

Global Assessments

Complaints policy



April 2021



Aptis ESOL Complaints policy

General approach to complaints

This document describes the process and procedure for Aptis complaints.

This Aptis complaints process was developed following global British Council standards. Complaints should be handled in accordance with the British Council's internal complaint handling guidelines and customer service standards. Investigation of the complaint should be completed in accordance with the Aptis escalation model outlined below.

Each test centre should have a complaints policy available to customers. The general complaints guidelines should be available publicly on country websites.

Aptis ESOL complaints handling process

Aptis test takers can raise their concerns about their pre-test, test day or post-test experience either directly with their test centre or by contacting the British Council customer contact team based in Manchester, UK, by following the [global complaint process](#).

The Aptis complaints process is as follows:

1. Complaints are usually received by a local British Council customer service team or by a test centre staff member.
2. The customer service/test centre determines the level of complaint and follows the Aptis escalation model for the complaint investigation. The majority of complaints will be received at Level 1.
3. If the complaint is Level 1, a customer service team member or test centre representative should resolve it within ten working days. The decision is communicated to customers through the communication channel they prefer.

This investigation will consist of a revision of all communications between the customer and the Aptis test centre and will review the test operations to identify service failures or other operational issues that might have occurred. Any service failures or other issues will be investigated, including the reason for them and what steps were taken to fix the issues.

If we identify that issues have not been fixed or have caused the test taker problems, we will put remedies in place wherever possible and communicate these to the test taker.

4. If the complaint is Level 2, it is managed by the head of department (depending on a centre's structure, this can be the Customer Experience Manager, Country Director or a Regional Manager). This investigation will look again at the issues raised, independently of the operations or customer service team, and will take the necessary authority to determine whether the issues have indeed been resolved comprehensively and



conclusively or, if failures still exist, revisit the complaint conclusion and provide an alternative. At this level, the customer should receive a reply within 30 working days.

5. If the Level 2 complaint is still unresolved or requires input from the Aptis global team, it should be escalated to the Global Assessments Business Development Team. Further input may be required from the Head of Global Assessments. These complaints relate to more serious and complex unresolved problems which are likely to be an intrinsic issue with the test delivery or other matter and may require a full review of Aptis operations. As such, these teams will need to investigate the complaint at a high level to determine potential strategic changes to the Aptis test. Such changes should be put in place promptly and communicated to the customer, whose complaint conclusion may be affected.
6. If the complaint is Level 3 or has reached Level 3, it is escalated to the Global Customer Contact Manager, who will review the case independently of Aptis Operations. If the case requires further investigation, and/or gaps are identified, it will be returned to the Head of Global Assessments with feedback and requirements for a further investigation. It normally takes 30 working days to review the case at a Level 3 complaint.
7. In exceptional circumstances, if a complaint is not resolved at Level 3, it may go to an independent review body. For further details, please see the Escalation model below.

Complaints handling process





Timeline for complaints

All complaints around a customer's pre-test and post-test experience should be made within 90 days of the date that the event occurred, or the date that the issue came to the candidate's attention.

Complaints related to the conduct of the test (such as complaints about noise during Listening) should be made on the test day.

Complaints fee

There is no fee involved for a customer wishing to complain.

Aptis ESOL Complaints escalation model

There are three levels of complaint, which are dealt with by independent departments of the British Council.

Level one

The vast majority of formal complaints will be dealt with via a 'Level one' investigation. Level one complaints are formal grievances for which an investigation and resolution is required. Examples may include disapproval of a specific aspect or process within the British Council, such as a participant in one of our events who did not have a satisfactory experience.

At Level one, we need to either acknowledge the complaint in writing or explain what steps we will take to manage the complaint if received over the telephone or in person.

Complaints at this level should be investigated and resolved within ten working days, and may require involvement from customer service managers, exams managers or project managers **to reach a resolution**. All complaints are recorded and their progress is tracked.

Level two

Level two exists for the infrequent occurrences where a complaint has not been concluded satisfactorily at Level one, despite having been dealt with at a managerial level, and where there is evidence that the issues highlighted are considerably more complex or serious.

When a complaint is escalated to Level two, there is likely to be a risk of legal action or serious damage to our reputation if not proactively managed and responded to. Complaints escalated to this level may arise from new evidence highlighted as part of accusations of fraud, or a serious intrinsic problem or risk associated with a British Council product or programme which requires an integrated response from a number of individuals or teams.

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Level two complaints are managed at Director or head of department level, and who becomes involved will vary on a case-by-case basis. An investigation may take place by a Regional Director and/or the global head in some countries.

These complaints should be investigated and resolved within 30 working days, unless notice is given to the complainant due to particular circumstances which make this timescale unworkable.

Level three

Level three is the final stage of the British Council complaints process. Only complaints that have been through a comprehensive Level two investigation will be escalated to Level three, where the complainant remains dissatisfied and has highlighted new evidence to support their dissatisfaction.

Dependent upon the nature of the case, complaints that reach this level will be handled as follows: all complaints related to Aptis will be reviewed by the Global Customer Contact Manager (whose role is independent from Global Assessments and who sits under the Customer Management Team), who will advise whether the investigation is full and complete or whether further investigation needs to take place.

Where the investigation is full and complete, and nothing further can be added, the complainant will be referred to the British Council's independent complaints review body. Where there are gaps in an investigation, or it is deemed that there may be an alternative solution, the Global Customer Contact Manager will pass the complaint back to the business to carry out a further investigation and reach a potentially different conclusion.

Timescales for these investigations should not normally exceed 30 working days. However, where that is not possible, notice must be provided to the complainant.

External review

If a customer's complaint passes through all three levels and has not been resolved, a test taker has the right to escalate their complaint to the external body.

The British Council's corporate external review body is an independent consultancy, [Verita LLP](#), which specialises in conducting and managing investigations, reviews and inquiries for public sector and statutory organisations.

Referrals to Verita are only made by the Global Customer Contact Manager, and Verita will only accept complaints once they have been through this stage and a valid Verita reference number has been assigned.

It usually takes 60 working days from the day of receipt of the complaint for Verita to reach a final conclusion.