DSW APPEALS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

This policy explains how a learner can ask DSW to review a decision relating to an End-Point Assessment (EPA) or an apprenticeship assessment via their training provider or Centre. It sets out which decisions can be appealed, how and when an appeal must be submitted, how DSW will review it, and the possible outcomes.

This policy ensures that all appeals are managed fairly, transparently, and in accordance with all applicable regulatory, statutory and apprenticeship assessment requirements and guidance.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all learners registered with DSW EPA or an apprenticeship assessment. It also applies to the training providers, Centres and employers supporting those learners, and to DSW staff, assessors, quality reviewers and appeal panel members involved in considering an appeal.

It covers enquiries and appeals relating to:

- decisions relating to administrative processes (e.g., ID checks, score calculations, grade mapping)
- decisions made in relation to Reasonable Adjustments or Special Considerations
- marking or grading outcomes of any assessment
- decisions regarding malpractice or maladministration.

The appeal process cannot be used to gain additional feedback or learning guidance. If you believe an administrative error has occurred, including a discrepancy between a recorded outcome and the accompanying feedback, you can request a check through the pre-appeal enquiry.

An appeal must explain why the decision is believed be wrong. For assessment results, this may include concerns that DSW did not apply its procedures consistently, or that the relevant procedures were not followed properly and fairly. An appeal is not an opportunity to submit new evidence or repeat the assessment.

3. DEFINITIONS

Appeal: A formal request for the review of a decision made by DSW related to an assessment outcome or procedural judgement.
End-Point Assessment (EPA): An assessment undertaken at the end of an apprenticeship under the applicable EPA assessment plan.
Apprenticeship assessment: An assessment delivered under an Apprenticeship Assessment Plan or Foundation Apprenticeship Assessment Plan, rather than an EPA assessment plan.
Assessment method: A distinct means of assessing specified knowledge and skills. It may comprise one or more assessment method modules, which collectively determine the overall result for the assessment method.

Assessment module: A separately assessed part of an assessment method for which DSW issues a result. The module contributes to the overall result for the assessment method.

Learner: An individual registered with DSW for an end-point assessment (EPA) or an apprenticeship assessment.

Independent Subject Matter Expert (SME): An individual with appropriate and current sector experience who was not involved with the assessment, or any related decisions, and who has no conflict of interest in the case.

Stage 1 Appeal (Internal): A review by a qualified assessor or quality specialist who was not involved in the original assessment decision.

Stage 2 Appeal (Panel): A review by a panel comprising individuals independent of previous decision-making.

Upheld: An appeal where the review finds that the grounds raised are substantiated and the assessment result is changed.

Not Upheld: An appeal where the review finds that the grounds raised are not substantiated and the original decision remains unchanged.

Partially Upheld: An appeal where the review finds that some, but not all, of the grounds raised are substantiated and corrective action is required in relation to those findings. This does not necessarily mean that the assessment result will change.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

DSW is committed to providing a transparent, robust process for reviewing appeal requests. All appeals will be handled fairly, objectively, and within defined timelines.

5. PROCEDURES

The Stage 1 and Stage 2 procedures below apply to all types of appeal listed in Section 2, including appeals against Reasonable Adjustments or Special Considerations decisions, assessment outcomes, and malpractice or maladministration decisions. The review will consider the evidence, procedures and requirements relevant to the decision being challenged.

5.1 PRE-APPEAL ENQUIRY

A pre-appeal enquiry is a review of whether DSW has accurately recorded, calculated and communicated the original assessment decision. It may be requested by the training provider or Centre on behalf of a learner. DSW will confirm the outcome of the enquiry and any correction in writing. A pre-appeal enquiry does not involve re-marking the assessment or reconsidering the assessor's judgement. If the learner wishes to challenge the assessment decision itself, the matter must proceed through the Stage 1 appeal process.

5.2 STAGE 1 APPEAL

Stage 1 will be conducted by a person with appropriate assessment or quality assurance competence and, where relevant, sufficient occupational or sector expertise to review the decision and processes. The reviewer will not have made the original decision, been involved in the learner's assessment, or have any personal interest or conflict of interest in the outcome.

A written stage 1 appeal response will explain the outcome of the appeal, the reasons for it, any action DSW will take, and how and by when the learner may request a Stage 2 appeal. Questions about the meaning of the outcome may be directed to the DSW Quality Team, but any challenge to the decision must follow the Stage 2 process.

Apprentices may escalate to Stage 2 if dissatisfied with the Stage 1 outcome.

5.3 STAGE 2 APPEAL

- Conducted by a panel consisting of:
  - A qualified assessor independent of the original assessment and stage 1
  - A member of DSW not involved with the case
  - An independent subject matter expert (SME)
- Based solely on original assessment evidence; no new evidence permitted.
- Clarification may be requested from the training provider or centre if required.

DSW will confirm the Stage 2 outcome in writing, bringing its internal appeals process to a close. If the learner remains dissatisfied with how DSW has handled the appeal, they may raise a complaint with Ofqual about the procedures and processes followed.

5.4 HOW TO APPEAL

A pre-appeal enquiry or appeal must be submitted within 15 working days of the date DSW issues the decision being challenged. For appeals against assessment outcomes, this means the date DSW issues the result for the assessment method or module being challenged.

The appeal must:

- identify the assessment method or module being appealed
- explain the grounds for the appeal
- be submitted by the training provider or Centre on behalf of the learner

The 15-working-day deadline applies separately to each assessment module.

Waiting for the result of another module, assessment method or the overall assessment result does not extend or restart the deadline.

Late appeals will only be considered where there is evidence of exceptional circumstances that prevented submission within the deadline. Receiving a later module, assessment method or overall result that causes dissatisfaction with an earlier result is not, by itself, an exceptional circumstance.

HOW TO SUBMIT

Pre-appeal administrative check: Submit to the Quality Team by email or via Proficient. The DSW Appeal Form is not required.

Stage 1 or Stage 2 appeal: Submit via Proficient using the DSW Appeal Form.

Where an appeal is made on behalf of a learner, the training provider or Centre must obtain the learner's consent before submission. The learner must understand that, following an appeal, the result may increase, decrease or remain unchanged.

6. OUTCOMES AND RESPONSE TIMES

An appeal may be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. It may result in a component or overall result staying the same, increasing or decreasing.

DSW will:

- acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 2 working days.
- provide written responses within the following maximum timeframes:
  - Pre-appeal enquiry: 10 working days from receipt
  - Stage 1: 10 working days from receipt of a completed appeal form
  - Stage 2: 20 working days from receipt of a completed appeal form

7. FEES

The following fees apply to appeals, but all associated fees will be waived if an appeal is upheld or partially upheld:

- Pre-appeal enquiry – No fee
- Stage 1 – £100 per assessment module appealed
- Stage 2 – £400 per assessment module appealed

If an appeal is upheld or partially upheld, all associated fees will be waived.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Learner:

- raise the appeal promptly with the training provider or Centre
- explain the decision or component result being appealed and the grounds for the appeal
- provide any information required by the appeal form; and check that the appeal is submitted within 15 working days of the relevant decision or component result being issued.

Training Provider or Centre:

- Ensure accurate completion and timely submission of appeals
- Support communication between DSW and the learner

DSW Appeal Reviewers / Panel:

- Conduct appeals objectively, make decisions within their competence, declare and manage any conflict of interest, give clear reasons for decisions, and maintain complete records of the evidence considered, the decision reached and any resulting action

- Ensure compliance with this policy and regulatory requirements

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where required due to:

- regulatory updates
- changes to apprenticeship assessment principles
- internal quality assurance findings

DSW will record and monitor appeal volumes, grounds, outcomes, response times, changes to results, recurring issues and any wider assessment failures identified. Findings will be used to support corrective action, risk management, assessor standardisation and continuous improvement, and will be reported through DSW's governance arrangements.

Where an appeal identifies a failure in DSW's assessment process, DSW will take all reasonable steps to identify any other learners affected, correct the failure or mitigate its effect where correction is not possible, and take action to prevent the failure recurring.

Accessible versions of this policy (e.g., large print) are available upon request.

10. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- DSW Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- DSW Complaints Policy
- DSW Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy
- DSW Data Protection Policy
- Guidance for Submitting Appeals

11. REGULATORY REFERENCES

- Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition (particularly A1, C2, H2, I1)
- DfE Apprenticeship Assessment Principles (2025)
- DfE Funding Rules (where applicable)
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR

12. CONTACT INFORMATION

Please contact the DSW Quality Team for support.

For questions or further information about this policy, please contact:

DSW Quality Team

Email: quality@dswlearning.co.uk