

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Association: Complaints Policy

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation

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Version 1.0



Version control

Version	Date	Author	Notes
1.0	June 2021	Stephen Peck, COO at The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation	This document is accompanied by the Complaint Template Form appendices.

Relevant policies

1. Complaint Template Form

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Complaints Policy: Background

Everyone connected with the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is committed to providing the highest quality support and service to all aspects of the Award. However, we also recognise that sometimes things go wrong, and, in these situations, we have a complaints policy and process. You can read the full document here below, but this page provides a summary of how to complain and what happens when you do.

When to use this process.

Our complaints process should be the last resort. In most cases it is easier to resolve complaints locally. If you have not tried to resolve the matter in your home area, we will ask you try that first, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you have tried to resolve the matter and still wish to complain we ask you to complete the form here at the bottom of this Policy and send it to us at complaints@intaward.org. Please try to provide all the details we have requested.

When not to use this process

If you believe that someone is in immediate danger or at risk of harm (such as a safeguarding concern) you should contact your local or national Operator immediately. If that's not possible or appropriate, you should contact the relevant authorities in your area.

We do not accept anonymous complaints because it is not possible to clarify or verify information without talking to you. However, if you ask us to keep your identity confidential, we will do our best to do so but this may mean we will be severely restricted in how we can investigate your complaint.

If the issue you are raising concerns very serious matters such as possible fraud, discrimination, corruption or unethical behaviour you may raise the matter under our Whistleblowing policy.

We do not normally accept complaints if more than three months has passed since you became aware of the issue you are contacting us about.

How long will it take?

We will deal with your complaint as quickly as possible. You can expect an acknowledgment of your complaint immediately. We will keep you informed of progress and regularly update you on timescales. We cannot be precise about how long it will take to investigate your complaint as it depends on the complexity of the issues and how long it takes it to gather information from other people. However, we will complete our investigation as soon as we can and keep you informed along the way. We will aim to resolve the matter within 30 days and if that is not possible, we will send you a progress report in this timescale.

What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?

Our policy allows for one appeal when the matter will be reconsidered by a Trustee group. The details of this process are set out in our policy below.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation is a registered charity in the UK and our activities are overseen by the [UK Charity Commission](#). The UK Charity Commission has a complaints process which can be found at this [link](#).

More information

We hope this page has been helpful in providing an overview of our complaints procedure. Before you complain please read the policy document below, which provides full details of how we deal with complaints.

If you need any help or guidance, please do contact us at complaints@intaward.org and we will do all we can to assist you.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Complaints and Disputes Policy (Policy) outlines the process to be used when dealing with a complaint or dispute related to the actions of Award Operators, Association volunteers, or International Award Foundation (Foundation) employees, where it has not been possible to resolve that matter through informal channels in the locality. It is always our wish that matters are resolved locally, and the procedures and processes stated here should be seen only as a last resort.

This Policy specifically does not cover:

- 1.2 Activities or actions of individual staff, volunteers or participants related to an Award Operator that are specific to the work of that Operator. Such specific complaints should be directed to the Award Operator concerned and will be dealt with in line with their policies.
- 1.3 Matters of Safeguarding or Whistleblowing which are dealt with using the relevant policies. Although many of the procedures are similar, these matters are addressed under different rules and processes. If a person wishes to raise a Safeguarding or Whistleblowing matter, they should refer to the relevant policies and procedures via our [Policies page](#) here.
- 1.4 Internal Foundation grievances, complaints, disputes and disciplinary issues raised by Foundation employees against other employees as they are covered in the Foundation Staff Handbook

2. DEFINITIONS

Complaint and Dispute: means a grievance against or dispute with or between individuals or Award Operators and the Foundation, raised by any individual, an Award Operator, or a Foundation volunteer.

Whistleblowing: means reporting very serious behaviour or issues that are in the public interest and cannot be considered a complaint or dispute. Whistleblowing is most often used when illegal activity is discovered, serious or institutional discrimination occurs, possible fraud or corruption or unethical behaviour is detected. For full details see the Whistleblowing policy.

Award Operator: means any National Award Operator, Independent Award Centre or Operating Partner that is licensed by the International Award Foundation.

Vexatious complaint: means any complaint that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- 2.1 Persists in pursuing a complaint where the procedure for handling complaints has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted
- 2.2 Repeated unwillingness to accept documented evidence given as being factual, denying receipt of an adequate response, despite correspondence answering their complaint, or not accepting facts that have been verified to a reasonably possible extent
- 2.3 Regular and continuous focus on a trivial matter to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance
- 2.4 Persistently raises new issues or seeks to prolong contact by raising further concerns or questions whilst the complaint is being addressed. This specifically excludes new issues which are significantly different to the original complaint and must be addressed.
- 2.5 Unreasonable complaints or demands which impose a burden on the Foundation in terms of required resources which is out of proportion to the seriousness of the allegation or complaint, and where the complaint clearly is designed to disrupt or annoy, or has the effect of harassing another person, or can otherwise be characterised as obsessive or manifestly unreasonable
- 2.6 Are repetitive complaints and allegations which ignore the actions and responses previously supplied

3. THE PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this Policy is:

- 3.1 To provide a complaints procedure to be implemented by the Foundation, which is fair, clear, and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint

3.2 To ensure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner

3.3 To ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved amicably

3.4 To gather information which helps the Foundation to improve its performance and practice, particularly in respect of the overall governance practice of the Foundation.

3.5 To ensure the confidentiality of the process of handling complaints to protect both the complainant and any respondent during the process

4. ACTIONS TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION

For a full implementation of this Policy, the Foundation will:

4.1 Publicise the existence of this Policy and associated procedures by making it easily available on the Foundation website

4.2 Make sure all NAO National Directors and Board Members are aware of the policy

4.3 Make sure all Independent Award Centres and Operating Partners are aware of this policy

4.4 Make sure all Foundation employees and Association volunteers engaged in activities for, and on behalf of, the Foundation are aware of the process to submit a complaint

If a complaint is received:

4.5 Assign two individuals to receive and handle communications between the complainant, and the respondent

4.6 Notify the Secretary General, of any complaints received and of the conclusion of such complaints

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

5.1 All complaint information will be handled sensitively and confidentially, providing information to the relevant parties only and in accordance with any relevant data protection requirements and legal requirements in respect of the subject of the complaint.

5.2 Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

5.3 At the discretion of those investigating the complaint, the identity of the complainant may be withheld from a respondent. This option may only be exercised where withholding the information does not undermine a respondent's ability to address the complaint. It is understood that if the case

is referred to public authorities, then the matter of withholding the identity of the complainant may not be an option.

6. RESPONSIBILITY

- 6.1 Overall responsibility for this Policy and its implementation lies with the Secretary General.
- 6.2 Two Foundation employees are designated by the Secretary General to receive complaints. They are responsible for notifying the Secretary General of all complaints received and for handling the communication between the complainant, and the respondent.
- 6.3 Where a complaint is made that concerns the Secretary General, the Chair of the Safeguarding, Safety and Serious Incident Reporting (SSSIR) Committee will be informed. Where a complaint concerns either of the Foundation's designated employees that person will be immediately removed from the process by the Secretary General and another employee substituted.
- 6.4 The Secretary General is responsible for the actions, in accordance with this Policy, after a complaint is received.

7. PRINCIPLES OF THE COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES POLICY

- 7.1 Every effort should be made to resolve complaints and disputes as close to the point of conflict as possible. This means locally or nationally. Resorting to the Foundation's complaints and disputes policy should be seen as a last resort. Where no effort has been made to resolve the matter locally, the Foundation reserves the right to refer the matter to the Award Operator concerned.
- 7.2 All complaints and disputes will be taken seriously, managed expeditiously, dealt with in a timely manner, and promote the maintenance of relationships.
- 7.3 The process of complaint and dispute handling should be robust and safeguard against the ability of any individual to manipulate the outcome of a complaint.
- 7.4 For a complaint or dispute to be considered, it must:
 - 7.4.1 be submitted in writing.
 - 7.4.2 be within the scope of this policy.
 - 7.4.3 be submitted within three months of the date that the complainant reasonably knew enough facts to report the issue.
 - 7.4.4 identify the complainant and provide contact information.
 - 7.4.5 state the complainant's relationship to the organisation.
 - 7.4.6 provide the basis for the complaint in 1,000 words or less, and in a clear and concise statement including whatever evidence is available, including dates and times.

- 7.4.7 provide details of the formal or informal resolution actions that have been taken so far to try to resolve the issue.
 - 7.4.8 describe what the complainant would see as an acceptable outcome.
 - 7.4.9 if there is reasonable belief that a complaint is vexatious or malicious, then it will not be progressed.
- 7.5 This Policy should not be used where individuals disagree with a Foundation or Association policy, or guidance provided within the International Handbook. Any concerns about such matters should instead be raised, via an Award Operator, for consideration using the Association MOU consultation process.
- 7.6 To prevent a single point of failure, the receipt of complaints will be monitored by two Foundation employees who will report all complaints received to the Secretary General.
- 7.7 The Foundation employees responsible for processing the complaint:
- 7.7.1 must provide all parties involved the opportunity to present their views clearly to ensure all facts are clear and understood.
 - 7.7.2 must consider all facts and points of view.
 - 7.7.3 may, within the constraints of confidentiality, seek the advice of other experts or consultants.
 - 7.7.4 should seek a solution that provides a right to a fair hearing, is aligned with our values, and is acceptable for both parties.
 - 7.7.5 must record the factors on which they have based their recommendation.
 - 7.7.6 should investigate and conclude the process as expeditiously as reasonably possible.
 - 7.7.7 Should ensure that, wherever possible, the complaint process is handled in a language acceptable to that particular complainant or respondent.
- 7.8 The process allows for a single appeal on any recommendation arising from a complaint by either the respondent or complainant, and the decision after the appeal process, as approved by the Safeguarding, Safety and Serious Incident Reporting Committee, will be final.
- 7.9 If the complaint is considered by the Foundation to involve a crime, the complainant must be advised and encouraged to report the matter to the relevant authorities in the jurisdiction of the crime at any time. The Foundation will only report the crime directly if, in the considered opinion of the Secretary General, in consultation with the Foundation's legal counsel, there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegation.
- 7.10 If the complaint involves a Foundation employee as a respondent, the process is

governed by the Foundation's Employee Handbook. Once the decision is ratified by the Secretary General, the decision will be implemented by the Secretary General via the appropriate internal processes, in accordance with the relevant legislation.

8. PROCESS OF COMPLAINT HANDLING

8.1 As stated above, every effort should be made to resolve complaints and disputes as close to the point of conflict as possible. This means locally or nationally. Resorting to the Foundation's complaints and disputes process should be seen as a last resort. Where no effort has been made to resolve the matter locally the Foundation reserves the right to refer the matter to the Award Operator concerned.

8.2 If a local resolution has not been possible complaints should be submitted to the International Award Foundation, either:

by email to complaints@intaward.org, or

by post or by hand to: Award House, St Matthew Street, London,
SW1P 2JT

The offices of The Chairman and Patron do not accept or deal with complaints.

On receipt of a complaint:

8.3 The two Foundation employees acknowledge the complaint within seven days. Acknowledgement does not necessarily mean the complaint has been accepted in accordance with the policy; it is simply a confirmation that the information sent by the complainant has been received.

8.4 The two Foundation employees log the complaint, and email the Secretary General, to advise them of a complaint having been received and note the respondent, if one exists. If the respondent to the complaint is one of these three individuals, that individual will be excluded from the distribution list for that specific complaint and only be notified as the respondent in accordance with the process below.

8.5 If a complaint relates to a Trustee or the Secretary General, the matter will immediately be referred to the SSSIR Committee. If a complaint is against a Foundation employee, the procedure in the Employee Handbook applies.

8.6 The two Foundation employees receiving complaints will ensure that the complaint complies with the requirements above.

If the complaint meets those criteria, then:

8.7 The complainant is notified by the Foundation that the complaint has been accepted and is being processed. A concise list of the areas to be investigated is provided and a request for

the complainant to confirm they are happy to proceed with an investigation into the complaint on this basis. Once confirmation has been received, the process then continues as below.

If the complaint does not meet those criteria, then:

8.8 The Foundation notifies the complainant that the complaint does not meet the requirements of the Policy and requests the complainant to either: restate why it should be considered under the criteria or provide supporting information to allow the Foundation to act on the complaint. If, on receipt of the restatement or additional information, the Foundation employees agree that the complaint meets the criteria then the process follows from Section 9.

8.9 If, after being referred back to the complainant, and in consultation with the Secretary General, it is agreed that insufficient information is provided to justify the complaint meeting the criteria, the Foundation will notify the complainant that the complaint does not meet the requirements of the Policy and the process ends.

8.10 If the complaint relates to a Foundation Team member who is also an active volunteer, staff member or participant related to an Award Operator, once the complaint is accepted as valid under this Policy, the Foundation, depending on the nature of the matter and balancing between confidentiality and transparency, may, at its discretion, inform the relevant Award Operator that a complaint has been received in respect of that person.

9. PROCESSING A COMPLAINT

9.1 On receipt of a complaint from the Foundation, the designated Foundation staff will:

- 9.1.1 Confirm that there is no conflict of interest in respect of the complaint
- 9.1.2 Where necessary to address the complaint, request additional support from the Foundation either directly or to involve experts or consultants with specialised skills

9.2 If the matter is deemed to be such that the continued involvement of the respondent constitutes a safety or reputational risk to the Foundation, the Association or the constituents thereof, the designated staff may:

- 9.2.1 Make a recommendation to the Secretary General for suspension of the respondent in respect of any Foundation activity while the matter is investigated.
- 9.2.2 If the respondent is an active volunteer related to an Award Operator or a member of staff, and with the consent of the Secretary General, issue a recommendation of suspension and details of the complaint to an appropriate contact in the relevant Operator.
- 9.2.3 If the respondent is a Foundation employee, pass the recommendation for suspension in line with the Employee Handbook to the Secretary General for action under the relevant internal

processes.

9.3 Within five working days the designated staff members will, via the Foundation:

- 9.3.1 Complete a complaint document that details the alleged circumstances of the complaint including dates, places time and people involved.
 - 9.3.2 Share the complaint document with the complainant and provide between 5 and 14 days (or a reasonable time for the complainant to review and accept the pertinent information), before the complaint document is issued to the respondent: and then,
 - 9.3.3 notify the complainant and respondent of a proposed timeline for actions on the complaint
- 9.4 Should the staff members, during the investigation of the matter, identify further issues beyond those detailed in the complaint document, either by the respondents, the complainants or any third parties, they will be granted the full process and rights allocated to the initial respondents in the process. Where this requires an adjustment to the timelines previously communicated, such change and the reason therefore shall be notified in writing to all respondents and complainants.
- 9.5 Once the matter has been investigated and considered, the staff members will decide if the complaint (or each part of it) is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld. They will also recommend if any sanction is required and issue an overall recommendation on the complaint to the Secretary General.
- 9.6 If the recommendation is one of no sanction, the Foundation will notify the complainant and the respondent of this recommendation. Should the complainant object to this, they may at this stage initiate the appeal process detailed below in Section 10.
- 9.7 If the recommendation is any form of sanction, the recommendation will be passed to the SSSIR Chair of the SSSIR Committee for ratification. If the recommendation entails multiple independent actions of sanction, the SSSIR Chair will be permitted to ratify each sanction independently.
- 9.8 If the SSSIR Chair of the Committee approves the recommended sanction of the Secretary General, the Foundation will notify the respondent and complainant and take the recommended actions. Should either the complainant or the respondent object to the recommended sanction, they may at this stage initiate the appeal process detailed below in Section 10.
- 9.9 If the SSSIR Chair of the Committee does not approve the recommendation, the recommendation will be referred back to the Secretary General for

reconsideration.

9.10 Having considered the comments of the SSSIR Chair of the Committee, the Secretary General shall issue a revised recommendation and substantiation for the SSSIR Chair's approval.

9.11 In the event that a matter has multiple respondents, the Secretary General will make separate recommendations for independent consideration in the matter of each individual respondent.

9.12 When informing the complainant and respondent of the outcome, the Secretary General will clearly state if the complaint is to be upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld and the reasons that led to this decision; referencing, where possible, all the key issues raised by the complainant based on the findings of the investigation. The communication will also identify recommendations that will be undertaken based on the outcome of the complaint in the spirit of continuous improvement.

9.13 It will also explain how the complainant can appeal if they are unhappy with the process undertaken or the outcome of the complaint and how they can be contacted.

9.14 Both the complainant and respondent are entitled to one appeal under this process. Once the appeal as detailed below has been heard, the ratification of the recommendation is final.

10. APPEALS PROCESS

10.1 Either the complainant or the respondent may appeal a decision by written notice by email, by post, or by hand to the Foundation. The appeal letter must provide sufficient basis for the appeal to be heard and present any information required to consider the appeal. This appeal must be submitted within seven working days of the notice being received from the Foundation by the complainant or the respondent respectively, or by the appealing party in terms of the actions related to Section 9.

10.2 In the event of a matter involving multiple respondents, an appeal will only be considered on an individual-by-individual basis and will only impact on the specific recommendation for which that appeal is lodged and will have no effect on decision relating to the other non-appealing parties.

10.3 The appeal letter will be considered by two Trustees appointed by the Safeguarding, Safety and Serious Incident Reporting Committee ("the Committee"). Should this be deemed to be a valid appeal, the complaint, along with the appeal submitted by the appealing party, will be reviewed by the appointed Trustees supported by such

Foundation staff as may be required but not including any person who considered the original complaint. Additional people may be recruited to advise and support the appointed Trustees.

10.4 Having considered the appeal and complaint, the appointed Trustees shall issue a recommendation to the Committee.

10.5 If the Committee approves the recommendation and sanction (if any), the Foundation will notify the respondent and the complainant and take the recommended actions. The approval of the Committee of this outcome from the appeal is final.

10.6 If the Committee does not approve the recommendation, the recommendation will be referred back to the appointed Trustees for reconsideration. Having considered the comments of the Committee, the Trustees shall issue a revised recommendation for approval by the Committee. Approval of this outcome of the appeal is final. Should the revised recommendation not be accepted, the Committee will take such action as it deems fit.

11. DOCUMENTATION AND RECORDING

11.1 The complaint and recommendation, along with copies of communications with the complainant and respondent will be filed by the Foundation for up to seven years.

11.2 For the purposes of institutional learning, the Secretary General will produce an anonymised summary of the complaint and recommendations arising for the use of the Foundation in internal communications.

12. MONITORING AND LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

12.1 The Secretary General will be responsible to report to the Trustees annually on complaints raised and corrective actions required. These reports are to be reviewed annually to identify any trends, which may indicate a need to take further action.

13. EFFECTIVENESS AND APPLICABILITY

13.1 This Policy is reviewed at a minimum of once every three years and updated as required. It is effective as of the adopted date of 24 June 2021.

Last reviewed: 24 June 2021

This Policy shall apply to complaints submitted on or after the effective date above.

Complaint Template

DATA PROTECTION: This form is used to collect information for the purpose of gathering compliant details as part of the complaints process. We don't share your personal data provided in this form with any third parties. We take your personal data privacy seriously. The data you provide to us is securely stored and we will keep the data we capture from this form for six years, in line with the UK Limitations Act.

Name:
Contact email:
Contact number:
Preferred contact method:
Your relationship to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (i.e. volunteer, parent/carer):
Complaint summary (what you think went wrong, including dates and times or any reported incidents. Please provide a clear list of matters you would like investigated. Please don't exceed 1,000 words and note that there will be opportunities to submit further evidence if required.)
Please provide details of any actions that have been taken so far to try to resolve the issue:
What is your desired outcome from the complaint process?

Please note that completion and submission of this form constitutes an e-signature.

I (insert name)

understand that any information given about myself or on behalf of someone else is limited to that which is relevant to the investigation of the complaint, and only disclosed to people who have a need to know it to investigate, respond and resolve the complaint.

Date: