



## Centre Sanctions: policy and procedure

As an Awarding Organisation regulated by Ofqual in England, Qualification Wales in Wales and CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland, YMCA Awards is required to meet the Conditions of Recognition set by each of these regulators. In order to support YMCA Awards' compliance with the Conditions of Recognition, all centres approved by YMCA Awards are required, as a condition of centre approval, to sign an enforceable agreement between themselves and YMCA Awards prior to commencing delivery of YMCA Awards qualification(s), and to comply with the agreement at all times.

A breach of the Centre Agreement may lead to the imposition of a sanction upon a centre by YMCA Awards in order to maintain the quality and validity of qualifications and to ensure that the interests of learners are protected.

The key mechanisms through which YMCA Awards identifies issues with a specific centre are:

- ongoing monitoring through the External Quality Assurance process
- information received from the regulators and/or other stakeholders
- analysis of centre data on achievement rates and retention data
- other data or information that is relevant, including learner feedback and complaints
- outcomes of any appeals, in cases where the centre's actions may be a contributing factor.

### Policy overview

This Policy sets out the sanctions YMCA Awards will impose on centres that fail to comply with the conditions of centre approval or with any YMCA Awards policies or procedures or by any other activity associated with the delivery of YMCA Awards qualifications and/or components (units).

### Issues likely to lead to a sanction

Examples of issues that may result in application of a sanctions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- actions set by the External Quality Assurer (EQA) are not met by the centre within a reasonable timeframe
- delivery of a YMCA Awards qualification is below the required standard
- concerns exist regarding the standards of assessment or internal quality assurance
- identification of significant anomalies in assessment decisions by the centre
- misleading information regarding YMCA Awards has been provided to learners, including prospective learners
- certification claims have been made before learners have completed the qualification(s)/components(s)
- centre refuses access to premises and/or to respond to reasonable requests by

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- YMCA Awards or to the regulatory authorities for copies of assessment records
- internal quality assurance is not taking place or is otherwise insufficient to meet the requirements set out in the qualification specification and other relevant quality assurance standards
- there are any other concerns regarding the centre's ability to meet the terms of the Centre Agreement and/or any other YMCA Awards policies or procedures.

## Malpractice and maladministration

YMCA Awards may take the decision to apply a sanction in cases where an investigation of suspected malpractice or maladministration is being undertaken. This is to ensure that YMCA Awards is able to maintain the integrity of the qualification(s) involved pending an outcome of the investigation.

In cases of proven malpractice or maladministration, the outcome of the investigation may lead to a sanction, proportionate to the finding of malpractice or maladministration and to attempt to mitigate re-occurrence of the issue.

YMCA Awards' Malpractice and Maladministration Policy provides further information regarding the procedures relating to cases of malpractice and maladministration.

## Sanctions tariff

YMCA Awards applies a four-level tariff of sanctions. The tariff is in place to ensure an appropriate response to identified shortcomings and issues, and also to ensure public confidence in the quality assurance arrangements that underpin the implementation and assessment of qualifications and components (units).

The existence of this tariff does not preclude YMCA Awards from withdrawing approval from centres for reasons not directly related to the quality of assessment, such as failure to register learners for a period exceeding 2 years.

The tariff has four levels of sanction; a rationale is given, for guidance, against each sanction level.

Tariff/Level of Issue	Sanction	Rationale
1	Removal of direct claims status, held by the centre, for one or more qualifications (without direct claims status, claims for certification must be authorised by the EQA).	Centre requires closer scrutiny of the integrity of the assessment decisions than previously in place. This may apply to one specific YMCA Awards qualification delivered by the centre or across

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		YMCA Awards' qualifications delivered by the centre, depending on the type of quality concern or issue.
2	a) Suspension of registration <i>and/or</i> b) Suspension of certification.	a) Protection of existing and prospective learners. b) To ensure the integrity of assessment decisions – in response to concerns that the centre may make invalid claims for certification.
3	Withdrawal of centre approval for specific qualifications and/or components (units). To reinstate approval, the centre would need to reapply for approval to deliver the specific qualification(s).	To protect learners and maintain the validity of YMCA Awards qualifications where there has been a significant breakdown in the management and quality assurance of specific qualifications.
4	Withdrawal of centre approval (for all qualifications and components).	Centre has failed to meet the terms of the Centre Agreement and there is an irretrievable breakdown in the management and quality assurance of YMCA Awards qualifications. This sanction may be especially appropriate in cases where centre malpractice has been identified.

## Interpretation

The above sanctions represent a minimum tariff of response to identified non-compliance, but there will be circumstances in which YMCA Awards may judge that a higher level of tariff is appropriate and justified. For example, a centre may temporarily resolve non-compliance as a result of action plans (or higher level sanction) and subsequently display the same issue again at a later date. YMCA Awards will take into account the previous record of a centre when considering whether to impose a higher level sanction.

## Combinations

A combination of non-compliance at a particular tariff may call for a more serious response. For example, a combination of infringements at Level 1 could give rise to a loss of integrity of

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assessment decisions and therefore merit a response at Level 2.

### **Procedure for imposing sanctions**

1. Recommendations for applying a sanction are made by the centre's allocated YMCA Awards EQA to the YMCA Awards Lead EQA.
2. The Lead EQA makes an outline decision on whether application of a sanction is appropriate and the level of sanction.
3. A determination on the level of sanction to be applied is made by the Lead EQA, in consultation with YMCA Awards Quality and Assessment team, who ensure that the sanction is imposed and the decision communicated to the centre (and EQA) in writing.
4. For sanctions at Level 4, the YMCA Awards Head of Quality and Assessment makes the final decision on whether centre approval should be withdrawn and communicates this decision to the centre in writing.

### **Level 4 sanctions: removal of centre approval**

In cases where centre approval is withdrawn, YMCA Awards will take all reasonable steps to protect the interests of any learners currently registered on YMCA Awards qualification(s). For example, we will:

- work with any learners affected by the withdrawal in order to transfer them – where possible and feasible – to another centre to enable learners to continue the qualification(s) they are registered on
- seek to ensure that learners are certificated for any units they have completed to date, in accordance with the requirements of the associated qualification specification, where no alternative centres are available or suitable for any learners affected by the withdrawal, and/or the learners do not wish to carry on with the qualification(s). Unit certificates would be issued to learners upon receiving a formal request from the learners, once they have supplied appropriate information to confirm their identity and the units/qualifications they were registered on.

At all times, YMCA Awards will seek to ensure that all parties affected by the withdrawal are kept appropriately informed throughout.

### **Notification to regulatory authorities**

In circumstances where the nature of the centre's failure to comply with YMCA Awards requirements results in formally withdrawing a centre's approval to offer a qualification or component and the withdrawal will have an adverse effect on learners, YMCA Awards will inform the relevant regulatory authorities.



## Sanctions relating to internal assessment decisions

In the interests of ensuring that results are accurate and reliable, YMCA Awards recognises that there may be occasions when decisions made by assessors need to be overturned by YMCA Awards. Adjustments to the outcomes of assessment may be made at any appropriate stage before or after overall results have been determined, in cases where the judgement made by the centre is deemed unreliable.

The following indicators of poor assessment practice will permit intervention by YMCA Awards:

- inconsistency in assessment decisions made by assessors across the sample of learners and types of evidence monitored by the EQA
- invalid and unreliable judgment of the learner's knowledge and skills, which does not reflect the YMCA Awards specification requirements or meet national standards
- the assessment process appears to disadvantage learners
- assessed learner evidence cannot be authenticated
- the assessment environment (equipment and accommodation) do not comply with health and safety requirements
- there are insufficient qualified assessors to ensure valid endorsement of assessment decisions
- there is insufficient evidence of appropriate internal quality assurance
- records are insufficient to allow an audit of assessment
- the range of assessment methods is insufficient to provide learners the opportunity to achieve
- assessment recording documents show that certification claims have been made prior to all the requirements of assessment being met.

Centres must provide the opportunity for YMCA Awards to hold discussions with relevant centre staff and learners, in order to assist YMCA Awards in making a judgement on the effectiveness of the assessment procedures in place at a centre.

To avoid contentious situations, YMCA Awards will, wherever possible, intervene in the assessment process prior to any final assessment decision being given to an individual learner. However, reversal of an assessment decision may affect any previous decisions made by the assessor or assessor team for other learners not sampled by the EQA. In this exceptional circumstance, the centre's allocated YMCA Awards EQA may request that the relevant assessment procedure is reviewed and that all previous work is re-assessed. This action would take place under the guidance and direction of the Lead EQA.

## Lifting of sanctions

Sanctions applied to a centre at Levels 1 and 2 remain in place until such time that:

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- the issue has been satisfactorily resolved
- any investigation into the issue has been concluded and it is determined that a sanction is not considered appropriate or necessary
- a centre's appeal against the sanction has been successfully upheld.

Sanctions applied to a centre at Levels 3 and 4 do not typically provide scope for reversal, other than as a result of a successful appeal by the centre. A centre wishing to reinstate approval to deliver YMCA Awards qualifications would need to submit an application for qualification and/or centre approval (as appropriate).

## Appeals

YMCA Awards' Appeals Policy enables centres to appeal a decision made by YMCA Awards to apply a sanction. More information regarding this type of appeal and the process for lodging an appeal is provided in the YMCA Awards Appeals Policy and Procedure, published on our [website](#).

## Review arrangements

YMCA Awards review this policy and its associated procedures annually as part of self-evaluation arrangements and revise it when necessary in response to customer or regulatory feedback. If you would like to comment on the process described in this document please contact us via the details provided below.

## Understanding this policy

All enquiries relating to this policy and procedure should be addressed to:

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