



# COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES

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# Complaints Policy & Procedures

## Policy

We are always working to improve the service we provide for our members and other individuals that access our services and resources.

Whenever concerns are expressed about some aspects of the service we provide, we treat this as a complaint because we have adopted the British Standards Institute definition of a complaint:

“any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer whether justified or not.”

As an organisation we value complaints for the insights they give us into how our services are being received and the opportunity they provide to improve our service provisions.

Our complaints policy and procedure are designed primarily for use by our members however, any stakeholder that interacts with us may complain about our services and therefore has access to the complaints process.

All complaints received will be investigated thoroughly, fairly and objectively following a process which is:

- easy to access;
- simple;
- fair to complainants and staff;
- rapid and open;
- is honest, thorough and desired to satisfy the concerns of the complainant.

Complaints can be made orally or in writing. When we receive an oral complaint, we ensure that we do not over-promise and create false expectations. For this reason additional guidance is given to staff on the handling of oral complaints in the complaints process.

It is our policy that all our staff are adequately trained to deal with complaints as anyone may receive a complaint. Managers will assess the need for staff training as a normal part of the appraisal process.



# Procedures

## Definition

The definition of a complaint is:

*“any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer whether justified or not”.*

For those of our functions that are subject to either legislation or our bye-laws this policy and procedure does not apply because appropriate provision is made elsewhere to resolve issues. This includes Examinations Appeals and similar matters where a separate process is already in place.

## Exclusions

This policy does not cover complaints about the conduct or performance of our members. Complaints of this nature should be directed to the GMC, CQC or appropriate.

## Process

### Initial Receipt

Any employee may receive a complaint. Complaints can be received through any medium: in writing, by e-mail, in person, web chat or by telephone. Complaints are to be treated as confidential between the complainant and the College, if appropriate the complaint will be kept confidential by the employee who receives it.

When a complaint is received, we will either

- a) send a written response for complaints resolved same day, or
- b) send a letter acknowledging receipt of the complaint for complaints requiring investigation within 24 hours of receipt.

### Oral Complaints

Oral complaints may be made in person or by telephone. We will:

- a) Commit to investigating the complaint and dealing with the complaint in accordance with our complaints procedure;
- b) If the complaint is made by telephone, we shall offer to ring the caller back, to ensure that we can offer the opportunity to complain at no cost to the caller;
- c) Advise the complainer of the complaints process including the next steps to be taken and when they can expect to hear from us.

If an oral complaint is resolved during the telephone call or discussion, to the callers express satisfaction, then we will log the complaint and we will send a letter confirming.

If an oral complaint is not resolved with the caller at the time of the call, then a letter will be sent and the complaint logged. The process then followed is the same as for written complaints.

## Written Complaints

For written complaints, received physically or electronically, we will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 24 hours. The complaints will be logged and the matter discussed with an RCEM manager.

Once advised of the complaint the manager will decide on who should investigate the matter and liaise with the investigating staff member as appropriate to:

- a) ensure a thorough investigation takes place
- b) allocate appropriate resources to ensure prompt resolution and reconcile any competing claims for resources
- c) and compose a written reply.

## Investigation

Whoever carries out the investigation will do so thoroughly and ensure they look into every issue that the complaint raises. The Investigating Officer should put themselves in the place of the customer to understand the underlying problems from the customer perspective.

## Reply

Our reply to the complainant will:

- a) Cover every aspect of the complaint.
- b) Accept criticism as a positive thing, customer complaints can provide opportunities to improve our service.
- c) If the complaint was addressed personally to the Chief Executive or President, or was sent via a Member of Parliament for example, a response will be signed by the Chief Executive.



- d) Some complaints may be about matters outside our control such as the NHS or Government Policy or Regulations. In these cases we may only be able to give a limited reply.
- e) Be within the time limits specified in this procedure.

All complaint response letters are to be countersigned by the Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive or Head of Corporate Services.

The complaint information will be logged and kept on file.

## Time Limits

We shall endeavour to respond to complaints quickly. This means we shall aim to:

- a) Where the investigating staff member judges it appropriate we shall telephone the Complainant, where the telephone number is known, to discuss the complaint within 48 hours of receipt. This will also give us the opportunity to apologise where appropriate and confirm that the complaint has arrived, is being dealt with, and to discuss any additional background information that may be available from the complainant.
- b) Acknowledge complaint within 24 hours of receipt.
- c) Share the complaint investigation and response with a manager within 7 days of date of receipt or, if the investigation takes longer, post a written explanation for the delay within 7 days of the date of receipt.
- d) Share the investigation and response with the Chief Executive for signature within 8 days of date of receipt or, if the investigation takes longer, post a written explanation for the delay within 8 days of the date of receipt.
- e) Reply to you with the investigation and response within 14 days of date of receipt or, if the investigation takes longer, post a written explanation for the delay within 14 days of the date of receipt.
- f) If the matter is such that we cannot respond fully within 10 days, we will send a courtesy letter to the complainant every 21 days advising of progress.



- g) If these timescales are not adhered to, the matter will be brought to the attention of the Corporate Governance Committee.

## Escalation and Closure

In line with our Complaints Policy, we shall endeavour to resolve complainants concerns to their satisfaction. However, in some instances we may, rarely, reach a situation where we have done all we can to resolve the matter, but the customer is not content with the resolution of the complaint.

In these circumstances, we will explain that we cannot resolve the matter and we will advise the Corporate Governance Committee of the situation at the next available meeting.

## Retention of Records

Once a complaint has been resolved, we shall retain our records for a period of 6 years from the date of the last correspondence on the issue.

## Compensation

We shall judge requests for compensation on their own merits on a case-by-case basis, although this is tempered by our duty of strict cost control and accountability to our members for expenditure, given that we are a charity.

Such compensation as we may provide is limited to:

- cases where the College has made an error, and
- this has caused a customer or stakeholder financial loss, and
- is limited to reimbursement of monies paid by the individual to the College and not incidental or consequential expenses.

Applications for compensation must clearly set out the problem that has occurred and provide a detailed breakdown of the financial loss, and why it has been caused by the College's error.





## Corrective and Preventative Action

The information gathered from complaint log will be reviewed periodically by the Corporate Governance Committee.

Feedback received as part of the complaint will be reviewed by the relevant individual responsible for the service/process/interaction that warranted the complaint and discussed formerly with their line manager so that potential lessons can be learned, and processes reviewed and improved accordingly

RCEM managers should periodically review the complaints log to look for any themes and trends that are occurring within their areas which might point towards corrective action being taken



## Amendment History

Version	Date	Description of change	Change/Author
1.0	02/10/2012	First draft	Gordon Miles
1.1	13/09/2016	Amendment to reflect title 'Royal'	Gordon Miles
1.1 abridged	22/11/2021	Abridged for website publication	Sam McIntyre