

# **Complaints Policy V1.1 Dec 2024**

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## Policy Statement

The OR Society strives for excellence and aims to continually improve its standards of provision. The Society is committed to providing a high-quality, fair and consistent end-point assessment (EPA) experience for all Apprentices, Employers and Training Providers.

## Reason for the Policy

The OR Society aims to provide a suitable assessment environment that maximizes the academic, social, and personal opportunities for all its Apprentices. It is recognised that on occasion, problems arise and Apprentices (and other stakeholders) may wish to express concern, disappointment, or dissatisfaction with aspects of the quality of services.

## Policy Objectives

This policy is aimed at any individual or organisation involved in the delivery of a standard where the OR Society is providing the EPA. This includes employers, providers and apprentices and covers any complaints these individuals or organisations may wish to make.

This policy ensures that all complaints are dealt with seriously, fairly, and consistently and that all Apprentices, Employers, Training Providers and other stakeholders are aware of the process for making a complaint.

It ensures that OR Society staff are aware of the process to be followed should a complaint arise and to ensure that complaints are handled sensitively and in line with the Society's Equality and Diversity policy.

It provides a Complaints procedure that is transparent and provides clear, accessible routes for those wishing to make a genuine complaint.

This Policy does not cover:

- appeals in relation to decisions made by the OR Society, which is covered by our Enquiries about Results and Appeals Policy, or
- any complaint about possible malpractice or maladministration, which is covered by our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

## Policy

All complaints will be dealt with seriously, fairly, and consistently and in accordance with the Society's Equality and Diversity Policy

All complaints will be handled sensitively and with due consideration to the confidentiality of both staff and the Apprentice/Employer/Training Provider.

All complainants will be kept informed, whatever the outcome and complaints will be recorded, monitored and analysed with appropriate actions being taken to prevent the recurrence of complaints where possible. Documentation will be filed in accordance with the Society's Data Protection Policy.

## Confidentiality and whistle blowing

We recognise that there are occasions where a complainant wishes to remain anonymous. Whilst our preference is that all complaints reveal their identity and provide contact details, if there is concern about negative consequences, a complainant may request that their identity is not divulged. It should be noted that the OR Society is not obliged to disclose information to a third party where it would be considered a breach of confidentiality and/or any other legislative obligation.

Whilst we are prepared to investigate issues which are reported to us anonymously, we will always try to confirm a complaint by means of a separate investigation before pursuing the matter with those to whom the complaint relates. At all times we will investigate such complaints from whistleblowers in accordance with relevant whistle blowing legislation and guidance.

## Definitions

A complaint is a serious expression of dissatisfaction with services provided by the OR Society that require investigation and a response.

There are separate procedures for:

- Appeals against any assessment outcomes, in such cases the Enquiry about Results and Appeals policy should be followed
- Staff wishing to complain about any aspect of their employment should follow the Grievance procedures

## Responsibility

This policy is relevant to all company staff, contractors, customers and stakeholders.

All staff have a responsibility for receiving complaints, treating them seriously and dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the procedures set out below.

The EPA Coordinator has a responsibility to receive all formal complaints and to log and monitor the complaints in accordance with the procedures below.

All staff have a responsibility to take a lead role in resolving complaints through investigation and response to the complaint.

## Complaints Procedure

### Stage One (Informal)

All concerns should be raised in the first instance with the EPA Coordinator within 10 working days of the incident. Complainants will normally be directed to the Independent End Point Assessor (IEPA) and/or Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) unless a member of the EPAO team can easily resolve the issue.

If appropriate, a meeting will be offered between the complainant and the Independent Assessor (if appropriate) with the EPA Coordinator in attendance, to try and resolve the issue.

If a complaint is about a member of staff, it must be referred to the Responsible Officer.

At this informal stage, complaints may be made by phone or by e mail. The complainant must be kept informed of progress at all stages with a written or verbal response to the complaint within 10 working days. If the issue is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction the complaint will move to Stage 2.

All records of conversations and correspondence will be held securely in SharePoint by the EPA Coordinator.

If it is not possible to resolve the complaint at this stage, it will be escalated for resolution through Stage 2.

Any complainant who does not feel it appropriate to follow the Stage One process due to a conflict of interest may go directly to Stage 2.

## Stage Two (Formal)

If a complainant has been through Stage One (or does not feel it appropriate) then he/she must submit their complaint in writing using the complaints form which is published on our website and in ACE360 knowledge base.

All formal complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days by the EPA Coordinator who will allocate a member of the OR Society EPAO team not involved in the complaint to investigate.

There will be two possible outcomes:

- Dismiss the complaint as unfounded, giving full reasons for the decision
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology and to take appropriate steps to avoid a similar problem arising in the future

In situations where a complaint is upheld, or where an investigation indicates a failure in our assessment processes, we will take appropriate action including:

- informing Ofqual, External Quality Assurance Organisation (EQAO), (where required) if an apprentice's assessment has been affected
- identifying any other apprentice who has been affected by that failure
- correcting or, where it cannot be corrected, mitigating as far as possible the effect of the failure
- ensuring that the failure does not recur in the future
- amending procedures and notifying relevant stakeholders of any changes that affect them and why, and
- arranging staff training

We aim to resolve complaints within 10 working days, However, should the issue be complex the EPA Coordinator will inform you if resolution is not possible within that timeframe.

Once the investigation is complete a formal response will be provided that explains what went wrong, why it went wrong and what action will be taken to resolve the situation.

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive to your complaint, you can request a review of it within 20 working days of the date of our decision letter.

The request will be referred to Responsible Officer who will either allocate a senior member of the OR Society staff or an independent competent expert who has not been involved in the original complaint or its response to complete the review or undertake the review

herself/himself.

A review will only be carried out if the complainant provides clear reasons for making the request and sets out areas of concern. The reasons must relate only to the way that we have or have not investigated your complaint and not the detail of the complaint itself.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the OR Society's response after exhausting the Complaints Policy, he/she may seek advice from Ofqual.

## Complaints brought to our attention by Ofqual

Where the Ofqual notifies the OR Society of a complaint about our assessment arrangements that it has received, we will follow the same process as any other complaint.

If the OR Society is notified of a failure that has been discovered in the assessment process of another End-point Assessment Organisation via a complaint, we will review our procedures in accordance with this policy to ascertain if the same failure could affect our arrangements.

## Policy Review

The External Quality Assurance Organisation may require the OR Society to change this policy at any time to ensure compliance with its requirements.

This policy is reviewed as part of the OR Society's continuous improvement monitoring through its annual self-assessment arrangements. It may be reviewed earlier should any feedback or concern be brought to the attention of the OR Society to ensure it remains fit for purpose and the process and its outcomes are deliverable.