

NATIONAL EXAMINING BOARD FOR DENTAL NURSES

Complaints Policy

Policy	Complaints Policy
Effective Date	16 October 2014
Date Last Reviewed	<i>New policy yet to be reviewed</i>
Scheduled Review Date	October 2015
Supersedes	Quality Assurance Complaints Policy and any other policy or procedure relating to complaint handling
Original Author	Sue Barker, Operations Manager
Owned by	Operations Manager / QA Coordinator
Monitored by	Governance Committee
Approved by	Board of Trustees on 16 October 2014

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- NEBDN has a clear procedure in place for complainants to follow, should they wish to make a complaint;
- all complaints are received, processed, investigated and resolved in a consistent, fair and timely manner;
- complaints are routinely recorded and reported upon for the purposes of risk management and continuous improvement.

Scope

Who can complain?

Any individual can use this policy to make a complaint about their experience of NEBDN or about any aspect of our service, procedures or policies, subject to the following limitations.

Limitations

1. This Complaints Policy does not cover the following:
 - Matters where separate policies or procedures apply (e.g. Appeals Policy);
 - Courses or Course Providers not accredited by NEBDN;
 - Matters unrelated to NEBDN, such as contract disputes with NEBDN accredited Course Providers;

- Requests for new or different services.
2. Candidates are not permitted to make a complaint on behalf of a third party. NEBDN will only accept complaints from candidates where the matter relates directly to them.
 3. NEBDN is unable to accept or act upon any complaints made anonymously.
 4. NEBDN reserves the right to reject a complaint which is:
 - False;
 - Abusive in content and/or the complainant is aggressive in manner;
 - Vexatious.

Policy statement

NEBDN is committed to providing high quality services and exemplary support to our stakeholders. This policy exists to ensure that any exceptions to that are resolved through a clear and standardised approach.

Definitions

Complainant

A complainant is the person making the complaint.

Vexatious complaints

Vexatious complaints are defined as:

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- Insistence upon pursuing unmerited complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes;
- Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
- Demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value.

Responsibilities

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the Governance Committee is responsible for reviewing this policy on a regular basis to ensure that it is fit for purpose. The Committee will be guided by feedback from NEBDN staff members who operate the policy, in particular the Chief Executive, Operations Manager and Quality Assurance Coordinator.

Confidentiality

Complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner. Everyone involved in the complaints procedure has a duty to maintain confidentiality. However, for a complaint to be fully investigated and resolved, it may be necessary to disclose the identity of

the complainant to the subject of the complaint and/or to anyone who may be directly involved in the complaint and/or its investigation. We may need to provide relevant parties with a copy of your complaint and any evidence relating to the complaint.

Where a candidate makes a complaint directly to NEBDN, it is usual practice for NEBDN to inform or liaise with the candidate's Course Provider.

References

Complainants are referred to any relevant NEBDN guidance, qualification documents and/or policies that may relate to their complaint. For example, depending upon the nature of the complaint, a more appropriate policy may apply such as the Appeals Policy.

Questions

If you have any questions about this policy, please email NEBDN at info@nebdn.org and your enquiry will be directed to the appropriate member of staff.

Complaints Procedure

Making a complaint

Before making a complaint, NEBDN advises complainants to read any relevant guidance or qualification documents and/or policies that may affect their complaint.

Complainants may, in the first instance, contact NEBDN by telephone, email, facsimile or by post.

Telephone: 01253 778417

Email: info@nebdn.org

Facsimile: 01253 777268

Post: NEBDN
108-110 London Street
Fleetwood
Lancashire
FY7 6EU

Complainants should ensure that they provide their full name and accurate contact details, including a contact email address if possible.

Complaints may also be made verbally to an NEBDN Quality Assurance Auditor during an audit visit.

Types of Complaint

Complaints about the Conduct of an Examination

Complaints about the conduct of an examination are covered under this policy.

Due to the nature of these complaints, the timescale is important as any matters of examination conduct have the potential to affect examination results.

Complaints about the conduct of an examination must be submitted in writing (by email or by letter) to NEBDN **within 5 working days** of the examination having taken place.

Complaints about the conduct of an examination which are received outside of this timescale cannot be considered since matters relating to examination conduct are reported to the relevant Qualification Committee and are considered as part of the results ratification process.

Complaints about the conduct of an examination will be acknowledged upon receipt.

Complainants can expect a response to their complaint following the issue of examination results.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they have the option of making a Formal Complaint under Stage 2 of this Policy.

Complaints against NEBDN Accredited Course Providers

Complaints against NEBDN accredited Course Providers are covered under this policy. However, complainants are expected to follow the relevant Course Provider's documented complaints procedure in the first instance.

Once the Course Provider's complaints procedure has been exhausted and if the complaint remains unresolved, the complainant may follow NEBDN's Complaints Policy, outlined herein. Complainants will be expected to provide full details of their complaint including documentation to evidence that they have exhausted the relevant Course Provider's complaints procedure.

Complaints from Course Providers about NEBDN Quality Assurance Processes

For clarity, complaints from NEBDN accredited Course Providers about our quality assurance processes are covered under this policy.

In the first instance, Course Providers are encouraged to contact the Quality Assurance Coordinator (see Making a Complaint).

How we will deal with your complaint

Stage 1 – Informal

A complainant should attempt to have their complaint resolved at this stage before making a formal complaint under Stage 2.

For complaints about the conduct of an examination, complainants should follow the process outlined earlier in this policy under 'Complaints about the Conduct of an Examination'. For all other complaints covered under this policy, the following process applies:

A complainant may make an informal complaint in the first instance by telephone, email, facsimile or post. Depending on the nature and/or complexity and/or severity of the complaint, NEBDN may require a complainant who has contacted NEBDN by telephone to subsequently submit the details of their complaint in writing.

Once received, a member of staff at NEBDN Head Office will take ownership of the complaint. The subject matter and/or the details of the complaint will determine who is best placed to deal with it.

If the complaint requires some investigation or cannot be resolved immediately for some other reason, the complainant will be sent an acknowledgement of their complaint within 5 working days of receipt. The acknowledgement will indicate an approximate timescale for completion.

It is expected that the majority of complaints will be resolved satisfactorily at this stage within 25 working days of receipt with no further action being necessary.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Scenario (a): Stage 1 complaint escalated to Stage 2

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response they have received at the informal stage and they wish their complaint to be formally investigated, this must be submitted to NEBDN in writing.

A formal complaint at Stage 2 must be submitted within 10 working days of being notified that the informal stage has been completed or exhausted.

If the complaint is in regard to Quality Assurance inspection judgements, it should include evidence that was available to the inspection team that you believe has not been taken into account. You may make a complaint up to 25 working days from the incident or date a report is published, or 25 working days from the end of the inspection/visit where there is no report.

The complainant must demonstrate what occurred at Stage 1 of the Complaints Policy and explain why the outcome of the informal stage was not a satisfactory resolution.

Scenario (b): Stage 1 does not apply

Stage 1 of the Complaints Policy may not apply where the nature of the complaint calls for it to be treated immediately as a Stage 2 Formal Complaint.

For all Stage 2 complaints, NEBDN will:

- Record the complaint in the Formal Complaints Log;
- Send the complainant a written acknowledgement within 5 working days of receipt.

The manner and conduct and timescale of the investigation into a formal complaint will vary depending on the particulars of the complaint.

During the course of the investigation, the complainant may be asked for additional information either verbally or in writing or in the form of documentation or other evidential material.

Where applicable, the Operations Manager has the authority and discretion to consider any reasonable option to resolve the complaint. Where the complaint relates to Quality Assurance, the Quality Assurance Committee will convene to agree a resolution. Depending on the severity of the complaint, the Chief Executive may be consulted and/or may undertake the investigation.

Complainants should expect a written response to their Stage 2 Formal Complaint within 25 working days of receipt of their complaint. If this timescale cannot be met, the complainant will receive notification in writing.

In all cases, the Chief Executive will be informed of any complaints reaching Stage 2. Depending upon the severity of the Stage 2 complaint, the Board of Trustees may also be informed.

Stage 3 – Review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the result of the formal investigation under Stage 2, they may request a review under Stage 3 of the Complaints Policy.

It is important to note that **Stage 3 is entirely concerned with a review of how a complaint has been dealt with and whether this has been fair and reasonable.** No new complaint or additional aspect of the original complaint may be introduced at this stage.

We will consider a Stage 3 Review on the following grounds:

- The formal investigation was not conducted fairly.
- The formal investigation failed to take account of relevant material.
- The decision reached was wholly unreasonable.

A request for a Stage 3 Review must be made in writing to the Chief Executive explaining the reason(s) why a request for a review is justified and why any or all of the grounds listed above are applicable. Documentary evidence should be supplied to support the request.

A request for a review must be received by the Chief Executive within 10 working days of the complainant being informed of the outcome of Stage 2. That is, 10 working days from the date of the formal written response of Stage 2.

The Chief Executive will examine the original complaint and all of the evidence and material assessed during the formal investigation at Stage 2. The Chief Executive will judge whether any of the grounds for review have been established.

If grounds for review have not been established, the complainant will be informed of this decision within 10 working days of receipt of the request for a review.

If grounds for review have been established, the Chief Executive may consider one of the following actions to resolve the complaint:

- Conclude the matter by offering a resolution.
- Convene a panel to consider the complaint and offer a resolution.
- Instigate a new investigation.

Where an offer to resolve the complaint can be made, the complainant will be informed within 10 working days. Alternatively, the complainant will receive

notification within 10 working days of what further action is deemed necessary and the timeline for completion.

In cases where the Chief Executive has been the key investigator and/or respondent at Stage 2, a member of the NEBDN Board of Trustees will lead the Stage 3 Review.

In all cases, the Board of Trustees will be informed of any complaints reaching Stage 3 of the Complaints Policy.