

Sanctions Policy

The Athena Herd Foundation looks to ensure that:

- all practitioners registered on Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™ should at all times comply with their declaration of compliance, the Ethical Basis of Best Practice and defined Professional Standards.
- Athena Herd Foundation “Training Centres” (delivering unregulated qualifications and programmes) and all “Recognised Training Centres” (delivering regulated qualifications) take all reasonable steps so as to be compliant with the Athena Herd Foundation Policies and Procedures and as a result in relation to our regulated qualifications, our qualifications regulators (Ofqual).

It is also important to note that this Sanctions Policy applies to all practitioners or individuals on the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, Organisational Membership, “Training Centres”, and “Recognised Training Centres” as well as members/staff involved in the delivery of the unregulated and regulated qualifications, therefore, the same must also be fully aware of the contents of this policy and the possible sanctions application as there is the possibility of a sanctions application against them.

This Policy:

- is also for use by our members and staff to ensure they apply any sanctions in a consistent manner and, where applicable, will be provided to the same through our induction process;
- ensures the defined ethics and standards of the Athena Herd Foundation are maintained by those registered on, or in relation to, the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™;
- ensures that all Training Centres and Recognised Training Centres deliver the Athena Herd Foundation qualifications and programmes in accordance with relevant national standards.

This Sanctions Policy identifies:

- failure by registered individuals to comply with the declaration of compliance, Ethical Basis of Best Practice and defined Professional Standards of the Accredited Practitioner Register™;
- failure to meet aspects of the Athena Herd Foundation delivery requirements or standards laid down by the regulatory authorities in respect of learners, service users, unregulated and regulated qualifications;
- the actions that the Athena Herd Foundation may take when any such non-compliance arises;
- how the Athena Herd Foundation shall enforce non-compliance of its policies and procedures and how a breach of the same shall also trigger a breach of defined professional standards, terms and conditions and/or where applicable the Athena Herd Foundation Services Agreement that a Training Centre and/or Recognised Training Centre must enter into with the Athena Herd Foundation.



Approach to Sanctions

Sanctions are punitive actions that can be applied to an individual on the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, an individual at an approved Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre that fails to comply with the Athena Herd Foundation Policies, Procedures, instructions and/or something that may pose a risk to and/or threaten the integrity of the Athena Herd Foundation.

The Athena Herd Foundation has a range of sanctions that can be imposed on individuals on the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, Organisational Members, “Training Centres” and/or “Recognised Training Centres” depending on the seriousness of the situation, the level and track-record of non-compliance and the risk to the interests of for example service users, learners and the integrity of the qualifications/Training Programmes.

If sanctions are required then they will be applied depending on the nature of the situation. The following non-exhaustive list identifies examples for recommending and imposing sanctions if the individuals on the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, Organisational Membership, “Training Centres”, and “Recognised Training Centres” has:

- outstanding actions;
- poor records to confirm assessment decisions;
- proven collusion or persistent bad marking of assessments;
- an upheld complaint raised against an individual registrant on the Accredited Practitioner Register™;
- suspected or proven cases of maladministration/malpractice;
- made certification claims before learners have completed the unit(s)/qualification(s);
- an increased likelihood of an Adverse Effect (*i.e. an act, omission, event, incident or circumstance that gives rise to prejudice to potential or actual learners or adversely affects the ability of the awarding organisation to undertake the development, delivery or award of qualifications in accordance with its Conditions of recognition, standards of the qualifications they are delivering/awarding or public confidence in qualifications*);
- refused access to premises and/or records to the Athena Herd Foundation or the regulatory authorities;
- breached any requirement contained in their application or approval for Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, Organisational Membership, “Training Centres”, or “Recognised Training Centres”;
- breached the conditions of a qualification application submitted by the Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre and accepted by the Athena Herd Foundation;
- repeatedly breached requirements for being on the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, Organisational Membership, “Training Centres”, and “Recognised Training Centres” approval or qualification approval application submitted by the individual, Organisation, Training Centre or Recognised Training Centre and accepted by the Athena Herd Foundation in such a manner as to reasonably justify doubts about its ability or intention to deliver qualifications and/or services in accordance with the terms outlined in the application(s) and/or contractual documentation entered into by the same.



The purpose of applying sanctions is to:

- to protect public interest and safety in all aspects of the delivery of Equine Facilitated Interactions;
- uphold the credibility and public confidence in the Accredited Practitioners Register™
- minimise risk to the integrity of all aspects of the Athena Herd Foundation in respect to the provision of training services, assessment of learners and awarding of results and certificates;
- ensure integrity and veracity of the certificates;
- give time to investigate potential Malpractice and/or Maladministration whilst maintaining integrity;
- protect the business;

Sanctions that may be imposed:

- can take anywhere from ten working days from receipt to three months or longer depending on what is being investigated;
- will depend on the nature of the non-compliance and risk to the interests of the Service User/learners and integrity of the qualifications plus effect on public confidence in the Athena Herd Foundation qualifications;
- can include: (i) an action plan (ii) written warning (iii) greater scrutiny (iv) additional quality assurance visits (at the individual/Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre's cost); (v) suspension of entry, registration and/or certification; (vi) increased risk rating (review of procedures); (vii) withdrawal (in full or in part) from the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, Organisational Membership, "Training Centre", and "Recognised Training Centre" approval (temporarily or permanently);
- appropriate publication of individual details on the Accredited Practitioner Register™ Professional Conduct Notices page on the website

Sanctions that may be imposed on an individual

Should an individual on the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, learner, or group of learners, be found to have committed malpractice then the following sanctions may be imposed on them in accordance with the arrangements outlined in the Athena Herd Foundation Malpractice and Maladministration Policy (which forms part of the terms and conditions and/or applicable Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre Services Agreement and may be communicated to the same by the Athena Herd Foundation and/or the applicable Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre):

- issuing a written warning that if the offence is repeated further action may be taken;
- loss of all marks/credits for the related work/unit;
- disqualification from the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, unit(s)/qualification;



- placing a ban from applying to be on the Athena Herd Foundation Practitioner Register™, taking any further qualifications with the Athena Herd Foundation (may be for a set period of time).

Ensuring consistency in our approach

The length of time any of the above sanctions will be imposed will depend on the situation that warranted their introduction.

The Athena Herd Foundation shall be responsible for regularly reviewing the application and maintenance of sanctions to ensure they continue to be appropriate, consistent and proportionate to the incident(s) and risk of future incidents occurring.

Please note that any additional visits to either an individual on the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, a Training Centre / Recognised Training Centre will be at the Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre's cost and expense. All fees paid are non-refundable. For more information please see our Fees and Costs Policy.

Failure to Meet Payment Terms

The Athena Herd Foundation reserves its right to withdraw / remove an individual from the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, Organisational Membership, Training Centre and Recognised Training Centre Memberships pursuant to the applicable Terms & Conditions, Services Agreement and applicable policies and procedures including this Sanctions Policy) suspend services and ultimately cease working with any individual and/or Organisational Member, Training Centre or Recognised Training Centre which fails to meet, *inter alia*, its payment terms, or is deemed a financial risk. Ultimately any agreement between the same shall be terminated (including where applicable the Terms and Conditions and Services Agreement). In all such cases the Athena Herd Foundation will endeavour to ensure the security of any Service User or Learner achievement and will discuss available options.

Withdrawal

An individual must inform the Athena Herd Foundation of any intention to withdraw from the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™. Similarly, any Organisational Member(s), Training Centre(s) and/or Recognised Training Centre(s) must inform the Athena Herd Foundation of any intention to cease to be an Organisational Member, Training Centre, Recognised Training Centre or withdraw services.

Specifically individuals and/or Organisational Members, Training Centres and/or Recognised Training Centres with such intentions must ensure that Service Users or Learners are not disadvantaged through such a decision and are supported to either find an alternative service provider or claim any unit certification to which they may be entitled. Importantly, withdrawing individuals, Organisational Members, Training Centres and/or Recognised Training Centres must remove any reference to the Athena Herd Foundation and the use of any applicable logos from its websites and literature, including publicity and delivery materials (please see the Athena Herd Foundation Brand Protection Policy, the applicable Terms and Conditions and/or Services Agreement including policies and procedures). Action will be taken against any individual, Organisational Member, Training Centre



and/or Recognised Training Centre displaying an Athena Herd Foundation logo which has not been approved by the Athena Herd Foundation, which may also include reporting the same to relevant regulatory authorities.

Sanctions Imposed on an Individual, Organisational Member/Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre including any Staff

For the purposes of this paragraph Staff refers to any individual working for or on behalf of any Organisational Member, Training Centre, or Recognised Training Centre either as an employee or in any capacity such as (but not limited to) volunteers, contractors, consultants, trainer, assessor, invigilator, or internal verifier.

Sanctions may be limited to specific members of Staff where the Athena Herd Foundation has no confidence in the competence of an individual to discharge their duties.

Please note that sanctions imposed upon an individual and/or Staff member does not replace the requirement to ensure that they have a workforce of sufficient competence to deliver, assess and internally quality assure their provision. Furthermore, if the Athena Herd Foundation has placed a sanction on an individual to prevent them from discharging a specific role or activity, any attempt to circumvent this sanction will be treated as malpractice and a threat to the integrity of qualifications. This will lead to an escalation in sanctions.

Sanctions will be communicated to the individual concerned within three working days of the decision being made.

Any sanction imposed on any individual will apply to all Athena Herd Foundation places where the individual is working. The Athena Herd Foundation will share information about the sanction imposed on the individual at all locations the individual is listed or approved to work.

	Rationale	Sanction
1	Written warning	issuance of a written warning outlining that if the offence is repeated, further specified sanctions will be applied.
2	Special Conditions	special conditions imposed on future involvement in examinations and/or assessments.
3	Training	required, as a condition of future involvement in examinations/assessments, to undertake specific training or mentoring, within a stated period of time, with a review at the end of the training.
4	Suspension or Permanent Ban	barred from all involvement in the Accredited Register, examinations/assessments, either for a set period of time or permanently. Other Accrediting or Awarding Organisations will be informed as applicable when a suspension/permanent ban is imposed.



Decisions and the Publication of Findings in respect of Individual Registrants on Accredited Practitioner Register

The Professional Standards Review Committee is responsible for reviewing any complaints raised by service users or clients in respect of services provided by individual registrants on the Accredited Practitioner Register™.

Any upheld complaints and subsequently agreed sanctions will be published on the Athena Herd Foundation website on the Professional Conduct Notices page. Conditions of publication are defined with the Professional Conduct Review Committee terms of reference and the Professional Conduct Publication Policy.

Sanctions applied against Learners

Any sanction imposed on any individual or learner will apply in relation to the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™, Organisational Membership, Training Centre and Recognised Training Centre Memberships as applicable e.g. if a candidate is disqualified from either the Athena Herd Foundation Practitioner Register™ or a unit, they will not be allowed to be registered on the Athena Herd Foundation Practitioner Register™ nor for that unit in any Athena Herd Foundation Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre.

Although learner malpractice is typically dealt with by the Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre within the assessment and internal verification procedures, it is possible that the Athena Herd Foundation may have due cause to impose a sanction on a learner or individual directly. This will be the case in relation to the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™. Where learner malpractice has occurred, confirmed by an investigation and/or a hearing, the Athena Herd Foundation reserves the right to invalidate and revoke the learner's issued Unit, Qualification, Certificate or Diploma. Please refer to the Athena Herd Foundation Malpractice and Maladministration Policy which provides further details on the timelines for investigation.

Sanctions will be communicated to the individual/learner concerned, and to the relevant Athena Herd Foundation Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre at which the same is registered if applicable, within three working days of any decision being made.

	Sanction	What does this mean?
1	Written warning	issued with a warning that if the offence is repeated, further specified sanctions will be applied.
2	Removal from the Athena Herd Foundation Practitioner Register™	removed either temporarily or permanently from the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™.
3	Disqualification for a unit	disqualified from the unit. Any qualifications and/or units previously achieved in full are retained.
4	Disqualification from a whole qualification	disqualified from the whole qualification taken in that series or academic year. Any qualifications and/or units previously

		achieved in full are retained.
4	Learner barred	Learner barred from being entered for one or more examinations. Any qualifications and/or units previously achieved in full are retained.
5	Unit or Qualification achievement invalidated	Learner's issued certificate is revoked, cancelled and withdrawn. Relevant people notified immediately.

Notifications to Regulators and other Awarding Organisations

The Athena Herd Foundation will immediately inform Ofqual of any serious breaches relating to Regulated Qualifications as outlined in General Condition B3, e.g. those which it deems may have an adverse effect on the integrity of the qualification and/or the Athena Herd Foundation, Ofqual or other awarding bodies as applicable.

The Athena Herd Foundation will immediately inform the Professional Standards Authority and or any other accredited register where required in relation to any serious breaches relating to the Athena Herd Foundation Accredited Practitioner Register™.

The Athena Herd Foundation is required to share certain information relating to the imposition of sanctions with for example other Awarding Organisations. This may impact upon a Training Centre/Recognised Training Centre's ability to deliver qualifications with other Awarding Organisations.

Notifications from Regulators and other Awarding Organisations

In cases where the Athena Herd Foundation is informed of sanctions imposed by, for example, a regulator, another accredited register and/or another Awarding Organisation on an individual, Training Centre(s)/Recognised Training Centre and any staff/members of the same that it is also working with, the Athena Herd Foundation will take appropriate action to check current activity, its quality assurance performance to date, undertake a Risk Assessment based on the information provided, and where appropriate, make arrangements to increase the Athena Herd Foundation' monitoring of the same to ensure that any award by the Athena Herd Foundation qualifications/units is sound and safeguarded.

Appeals

Individuals, Training Centres/Recognised Training Centre members and staff and learners have the right to appeal against any sanction which has been imposed. Appeals received by the Athena Herd Foundation will acknowledge within 5 working days. Full details can be found in the Athena Herd Foundation Appeals Policy.

Monitoring and Review

An annual report on any cases of sanctions being applied, including those that have been withdrawn, will be made available to the Athena Herd Foundation Charity Trustees. The Athena Herd Foundation will review the policy bi-annually as part of its self-evaluation arrangements and revise it



as and when necessary in response to individual and learner feedback, changes in its practices, advice from the regulatory authorities or external agencies, changes in legislation, or trends identified from previous instances of malpractice or maladministration.

Related Policies and Documents

This document is linked to the following Athena Herd Foundation policies and procedures:

- Athena Herd Foundation Professional Standards Review Committee and Professional Standards Notices Policy;
- Athena Herd Foundation Services Agreement;
- Where applicable, the Athena Herd Foundation Terms and Conditions;
- Athena Herd Foundation Appeals Policy;
- Athena Herd Foundation Maladministration and Malpractice Policy;
- Athena Herd Foundation Whistleblowing Policy.

Regulatory Requirements

Furthermore, this Sanctions Policy is designed to fulfil the requirements of our regulators. In particular: Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition:

- A6 Identification and management of risks
- A7 Management of incidents
- B7 Compliance with Regulatory Documents
- C1 Arrangements with third parties
- C2 Arrangements with Centres
- G1 Setting the assessment
- G8 Completion of the assessment under the required conditions
- G9 Delivering the assessment
- H1 Marking the assessment
- H2 Moderation where an assessment is marked by a Centre
- H5 Results of a qualification must be based on sufficient evidence

Review Frequency

The Athena Herd Foundation reviews this Sanction Policy bi-annually. Please note, however, a review will be carried out more frequently in the event that an issue arises in relation to sanction arrangements and/or in response to individual, service user, learner or regulatory feedback.