Exam Complaints and Internal Appeals Policy

How learners and parents can raise a complaint or appeal a decision about their assessment.

Awarding organisation	VQA
Approved by	Christine Jamieson, Head of Centre
Date approved	November 2026
Next review	November 2027

Exam Complaints and Internal Appeals Policy

Centre	Maximize Education Ltd, 9 Telford Court, Loansdean, Morpeth, NE61 2DB
Awarding organisation	VQA, formerly TQUK (Functional Skills English and maths, Levels 1 and 2)
Head of Centre	Christine Jamieson, CEO
Centre Contact and Exams Officer	Joe Briddon, General Manager
Complaints contact	Joe Briddon, General Manager, admin@maximizeeducation.com
Date approved	November 2026
Next review	November 2027, or sooner if VQA guidance changes

1. Purpose of the policy

This policy sets out how learners, and their parents or carers, can raise a complaint about how Maximize Education delivers or administers a VQA qualification.

VQA only accepts a complaint from a learner once they have complained to their centre and completed the centre's full complaints process. VQA also expects learners to raise questions about their results through their centre first. This policy is that process. It also sets out our internal appeals procedure (section 7). Questions about a result for a test marked by VQA are handled through VQA's enquiries about results service, as set out in section 3.

2. Grounds for complaint

A learner, or their parent or carer, may make a complaint on the grounds below. This is not a complete list.

Teaching and learning

- Quality of teaching and learning, for example a tutor without adequate training or subject knowledge used on a long-term basis
- Core content not adequately covered
- Inadequate feedback following an assessment
- An assessment that counts towards the qualification not conducted in line with VQA's requirements
- Learner not told their centre-assessed result, such as for English Speaking, Listening and Communicating, before it is submitted to VQA
- Learner not given enough time to request a review of a centre-assessed result before it is submitted
- Learner unhappy with an internal assessment decision (see section 7)
- Centre fails to follow its internal appeals procedure (section 7)

Reasonable adjustments and special consideration

- Learner's need for reasonable adjustments not properly assessed by the centre
- Learner not involved in decisions about their reasonable adjustments
- Learner's personal data shared for reasonable adjustments without their consent
- Learner not told which adjustments are in place, or which tests they do not apply to
- Exam information not adapted for a disabled learner to access it

- Adapted equipment or assistive technology failed during a test
- Approved reasonable adjustments not in place at the time of a test
- Adjustments not put in place for a temporary injury or impairment
- Learner unhappy with a centre decision on reasonable adjustments or special consideration (see section 7)

Registration and booking

- Registration or booking decision not clearly explained to the learner or their parent or carer
- Learner not registered, or registered late, for a required test
- Learner registered or booked for the wrong test or level

Conducting exams

- Learner not properly briefed on exam arrangements and rules before the test
- Exam room did not provide suitable conditions
- Inadequate invigilation
- Test not conducted in line with the JCQ Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments or VQA's requirements
- Online system failed during an onscreen test
- Disruption during the test
- Suspected malpractice not investigated or reported
- Learner not told the outcome of a special consideration application, where VQA provides it

Results and enquiries about results

- Before the test, learner not told about enquiries about results or how to contact senior staff after results are issued
- Learner unable to speak to a senior member of staff after results to discuss a review
- Learner unhappy with a result (referred through the Exams Officer to VQA's enquiries about results service)
- Learner unhappy with a centre decision not to support an enquiry or appeal (see section 7)
- Centre applied for the wrong service, or for the wrong learner's work
- Centre missed VQA's deadline for an enquiry about results
- Centre applied for an enquiry about results without the learner's consent
- Learner's work not available after external quality assurance, or disposed of earlier than VQA allows

3. Raising a concern

We encourage learners and parents or carers to raise any concern informally first. Contact Joe Briddon, General Manager, at admin@maximizeeducation.com to arrange a meeting. Most concerns can be resolved quickly this way. If the concern is about Joe, contact the Head of Centre, Christine Jamieson, instead.

If the concern is about a result for a test marked by VQA (English reading, English writing or maths), Joe will explain VQA's enquiries about results service, which includes a clerical check and a review of marking, and help the learner apply through the Exams Officer (see section 7.2).

4. Making a formal complaint

If a concern is not resolved informally, a formal complaint can be made. To do this:

1. Complete our complaints form (Appendix A), available from the office or by emailing admin@maximizeeducation.com.
2. Email it to admin@maximizeeducation.com, or hand it in at 9 Telford Court, Loansdean, Morpeth, NE61 2DB.
3. The complaint is logged on our complaints log and acknowledged within 2 working days.
4. It is then passed to the Head of Centre, Christine Jamieson.

If a learner or parent or carer needs help to make a complaint, they can make it by phone or in person and a member of staff will complete the form with them.

5. How a formal complaint is investigated

The Head of Centre, or a member of staff she appoints who was not involved, investigates the complaint. This includes reviewing the evidence and speaking to the people involved.

The findings and conclusion are sent to the complainant in writing within 10 working days. If more time is needed, we will explain why and give a new date.

6. Appealing a complaint outcome

If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome and believes there are clear grounds, they can appeal.

1. Write to admin@maximizeeducation.com, or to 9 Telford Court, Loansdean, Morpeth, NE61 2DB, within 10 working days of receiving the outcome. Mark it as an appeal and explain the reasons.
2. The appeal is logged and acknowledged within 2 working days.
3. It is reviewed by a member of the management team who was not involved in the original complaint. If no one is available, an independent person from outside Maximize reviews it.
4. The final decision is sent to the appellant in writing within 10 working days. This completes our complaints process.

Taking a complaint further

If the complainant is still unhappy once our process is complete, or if the complaint is about VQA rather than Maximize, they can complain to VQA using VQA's Complaint Form, sent to support@VQA.org or by phone on 0333 358 3344. VQA normally considers complaints made within 12 months of the issue.

If they are still unhappy after VQA's process, they can contact the regulator, Ofqual. Ofqual normally expects VQA's complaints process to be completed first.

7. Internal appeals procedure

This procedure covers appeals against decisions made by Maximize Education. Appeals against VQA's decisions follow VQA's Appeals Policy, and must normally be made within 4 weeks of VQA notifying the result or decision.

Unless stated otherwise below, the reviewer is a member of the management team who was not involved in the original decision and has no personal interest in it. If no one is available, an independent person from outside Maximize reviews it. All appeals and outcomes are recorded, and the records are made available to VQA on request. This procedure is shared with learners at enrolment and is available on request.

7.1 Centre-assessed results

This applies to internally assessed work, such as English Speaking, Listening and Communicating, which is assessed by our staff as pass or fail.

1. Before results are submitted to VQA, we tell learners their result. We explain that it is provisional until it is confirmed through VQA's external quality assurance.
2. Learners can ask for a copy of their assessment record and the assessment criteria. We provide them within 2 working days. Recordings can only be viewed under supervision.
3. Learners can request a review within 5 working days of receiving the copies, by writing to the Exams Officer at admin@maximizeeducation.com and giving their reasons. We tell learners this deadline when we give them their result.
4. The review is carried out by someone with the right expertise who did not assess or quality assure the learner's work and has no personal interest in the outcome. This may be a tutor from another centre.
5. The reviewer checks the decision against VQA's assessment criteria and our agreed standard, and corrects any errors. They give reasons for keeping or changing the decision. The learner's work and recording are not changed during the review.
6. The learner is told the outcome in writing before the result is submitted to VQA. The review is logged and passed to the Head of Centre, who makes the final decision if there is a disagreement.

7.2 Decisions about enquiries about results

1. Before their test, learners are told about VQA's enquiries about results service and how to contact the Exams Officer after results are issued.
2. After results are issued, a learner can ask the Exams Officer to request a clerical check or review of marking from VQA. We need the learner's written consent, given after results are issued, because their result could go down as well as up. We keep the consent for at least 6 months.
3. If we decide not to support the request, we explain why in writing.
4. The learner can appeal that decision within 5 working days, in writing to admin@maximizeeducation.com.
5. The appeal is decided within 5 working days, so that VQA's 4-week deadline is not missed. If the appeal is upheld, we submit the request.
6. We explain any VQA fee to the learner before a request is made.

7.3 Reasonable adjustments and special consideration

1. If a learner, or their parent or carer, disagrees with a centre decision about reasonable adjustments or special consideration, they can appeal in writing to admin@maximizeeducation.com within 5 working days of the decision.
2. The reviewer considers the evidence and VQA's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy.
3. The outcome is given in writing within 5 working days, and before the learner's test where possible.

VQA requires every centre to have an appeals process for learners who disagree with its adjustment decisions. This section is that process. If the decision was made by VQA, the learner can appeal to VQA under its Appeals Policy, after first checking VQA's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy. We will help them do this.

7.4 Malpractice decisions

Appeals against internal decisions about malpractice follow the process in section 6, within 10 working days. Our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy sets out how malpractice is handled.

8. Records and review

All complaints and appeals, and their outcomes, are recorded on our complaints log. Records are kept securely in line with data protection law, for at least 3 years and until any appeal, malpractice case or results enquiry is complete, whichever is later. We keep all qualification evidence at least until results are received, and internally assessed work and recordings for at least 3 years.

This policy is shared with learners and parents or carers at enrolment and is available on request. The Head of Centre reviews it every year, or sooner if VQA guidance changes, and shares it with all staff.

Approval

	Name	Date
Approved by Head of Centre	Christine Jamieson	
Signed		
Next review		November 2027

References

- VQA, Complaints Policy (CS.P.1)
- VQA, Appeals Policy (C.P.1)
- VQA, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy
- JCQ, Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments (English and mathematics), 2025 to 2026
- Ofqual, Complaints to Ofqual guidance

Appendix A: Exam Complaints Form

Please complete this form and email it to admin@maximizeeducation.com, or hand it in at 9 Telford Court, Loansdean, Morpeth, NE61 2DB.

Your details

Learner name	
VQA registration number (if known)	
Name of person completing this form, if not the learner	
Relationship to learner	
Email and phone number	

Your complaint

Qualification and test date	
What the complaint is about (tick one)	☐ Teaching and learning ☐ Reasonable adjustments or special consideration ☐ Registration and booking ☐ Conducting exams ☐ Results and enquiries about results ☐ Other
What happened	
Have you raised this informally? If so, with whom and when?	
What outcome would you like?	
Signature and date	

For office use

Date received	
Date acknowledged	
Passed to Head of Centre (date)	
Outcome sent (date)	