



# **Complaints Policy and Procedures**

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## Policy Statement

Laser Learning Awards (LASER)<sup>1</sup> is committed to providing a high quality service and to maintaining the highest standards for its learners, centres, and other stakeholders. However, if you are dissatisfied with the service you have received from LASER, you may make a complaint.

This policy sets out how you can make a complaint to LASER, and LASER's procedures for dealing with complaints.

LASER's procedures for dealing with complaints are intended to ensure that any complaint received is dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently. LASER aims to resolve complaints promptly, however these matters can be complex and may require scrutiny of extensive documentation and/or visits to centres, which in some cases may take some time.

## Policy Relevance

LASER will consider complaints from learners, centres, or others, in relation to the provision and associated services which it offers.

Complaints against a LASER centre must always be made directly to the centre in the first instance, and can only be accepted by LASER if you have exhausted the centre's own Complaints Policy and Procedures.

This policy does not cover appeals against a decision made by LASER which includes assessment/examination results. If you wish to make an appeal, please follow the LASER Appeals Policy and Procedures which can be found on the LASER web site: [www.laser-awards.org.uk](http://www.laser-awards.org.uk).

Complaints are different from whistleblowing, which is a term used when someone discloses information relating to malpractice or wrongdoing and/or the covering up of malpractice or wrongdoing which affects others but does not usually affect the person directly. The LASER Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures can be found on the LASER web site: [www.laser-awards.org.uk](http://www.laser-awards.org.uk).

If you suspect that malpractice or maladministration may have taken place in relation to LASER provision/examinations/assessments which directly affects or potentially affects yourself, please follow the LASER Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedures which can be found on the LASER web site: [www.laser-awards.org.uk](http://www.laser-awards.org.uk).

LASER does not wish to present any financial barrier to anyone wishing to make a complaint, and will therefore not make any charge to complainants unless it is found that the complaint is either frivolous or malicious, in which case LASER reserves the right to charge a fee and/or to take other action against the complainant, which may include removal of the complainant's centre's approval to deliver LASER qualification(s).

## Policy Responsibility and Review

This policy is the responsibility of the Quality Manager, and will be reviewed by March 2018 at the latest.

## Informal Complaints Procedure

Most issues can be resolved informally and quickly, and this should be the first action you take. You should contact either the member of staff concerned, or the Quality Manager, to explain your complaint, and this can be verbal. Contact details can be found on the LASER web site: [www.laser-awards.org.uk](http://www.laser-awards.org.uk).

You should make your complaint as soon as possible but within ten working days<sup>2</sup> of the event you are complaining about.

## Formal Complaints Procedure

If your complaint cannot be resolved informally, you should send it in writing (which can be by email) to the Quality Manager. Contact details can be found on the LASER web site: [www.laser-awards.org.uk](http://www.laser-awards.org.uk).

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<sup>1</sup> All references to LASER in this document also refer equally to Trident Awards, which is the brand name for LASER's work in the security industry.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this document, number of working days does not include weekends, English public holidays, or LASER's Christmas office closure dates.

You must make your complaint as soon as possible but within ten working days of receiving a response from your informal complaint, or reaching the end of your centre's own Complaints Policy and Procedures.

You should state that you wish to make a formal complaint, and include:

- Your full name (see Confidentiality section below).
- Your contact details.
- A clear and full explanation of your complaint including names of any staff involved.
- Copies of any relevant documents and/or supporting evidence.

LASER will acknowledge the complaint within five working days of receipt, and will determine whether the matter falls within the scope of the LASER Complaints Policy and Procedures as outlined above in Policy Relevance.

If the complaint is not within its scope, LASER will explain why the complaint cannot be acted upon. If there is a relevant alternative policy and procedure, you will be advised of this.

LASER will gather any relevant information, evidence or documents and investigate your complaint. This may include contacting you to discuss your complaint and/or for further information or clarification.

If the investigation requires additional visits to a centre, the centre will be charged £250 plus expenses for each visit, and/or other fees may be charged to the centre as necessary (eg courier fees to send assessment evidence). These fees are non-refundable.

Once all information is gathered, LASER will draw a conclusion and will write to you to explain this, within 20 working days of receiving your complaint, though often this will be sooner. If this is not possible, for example if all the required evidence cannot be gathered in this time, then LASER will tell you this within 20 working days, and will tell you the length of time expected to be needed.

## **Recommendations and/or Requirements Arising from a Complaint**

Whatever the outcome of your complaint, LASER may identify recommendations and/or requirements to be taken by LASER itself and/or by centres, to improve LASER's service and/or to address concerns/issues. LASER will ensure that any such recommendations and/or requirements are actioned, and centres are required to co-operate with LASER where relevant to ensure that this happens.

If LASER identifies any failure in its processes, including anything which may compromise the integrity of LASER awards, LASER will take all reasonable steps to:

- Identify whether anyone else has been affected by the failure.
- Correct, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure.
- Take whatever action may be appropriate and necessary to protect the integrity of the award of certificates.
- Apply sanctions to the relevant centre if the failure occurred at a centre.
- Ensure that the failure does not recur in the future.
- Inform the regulatory authorities of findings and actions, where relevant/required.

## **Appeals Against Complaint Conclusions**

If you do not consider that your complaint has been dealt with correctly, you should contact the Quality Manager (or whoever has dealt with your complaint).

If you are still dissatisfied, if relevant and within ten working days of receiving the conclusion, you can follow the LASER Appeals Policy and Procedures which can be found on the LASER web site: [www.laser-awards.org.uk](http://www.laser-awards.org.uk).

Your appeal, if it falls within the scope of the LASER Appeals Policy and Procedures, will be investigated by a member of LASER staff who did not deal with the original complaint.

## Confidentiality and Anonymity

It is always best to give your name and contact details if you make a complaint, so that LASER can discuss your complaint with you and find out any further information needed in order to come to the most satisfactory conclusion.

LASER understands that there may be occasions when you prefer not to do so, and if this is the case, you can consider making a confidential complaint. This means that you give your name on condition that it is not revealed without your consent. In this case LASER will always endeavour to keep your identity confidential although it may be necessary to share information with other individuals or organisations in order to investigate your complaint. Furthermore, sometimes requesting confidentiality may make it impossible to take action on the complaint, and you should also recognise that you may be identifiable by others due to the nature or circumstances of your complaint.

Only in the most extreme cases does LASER advise making an anonymous complaint. This means that you do not give your name at all. LASER will look into anonymous complaints, or pass them onto the relevant organisation (where appropriate), although it may not always be possible to investigate or substantiate anonymous complaints.

If you are concerned about being identified, please discuss your concerns when you make your complaint.

## Monitoring and Evaluation of Complaints

LASER will report all complaints to the LASER Quality Committee, and in turn to its Board of Trustees, for monitoring and evaluation. These reports will cover the number and nature of complaints submitted, their outcomes, and any actions identified.

## Vexatious Correspondence or Behaviour

LASER staff have the right to work without fear of abuse, intimidation, or harassment. Threatening or abusive correspondence or behaviour will not be tolerated under any circumstances, and LASER staff will not engage with persistent or harassing contact from complainants. If this kind of behaviour occurs, LASER will treat it as vexatious.

Vexatious behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Abusive, intimidating or threatening written or telephone correspondence or physical behaviour in a face to face meeting.
- Persistent repeated contact without providing any new information or evidence, or harassment of any kind.
- Making unreasonable demands on LASER staff, eg outside the remit of the complaint.
- Making accusatory or malicious remarks about or against LASER, LASER staff or representatives, or LASER centres.
- Making complaints known to be false/inaccurate.

Vexatious behaviour will be reported to the Deputy Chief Executive Officer or Chief Executive Officer to be dealt with appropriately, which may include reporting to the police where an offence has been committed. All vexatious behaviour will be reported to the LASER Quality Committee and to the Board of Trustees.

## Policy Approval

Approved internally by Deputy CEO 29.02.16

Approved externally by Quality Committee 08.03.16