within ten (10) working days. If your complaint is more complex, or involves people who are not available at the time, we may extend this to twenty (20) working days. We may contact you within this period to seek further information or clarification (in some instances we may recommend a meeting). At the end of the investigation we will explain what went wrong and why, act to provide a solution as soon as possible and apologise where appropriate.

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If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can take the matter further by asking for your complaint to be escalated to the appropriate manager who will evaluate all of the information provided and establish whether correct procedure has been followed.

If you remain unhappy with our decision, following investigation of your complaint, you can, where relevant, take the matter through our appeal arrangements, outlined in our *Enquiries and Appeals Policy*. If, after you have exhausted our appeals arrangements, you are still unsatisfied with the outcomes, you can complain/appeal directly to the relevant regulatory authority for the qualification (for example Ofqual in England, or CCEA in Northern Ireland) or End-point Assessment (for example IfATE or QAA) providing evidence that you have instigated VetSkill’s complaints procedure in the first instance.

8. Successful Complaints/Issues Brought to VetSkill’s Attention by Regulators

If any part of your complaint is upheld we will respond accordingly and give due consideration to how we can improve our service and arrangements. For example, by reviewing our procedures to assess the impact on our qualification or End-point Assessment development, delivery or awarding arrangements, and assessment processes (if relevant), or by arranging for staff training. In extreme circumstances, internal disciplinary procedures may be exercised where the performance or behaviour of our staff is deemed at serious fault.

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

- identifying any other learner or apprentice, and/or centre or training provider who has been affected by that failure
- correcting, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigating, as far as possible, the effect of the failure

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- reviewing and amending our arrangements, where appropriate, to reduce the likelihood of a similar failure occurring in the future
- starting internal disciplinary procedures against a member of our staff if we found their behaviour was seriously at variance with our internal procedures and arrangements.

9. Review Arrangements

VetSkill will review this policy and its associated procedures annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements, and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer, learner, apprentice or regulatory feedback (for example, to align with any appeals and complaints processes established by the regulators) and any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received.

If you would like to provide us with feedback, please contact us using the contact details provided.

10. Contact Us

If you have any queries about the contents of this policy, please contact VetSkill on 01480 278584 or email at priority@vetskill.com

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Review Arrangements and Version Control:

This version of VetSkill's *Complaints Policy* replaces all previous versions. This document is subject to regular revision and is maintained electronically by its owner. Electronic copies are version controlled. Printed copies are not subject to this control. VetSkill will review this policy regularly as part of internal continuous improvement processes and will revise it as and when necessary in response to customer and learner/apprentice feedback, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies, changes in legislation, or trends identified from previous situations.

Documented changes from previous version	
Section	Change
Introduction	Terminology changed to incorporate AO and EPAO staff and stakeholders.
Footer Table	Enhancement to policy document format – version control

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