

End Point Assessment

Complaints Policy and Procedures

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy outlines the process for dealing with complaints from Employers, Training Providers or Apprentices in relation to CIMA's End Point Assessment (EPA) Service.
- 1.2 CIMA is committed to delivering a high-quality examination service to its students and members. However, we recognise that on occasions, our service may fall short of expectations. If you feel you have been treated unfairly or due process has not been followed by CIMA's EPA department, this policy explains how to make a complaint and what actions we will take to resolve your complaint.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 An **informal complaint** is defined as an issue that an Employer, Training Provider or Apprentice wishes to raise with CIMA, without using the formal complaints procedure. Informal complaints are typically quicker to resolve and don't require an in-depth investigation.
- 2.2 A **formal complaint** is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about the provision of CIMA's EPA service, or any related service provided by CIMA's EPA representatives.

3. Principles

- 3.1 This policy applies to CIMA's EPA Service. This policy aims to:
 - provide a fair and transparent complaints policy that is clear and accessible.
 - ensure all relevant staff follow the correct procedures in resolving complaints.
 - ensure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner.
 - ensure all complaints are taken seriously, handled appropriately and the complaint outcomes are fair and consistent.
 - encourage lessons learned to improve our processes and quality of service.
- 3.2 If CIMA discovers a failure in our EPA service, we will take all reasonable steps to identify other apprentices affected and mitigate the impact and likelihood of the failure reoccurring in the future.
- 3.3 CIMA's complaints and appeals service is free of charge.

4. Policy scope

- 4.1 A complaint can be raised on one or more of the following grounds:
 - a) Unprofessional conduct, including potential or actual malpractice of a member of CIMA staff, CIMA representative or partner.
 - b) Unprofessional conduct of an examiner, invigilator or independent assessor.
 - c) Failure by CIMA or the Association to comply with one or more of its examination policies or procedures.

- d) Failure by CIMA or the Association to comply with EPA policies, procedures and regulations.
- e) Inadequate handling of customer service issues relating to the EPA service, including how CIMA has handled a complaint.

Out of scope

- 4.2 For appeals in relation to assessment decisions or result outcomes, please refer to the EPA [Enquiry and Appeals Policy and Procedure](#).
- 4.3 For appeals in relation to the content of an examination or a specific examination question or academic judgement, please refer to [CIMA's examinations terms and conditions](#).
- 4.4 If you wish to submit a complaint anonymously, please refer to CIMA's [EPA Malpractice Policy and Procedures](#).
- 4.5 If you feel that your exam performance was adversely affected by technical or personal mitigating circumstances shortly before or on the day, please refer to CIMA's [EPA Special Consideration Policy](#).
- 4.6 In circumstances where CIMA or Pearson VUE have failed to apply pre-approved special accommodations (access arrangements), please refer to CIMA's [EPA Special Accommodations policy](#).
- 4.7 CIMA services and functions outside the EPA service. Please refer to CIMA's general customer contact policy.

5. Making a complaint

- 5.1 To make a complaint, please email cima.contact@aicpa-cima.com and include the following information:
 - a) Candidate ID and contact details (full name, phone number)
 - b) Examination details (where applicable)
 - c) Pearson VUE incident number (where applicable)
 - d) Full details of the complaint
 - e) Grounds for your complaint (refer to section 4.1 above)
 - f) Supporting evidence/documents (include any previous correspondence from CIMA relevant to the complaint).
 - g) Details of your preferred outcome. For example: an explanation or apology; commitment to review relevant administrative and quality assurance procedures; examination fee refund or free examination re-sit or state an alternative outcome.

6. Complaints procedure

Stage 1 Raise an informal complaint

- 6.1 A complaint should be raised in writing as soon as possible after the incident via email to cima.contact@aicpa-cima.com.
- 6.2 Our aim is to resolve the issue directly, informally and at the earliest opportunity. It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved through the informal process.
- 6.3 Acknowledgement of an informal complaint is typically provided within five working days of receipt and a full written response provided within 10 working days from acknowledgement of receipt.

Stage 2 Raise a formal complaint

- 6.4 All formal complaints must be made in writing by the complainant via email within 14 working days of the incident or within 14 working days of the outcome of an informal complaint (Stage 1). Any complaint submitted after this deadline will not be reviewed unless there are highly extenuating circumstances.
- 6.5 A complaint is typically acknowledged within five working days of receipt. We will confirm whether your complaint falls within the scope of this policy and the appropriate next steps.

Stage 3 Investigation

- 6.6 A senior member of the EPA department will investigate your complaint and gather the facts relevant to the complaint. Please note investigation timescales may vary depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint. However, every effort will be taken to complete the investigation in a timely manner.

Stage 4 Formal complaint outcome

- 6.7 CIMA's EPA department aims to resolve all complaints and communicate the outcome within 30 days of receipt of your complaint. However, timescales may vary depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint.
- 6.8 CIMA will provide a reason for either upholding or rejecting your complaint.
- 6.9 If your complaint is upheld, a senior manager will contact you regarding a proposed resolution. If a complaint is upheld, lessons learned and preventative actions will be logged and monitored.

Stage 5 Appeal complaint decision (Optional)

- 6.10 If you are unsatisfied with the decision or outcome of your complaint, you can request a review within 10 working days of receiving the response to your complaint.
- 6.11 You will need to provide additional or new evidence to substantiate your appeal and clearly state the grounds for which you are making your appeal. CIMA cannot review a decision that you disagree with if there is no new evidence to consider.

7. Grounds for making an appeal

- 7.1 CIMA's Independent Appeals Panel may consider appeals based on one or more of the following grounds:
- there was unfairness, bias or irregularity in the procedure leading to the decision or outcome reached
 - there is material new evidence from the apprentice which may have an important influence on the outcome of the complaint.
- 7.2 Please note challenges to academic judgement alone are not sufficient grounds for an appeal.

8. Appeals procedure

Stage 1 Request an appeal

- 8.1 An Appeal request is typically acknowledged within five working days of receipt. We will confirm whether sufficient further evidence has been provided in order for this to be considered as part of a review of your complaint.

Stage 2 Appeals Panel

- 8.2 Your case will be considered by an independent Appeals Panel¹, not previously involved in any aspect of your complaint.

Stage 3 Appeal outcome

- 8.3 The decision and outcome of your appeal will be communicated to you within 30 working days of receipt of your complaint. The response will include reasons for either upholding or rejecting your review. If your complaint is upheld, you will be contacted regarding a proposed resolution.
- 8.4 The decision of the Appeals Panel is final and reflects the end of the complaint's procedure.

9. Confidentiality

- 9.1 While your privacy and confidentiality will be respected, this needs to be balanced with facilitating a fair investigation. Your complaint and supporting documentation will be kept confidential and only shared with colleagues and CIMA partners relevant to the investigation process or remediation action. Both informal and formal complaints will be recorded on CIMA's complaint log.

¹ The Appeals Panel is a sub-committee of the CGMA Examination Board. The Appeals Panel comprises of at least 3 voting members (lay and non-lay members of the Accounting Profession), an independent Chair and CIMA staff to act as a non-voting Secretary. All voting members are independent of the investigation process.

