



COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES

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Royal College *of*
Emergency Medicine



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Introduction

The way we log and respond to complaints is important, from a customer services perspective and also from a business improvement perspective so that as a College can review and learn from feedback, address any issues that have arisen, improve our standards and, where needed, make operational changes. This policy and procedure is designed to ensure all teams are guided and we have a consistent approach.

Overview:



- Complaint received
 - Is it in relation to a College service that is covered by this process? If yes proceed, if no then refer to the correct procedure.
- The complaint should be added to the Colleges Comments, Compliments and Complaints log if it has been received through another route, otherwise the log will be automatically populated if it has come through the CC reporting form.
- All complaints should be acknowledged within 24 hours
- All complaints should be shared with the relevant Head of Department if they are not already aware. Complaints that are of significant importance or affect multiple teams should be shared as appropriate.
- If investigation is required, then The Head of Department will allocate someone to investigate the complaint
- A file/folder for the complaint should be created to store all relevant comms and docs relevant to the case.
- The complaint should be investigated thoroughly

- The Head of Department should be made aware of the outcomes of the investigation. Complaints that are of significant importance or affect multiple teams should be shared as appropriate.
- The complainant should be notified in writing regarding the outcome of the investigation within 14 working days from the receipt of the complaint
- Outcomes of the investigation/complaint should be shared with the relevant director as appropriate.
- All actions taken should be logged on the Colleges Comments, Compliments and Complaints log

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.

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 is designed for use by our members and other individuals that access our services. 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.

We have a dedicated [compliments, comments and complaints form](#) which is used as a mechanism for complaints to be received to us and this is shared on our website, and in the email signatures of our emails. Alternatively, complaints can be made orally or in writing through other channels such as by phone, webchat etc.

All staff should be adequately trained/informed to deal with complaints as anyone may receive a complaint and this should be covered as part of our induction training, with reminders at opportune moments, such as All Colleague meetings.

Procedures

Definition

The definition of a complaint is: ***“Any expression of dissatisfaction that is not resolved at initial contact and requires a response.”***

For those of our functions that are subject to either legislation or our bylaws 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. For example candidates have the right to appeal if they feel their performance in any exam was affected by a procedural irregularity and/or exceptional circumstances. Full details can be found in our [Appeal Regulations](#).

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 other organisations as appropriate.

Process

Initial Receipt

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

When a complaint is received, we will:

- a) Commit to investigating the complaint and dealing with the complaint in accordance with our complaints procedure;
- b) Advise the complainant of the complaints process including the next steps to be taken and when they can expect to hear from us.
- c) Acknowledge the complaint in writing within 24 hours, either
 - For complaints resolved the same day, a written confirmation acknowledging the complaint was received and resolved the same day
 - For complaints requiring further investigation, a written confirmation should be sent acknowledging receipt of the complaint and outlining steps to be taken in line with the complaints process
- d) Log the complaint on the CCC tracker on the day it is received, and ensure follow up action is taken and the log amended when it is resolved.

All complaints must be logged. Any complaints received through other means other than the CCC e-form log, which gets exported into a spreadsheet, should be added to the Colleges Comments, Compliments and Complaints log manually so that all complaints can be collated in one place to be reviewed and actioned accordingly.

How to deal with complaints received

Written complaints received should be shared with the relevant manager for that team/department or whoever is responsible for the area of work that the complaint relates to. 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.

Extra considerations for oral complaints

If an oral complaint is resolved during a telephone call or discussion to the caller's express satisfaction, then we will log the complaint and we will send a written confirmation, within 24 hours confirming the complaint was received and resolved.

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

Investigation

Investigations should be carried out by a suitable person, depending on the severity of the complaint. For example, an administrative oversight could be dealt with by the person receiving the complaint. An allegation into serious misconduct should be referred to a Head / Manager so that appropriate escalation can take place.

Whoever carries out the investigation must 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

Once the complaint has been investigated and an outcome reached, the complainant should receive written confirmation of the outcome of the investigation.

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) Be sincere, and include an apology if appropriate
- d) Be from a named person, with their title and contact details included. This would normally be the Manager or Head of the relevant team, or the Director.



- e) 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.
- f) Be within the time limits specified in this procedure.

Actions taken to resolve the complaint should be logged on the Colleges Comments, Compliments and Complaints log so that our response can be reviewed and steps taken can be actioned. Our CCC log will be periodically reviewed by the Senior Leadership team prior to a high level summary being reported back to our Audit and Risk Committee once a year, unless otherwise requested.

Time Limits

Delays in responding to complaints can exacerbate a situation and so we should endeavour to respond to complaints quickly. This means we will aim to:

- a) Acknowledge complaint in writing within 24 hours of receipt.
- b) 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.
- c) Share the outcome of the complaint investigation and response with a the relevant manager/Head of department within 24 hours of completion, updating the complaints log appropriately.
- d) Share the investigation and response with the Head of Department for signature within 24 hours of the investigation being completed
- e) Reply to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation within 14 days of date of receipt of the initial complaint. Unless a specific timeframe, either shorter or longer is applicable to the nature of the complaint. If the investigation takes longer, and we cannot respond fully within 14 days we will send a holding email to the complainant on the 14th day to update them on the investigation and the reason for the delay. We will then email them every 7 days advising them of progress with the response until such a time that a complete response is provided.

- f) If these timescales are not adhered to, the matter will be escalated to the relevant director for information and to help expediate the issue as appropriate.

Escalation and Closure

In line with our Complaints Policy, we shall endeavour to resolve complainants and concerns raised to the satisfaction of the complainant. 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 update the CCC log as appropriate and the relevant Managers/Heads of Department will be kept informed and the matter will be shared with the relevant director as appropriate. Any unresolved complaints will be reported to the audit and risk committee as part of the regular reporting of complaints.

Retention of Records

Once a complaint has been resolved, we shall retain our records for a period of six 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

Information gathered from the complaint log will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team for any learning and will additionally form part of regular reporting to the Audit and Risk 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/Heads of Department should action every complaint received via automated [email from the CCC form](#) and the Colleges Comments, Compliments and Complaints log should be proactively reviewed and updated with actions relating to ongoing complaints. Managers/Heads of Department 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. They should escalate matters to their Director as appropriate, who in turn will inform the CEO if they are of a serious nature.



Amendment History

Version	Date	Description of change	Change/Author
1.0	02/10/2012	First draft	Gordon Miles
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1.2 abridged	22/11/2021	Abridged for website publication	Sam McIntyre
1.3	19.5.25	Reviewed and updated	Gareth Davies Catherine Feast Gordon Miles