

SFEDI[®]AWARDS

Sanctions Policy

Version 2.3

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This version of the policy replaces all previous versions. This policy is subject to regular reviews and is maintained electronically by its owners. Electronic copies are version controlled; printed copies are not subject to this control.

Version History

Version	Month/Year	Section Updated	Description	Reviewed By	Signed off By
2.1	January 2023	All	Multiple changes due to annual review	N Preston	R Lowbridge
2.2	January 2024	All	Multiple changes due to annual review	S Trouten	R Lowbridge
2.3	September 2025	All	To include a breakdown of non-compliance Issues, sanctions levels explained, sanctions imposed and what this means New format layout	Quality Team	R Lowbridge

About this policy

This policy outlines SFEDI Awards arrangements for sanctions. SFEDI Awards has a responsibility to protect the interests of learners completing our qualifications to ensure that all Centres deliver qualifications in accordance with our requirements and standards which are regulated by Ofqual, SQAA and Qualifications Wales.

The policy is aimed at all approved Centres who are offering units and/or qualifications that are regulated. It is also used internally to ensure that any sanctions are dealt with consistently. Sanctions are outlined that could be imposed on centres that do not meet the standard that SFEDI Awards set for the delivery and assessment of qualifications and/or units.

Definitions

SFEDI Awards define sanctions as a punitive action that can be applied to an approved Centre that do not meet with SFEDI Awards policies, procedures or guidance that may pose a risk to the integrity of the awarding organisation. Sanctions can be applied against a centre, staff, learner or any third party.

Sanction Levels Explained

Level	Rationale	Sanction	What does it mean?
1	Some non-compliance with Centre recognition criteria but no threat to the integrity of assessment decisions.	Action Plan.	One or more of the following: - Sanctions will be communicated in writing if identified outside of a Quality Assurance Check - Action point(s) to be identified in the EQA report - May include a condition or temporary suspension of registrations until action point(s) are completed and evidenced to SFEDI Awards - Centre required to review the Centre's procedures and to report back to SFEDI Awards on improvements implemented by a set date.
2	Some doubt about the integrity of assessment decisions practices. Non-compliance with the Centre recognition criteria. Not responding to actions.	Greater scrutiny of assessment, and/or internal quality assurance to ensure integrity of decisions and practices. Additional quality assurance visits. Increased risk rating.	One or more of the following: - Assessments and/or quality assurance practices and decisions scrutinised by SFEDI Awards - Action plan agreed between SFEDI Awards and the Centre, to be implemented, with timescales. Please note that such timescales can vary and they are subject to the type of non compliance under investigation - Temporary suspension of certification for specific qualification(s) / unit(s) - Centre required to review the Centre's procedures and to report back to SFEDI Awards on improvements implemented by a set date.
3	Loss of integrity of assessment decisions and/or quality assurance practices.	Suspension of registration and/or certification. Removal of Direct	One or more of the following: - Loss of Direct Claims Status with all certification claims to be authorised by SFEDI Awards

Level	Rationale	Sanction	What does it mean?
	Risk of invalid claims, or possibility of invalid claims, for certification. Non-compliance with the Centre recognition criteria. Failure to comply with financial terms and conditions and/or financial risk.	Claims Status. Increased risk rating.	- Assessments practices and decisions scrutinised by SFEDI Awards - SFEDI Awards may increase, at the Centre's expense, the normal level of quality assurance monitoring that takes place in relation to the qualification(s) - Action plan agreed between SFEDI Awards and Centre, to be implemented, with timescales. Timescales may vary subject to the type of non-compliance under investigation - Temporary suspension of registration and/or certification of qualifications/ units or Learners - Centre required to review the Centre's procedures and to report back to the SFEDI Awards on improvements implemented by a set date - Immediate payment terms.
4	Breakdown in management and quality assurance of specific qualifications/units, including examination practices.	Withdrawal of approval for specific qualification(s), unit(s) or provision areas. Increased risk rating.	Withdrawal of Centre approval to deliver specific SFEDI Awards qualification(s)/unit(s) - temporarily or permanently.
5	Breakdown in management and quality assurance of all qualifications/units.	Withdrawal of approval for all qualification(s), unit(s) and provision areas. Withdrawal of Centre Recognition.	Withdrawal of Centre approval to deliver all SFEDI Awards qualification(s)/unit(s) -- temporarily or permanently

Centre Staff Sanctions

“Centre Staff” refers to any individual working for or on behalf of the Centre, either as an employee or in any capacity such as (but not limited to) a consultant, trainer, assessor, or IQA.

Sanctions may be limited to specific members of staff where SFEDI Awards has no confidence in the competence of an individual to carry out their duties at a Centre. Please note that sanctions imposed upon staff do not replace the requirement on all Centres to ensure that they have a workforce of sufficient competence to deliver, assess and internally quality assure their provision. Furthermore, if SFEDI Awards has placed a sanction on an individual to prevent them from carrying out a specific role or activity, any attempt to circumvent this sanction will be treated as malpractice and a threat to the integrity of qualifications. This will lead to an escalation in sanctions.

Sanctions will be communicated to the individual concerned within ten (10) working days of the decision being made. Any sanction imposed on any individual will apply to all SFEDI Awards Centres in which the individual is working. SFEDI Awards will share information about the sanction imposed on the individual with all SFEDI Awards Centres for which the individual is listed or approved to work.

Sanction Imposed	What does this mean?
Written warning	Member of staff issued with a written warning that if the offence is repeated, further specified sanctions will be applied.
Special conditions	Special conditions imposed on future involvement in assessments and/or quality assurance by the member of staff.
Training	Member of staff required, as a condition of future involvement in assessments and/or quality assurance, to undertake specific training or mentoring, within a stated period of time, with a review at the end of the training.
Suspension or Permanent Ban	Member of staff barred from all involvement in the delivery of its assessments and/or quality assurance, either for a set period of time or permanently. Other Awarding Organisations/Access Validating Agencies will be informed when a suspension/permanent ban is imposed.

Learner Sanctions

Any sanction imposed on any learner will apply to all SFEDI Awards Centres in which the candidate is registered – for example, if a candidate is disqualified from a unit, they will not be allowed to be registered for that unit in any SFEDI Awards Centre.

Although learner malpractice is typically dealt with by Centres within the assessment and internal quality assurance procedures, it is possible that SFEDI Awards may have due cause to impose a sanction on a learner directly. Where learner malpractice has occurred, following investigation and/or a hearing, SFEDI Awards reserves the right to invalidate and revoke the learner's issued unit or full qualification certificate. Please refer to SFEDI Awards Malpractice and Maladministration Policy which provides further details on the timelines for investigation. Sanctions will be communicated to the learner concerned, and to any SFEDI Awards Approved Centre at which the learner is registered, within ten (10) working days of the decision being made.

Sanction Imposed	What does this mean?
Written warning	Candidate issued with a warning that if the offence is repeated, further specified sanctions will be applied.
Disqualification for a unit	Candidate disqualified from the unit. Any qualifications and/or units previously achieved in full are retained.
Disqualification from a whole qualification	Learner disqualified from the whole qualification taken in that series. Any qualifications and/or units previously achieved in full are retained.
Learner barred	Learner barred from undertaking further qualifications. Any qualifications and/or units previously achieved in full are retained.
Unit or qualification achievement invalidated	The learner's issued certificate is revoked, cancelled and withdrawn. Relevant stakeholders will be notified immediately.

Qualification Approval Risk (QAR)

This table details the non-compliance criteria used to measure the validity and reliability of centre assessment. The QAR status reflects the severity of the risk and dictate a centre's ability to register and certificate learners. EQAs will recommend an overall Risk status for the Centre, following verification, which will be confirmed and applied by SFEDI Awards.

EQAs will refer to these criteria on the EQA Report that they complete for each quality assurance check.

Management systems

Non-Compliance Issue	Risk Rating
Inadequate arrangements in place to ensure learners registered correctly within four (4) weeks	1

Non-Compliance Issue	Risk Rating
Failure to update changes to the initial centre approval application on management systems	1
No single named centre contact	2
Insufficient or inadequate centre systems to support the assessment of qualifications	3/4
Failure to demonstrate adequate policies and procedures to meet regulatory requirements	3/4

Resources

Non-Compliance Issue	Risk Rating
Insufficient arrangements in place for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	1
Failure to update changes in assessment materials, from those of initial centre approval	1

Learner Support

Non-Compliance Issue	Risk Rating
Insufficient arrangements in place to access the learners' previous achievement with learner consent or for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	1
Insufficient staff to support the assessment of qualifications	4
No competent Assessors/IQAs in role, or Assessors/IQAs do not have the required competency and experience to perform their role	4

Assessment

Non-Compliance Issue	Risk Rating
Learners are assessed before they are registered	1/2
Centre fails to notify SFEDI Awards that an assessor is taking a qualification in their vocational area, in their own centre	3
Insufficient arrangements in place to hold and transmit securely the details of assessment outcomes	3

Non-Compliance Issue	Risk Rating
Inadequate, administrative system in place to track and record learner progress	2/3
Centre does not comply with assessment recording requirements	3
Documented evidence of assessment(s) carried out in language other than English or Welsh without prior agreement	3
Centre using an unregistered assessor	2/3
Centre using an unregistered IQA	3/4
Assessment arrangements do not comply with requirements in the qualification and assessment documentation	4
Centre staff registered on a qualification they are delivering and assessing	4
Insufficient established and maintained internal quality assurance system	4
Adequate assessment records not retained	4
No authentication of certification claims by IQA	4
Assessor/IQAs are not performing their role functions accountably or responsibly	4
Ineffective internal assessment processes and practices	4/5
Insufficient explicit internal quality assurance procedures	4/5
No declaration of authenticity for learner evidence	2/3

Quality Assurance

Non-Compliance Issue	Risk Rating
Failure to notify SFEDI Awards of certificates claimed in error/invalid certificates	3
Insufficient evidence to demonstrate effectiveness of internal quality assurance procedures	3
Insufficient quality monitoring and/or consistency of practice within centre and across sites	3/4
Centre staff behaving in an unreasonable, hostile or obstructive manner	4/5
SFEDI Awards staff or representatives prevented access to premises, people and records	4/5
Certificates claimed prior to completion	4/5
Providing inaccurate statements in information and submissions	4/5
Failure to report malpractice	4/5
Failure to cooperate with any malpractice investigation	4/5

Non-Compliance Issue	Risk Rating
No declaration of previous withdrawal of centre and or/qualification approval by another Awarding Organisation	5

Records

Non-Compliance Issue	Risk Rating
Centre does not comply with requirements regarding recording assessment and/or IQA decisions	3/4
Insufficient established and maintained or auditable internal quality assurance system	4
Adequate learner assessment records (assessor tracking with date of assessment, type of assessment and outcome) and IQA assessment records and/or reports not kept	4
Learner assessment and/or IQA records not retained for three years	3/4
Non-compliance with data and legal requirements	5

Continuous Improvement

Non-Compliance Issue	Risk Rating
Insufficient training, support or development opportunities for assessors and/or IQAs	1
Insufficient evidence of IQA development	1
Insufficient evidence of standardisation training taking place	2

Additional Information

Failure of a Centre to Meet Payment Terms

SFEDI Awards reserves the right to suspend services and ultimately to cease working with any Centre which fails to meet its payment term or is deemed a financial risk. In all such cases SFEDI Awards will endeavour to ensure the security of learner achievement and will discuss options available to the Centre.

Notifications to Regulators and other Awarding Organisations / Access Validating Agencies (AVAs)

SFEDI Awards will immediately inform Ofqual of any serious breaches relating to Regulated Qualifications as outlined in General Condition B3 – for example, those which it deems may have an adverse effect on the integrity of the qualification and/or of SFEDI Awards, Ofqual or other awarding bodies. SFEDI Awards will immediately inform the QAA of serious breaches relating to Access to HE Diplomas where certificates have been issued in error or they threaten the reputation of the Access to HE Diploma qualification, in line with Licensing Criteria 25 and 48. SFEDI Awards is required to share certain information relating to the imposition of sanctions with other Awarding Organisations. This may impact upon a Centre's ability to deliver qualifications with other Awarding Organisations.

Notifications from Regulators and other Awarding Organisations / Access Validating Agencies (AVAs)

In cases where SFEDI Awards is informed of sanctions imposed by a regulator and/or another Awarding Organisation or stakeholder, on centres it is also working with, SFEDI Awards will take appropriate action to check the centre's current activity, its quality assurance performance to date, undertake a Risk Assessment based on the information provided, and where appropriate, make arrangements to increase SFEDI Awards' monitoring of the centre to ensure that the award of credit of SFEDI Awards qualifications/units is sound and safeguarded.

Appeals

Centres, Centre staff and learners have the right to appeal against any sanction which has been imposed. Appeals received by SFEDI Awards will acknowledge within ten (10) working days. Full details can be found in the SFEDI Awards Appeals Policy.

Regulation

This policy supports compliance with:

- Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
- SQAA accreditation requirements and principles
- Qualifications Wales regulations
- Regulatory requirements for sanctions and centre management.

Review Arrangements

We will review this policy as part of our annual self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer and learner feedback, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies, changes in legislation, or trends identified from previous allegations.

In addition, this policy may be updated considering operational feedback to ensure our arrangements for dealing with sanctions remain effective.

If you would like to feedback any views, please contact us via the details provided at the end of this policy.

Other relate Polices and Documents

- Centre Agreement
- Withdrawal Policy
- Appeals Policy
- Maladministration and Malpractice Policy
- Invoicing Policy
- Registration and Certification Policy
- Retention of Records Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Standardisation Policy

Contact Us:

If you have any questions about the content of this policy, please contact our customer service department.

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