

NCFE Group

Title	Withholding Learner Achievement Policy and Procedure
Author	Quality Development Officer
Reviewer	Quality Improvement, Risk and Compliance Leader
Date	February 2018
Approved by	Head of Quality Assurance
Next review date	February 2019
Executive lead	Director of Quality and Product
Accessible to	Board; all group interests; customers

Section 1 Overview of the policy

1.1 Scope of the policy

This policy relates to NCFE (we, us, our etc). The use of 'NCFE' refers to NCFE and NCFE-owned brand names (such as 'CACHE'). This policy applies to all individuals working for or on behalf of NCFE, including all colleagues at all locations and at all levels including members of the Executive Team, external contractors, agency workers, partners, suppliers, centres, customers, any associates, any subsidiaries or their employees or any other person associated with us (collectively referred to in this document as 'individuals').

The policy, where applicable, relates to our regulated qualifications and unregulated products which are owned and/or offered by NCFE.

1.2 Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out the circumstances in which we may withhold learner achievements from centres and/or learners and the circumstances in which we permit centres to withhold learner achievements.

The policy should be read in conjunction with NCFE's Enquiries and Appeals about Results and Assessment Decisions, Maladministration and Malpractice and Sanctions policies, and the Centre Agreement. These documents are available on our website.

1.3 Who needs to know about the policy?

We will ensure our staff, including temporary staff and external contractors, are fully appraised of this policy.

If you are a customer, you must make your staff (including centre, satellite, sub-contract centres or contractual staff) that are involved in the administration, design, delivery, management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications and products and your learners aware of, and familiar with, the contents of this policy and any policy you have relating to your practice and procedures with regards to withholding learner achievement.

Our wider suppliers, stakeholders and partners (as outlined above) are required to read and understand this policy in order that you are clear as to our expectations of you.

1.4 Obtaining copies of the policy

Copies of this policy can be downloaded from our website www.ncfe.org.uk or requested from our Customer Support Team.

1.5 Reviewing the policy

This policy is regularly reviewed and revised to capture changes in risk, law and best practice. It may be revised in response to the findings of any review.

1.6 Complaints

You have the right to express your dissatisfaction regarding our actions, products or services. Please see our Complaints Procedure, which is available on our website, for more information.

Section 2 Withholding learner achievement information

On occasions it may be necessary for NCFE to withhold learner achievements. Reasons for this could include, but are not limited to:

- an incident of centre or learner maladministration and/or malpractice has occurred which could compromise the validity of learner achievements
- learner achievements are incorrect or have been issued in error
- technical issues experienced by us or you
- financial grounds (in exceptional circumstances)
- there is reasonable evidence that we may not be able to comply with our regulatory conditions by issuing learner achievements.

In some circumstances we may request that centres withhold learner achievements on behalf of NCFE. In such an event, we will request centres to securely store learner achievements until further notice or advise centres to return the learner achievements to NCFE.

Centres are not permitted to withhold learner achievements on the basis of non-payment of fees or internal disputes. We expect that our centres, where possible, have arrangements in place to secure all associated fees and/or outstanding payments and manage all internal disputes by the time learners are ready to be awarded their achievements. Any learner who has successfully met the requirements of the qualification or product, should expect to receive their achievement in a timely manner irrespective of outstanding fees or internal disputes.

There may also be times when centres may need to withhold learner achievement following an identified incident of maladministration and/or malpractice. This should be dealt with in compliance with NCFE's Maladministration and Malpractice Policy and Sanctions Policy, which can be downloaded from our website www.ncfe.org.uk. In the event of maladministration and/or malpractice, centres still require permission to withhold learner achievements unless they have been instructed by NCFE.

Learner achievements must not be withheld by the centre for any other reason, and will only be approved by NCFE in exceptional circumstances.

Section 3 Withholding learner achievements procedure

3.1 How we will inform you of a decision to withhold learner achievements

In the event that we decide to withhold learner achievements:

- We will notify you in writing detailing what action we have taken/we want you to take. This may be in conjunction with other ongoing activities, for example a maladministration and/or malpractice investigation.
- We will provide you with a decision in writing once we have conducted any necessary activities.

3.2 What we will do when we receive a request from a centre to withhold learner achievements

- We will acknowledge receipt of your request in writing, normally within **five working days**.
- We will conduct a review of your request and any additional evidence you have submitted. This review period will usually be complete within **ten working days** of receipt of the request and will determine if we will approve your request to withhold learner achievements or not. In making this determination, we may ask for further information/evidence to support the request.
- Once a decision has been reached we will inform you in writing to inform you if we have approved or rejected your request:
 - Request approved – we will outline the approval conditions and we will require an update every 5 working days in order to review the approval arrangements. NCFE reserve the right to withdraw our approval; in the event we decide to withdraw approval this will be in writing, we will also instruct the release of any outstanding learner achievements.
 - Request rejected - we will provide you with an explanation which will detail why we have rejected your request and instruct the release of any outstanding learner achievements.

Section 4 How to contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of this policy, or you want to make a request to withhold learner achievements, please contact our Quality Assurance team via phone or email. If you have already collated evidence to support your request please also send this to us when you make contact.

NCFE Quality Assurance team
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*To continue to improve our levels of customer service, telephone calls may be recorded for training and quality purposes.