

NATIONAL EXAMINING BOARD FOR DENTAL NURSES

Complaints Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- NEBDN has a clear procedure in place for individuals or organisations 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 or organisation representative may use this policy to make a complaint to NEBDN about any aspect of our service, procedures or policies, subject to the limitations listed in this policy.

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 outside of the jurisdiction of NEBDN, such as contract disputes between candidates and their course providers.
2. Third parties are not permitted to make a complaint on behalf of someone else. NEBDN will only accept complaints where the matter relates directly to the individual or organisation who is making the complaint.
3. NEBDN is unable to accept or act upon any complaints made anonymously.
4. NEBDN reserves the right to reject a complaint which is:
 - abusive in content and/or the complainant is aggressive in manner;
 - vexatious.

Policy statement

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

Stage 1 – Informal complaint

The majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage, within 5 working days of receipt.

Stage 2 – Formal complaint

A stage 1 complaint may be escalated to stage 2 if:

- a) the complaint cannot be resolved within 5 working days, or
- b) the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint at stage 1.

Stage 3 – Review of complaint handling

Stage 3 is entirely concerned with a review of how a complaint has been dealt with and whether this has been fair and reasonable. We will consider a stage 3 review on the following grounds:

- It is alleged the formal stage 2 investigation was not conducted fairly.
- It is alleged the formal stage 2 investigation failed to take account of relevant material.
- It is alleged the decision reached was wholly unreasonable.

A summary complaints report is issued to the Board of Trustees at each of their Board meetings.

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, we will inform the candidate's course provider to ensure transparency.

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

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 and management team.

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that this policy is communicated and implemented effectively throughout the organisation. The Chief Executive is also responsible for ensuring that summary complaints reports are provided to the Board of Trustees at their Board meetings.

The Chief Executive and management team are responsible for operating the complaints policy and for ensuring that team members understand what to do when complaints are received.

The Executive Assistant is responsible for acknowledging receipt of complaints and for recording the details in a central complaints log.

A named manager will be responsible for each complaint. This person will be responsible for adhering to NEBDN's documented complaints process, including investigation and response times and, where relevant, escalation of the complaint.

NEBDN staff can provide guidance regarding the complaints process but cannot change or reverse a decision once it is made, no matter what informal approaches or appeals are made by the complainant.

References

Appeals Policy
Bribery and Corruption Policy
Bullying and Harassment Policy
Candidate Conduct Policy
Confidentiality Policy
Conflict of Interest Policy
Data Protection Policy
Disciplinary Policy
Equality and Diversity Policy
Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances Policy
Fees and Invoicing Policy
Gifts and Hospitality Policy
Reasonable Adjustments Policy
Right to Work Policy
Risk Management Policy
Standards for Course Provider Accreditation
Standards of Performance and Conduct
Student Fitness to Practice Policy
Volunteer Recruitment and Management Policies
Whistleblowing 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, qualification documents and/or additional policies that may be relevant to their complaint.

Contact us

Telephone: 01772 429917

Email: info@nebdn.org

Post: NEBDN
First Floor
Quayside Court
Chain Caul Way
Preston
PR2 2ZP

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

How we will deal with your complaint

When a complaint is received by the organisation, the Executive Assistant will acknowledge its receipt to the complainant and add the complaint to a central complaints log. A summary version of the complaints log is submitted to each Board of Trustees meeting as part of the Executive Report.

Stage 1 – Informal

The majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage.

Complaints about the conduct of an examination:

If a candidate or course provider has a complaint about an examination, the details must be submitted in writing (by email or by letter) to NEBDN **within 5 working days of the examination having taken place**. NEBDN's Assessment and Awards Lead is responsible for dealing with complaints about examinations.

Complaints about examinations have the potential to affect examination results. They are therefore dealt with by the relevant Qualification Committee as part of the results ratification process. For this reason, complaints about examinations may not be considered if they are received beyond 5 working days of the examination having taken place.

Complaints from candidates about their course provider:

If a candidate has a complaint against their course provider then they must use the course provider's complaints policy as the first step. If after this has been followed and the candidate still has concerns, then the complainant may follow NEBDN's Complaints Policy. 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.

For all other complaints, the following procedure and timeline applies:

Complaints should be submitted to NEBDN in writing - by email or letter. If a complaint is initially made by telephone, the complainant will be asked to set down the complaint in writing - by email or letter. Once received, a team member at NEBDN Head Office will take ownership of complaint resolution as follows:

<i>Nature of complaint:</i>	<i>Responsible manager:</i>
Complaints about NEBDN examinations	Assessment and Awards Lead
Complaints about NEBDN course providers	Quality Assurance Lead
Complaints about NEBDN quality assurance	Quality Assurance Lead
Complaints about NEBDN invoicing or credit control	Finance Lead
All other complaints	Executive Assistant <i>(who will acknowledge complaint and allocate responsibility to a named member of the team)</i>

We will resolve informal (stage 1) complaints within 5 working days of receipt.

An informal (stage 1) complaint may be escalated to a formal (stage 2) complaint if: c) the complaint cannot be resolved within 5 working days, or
d) the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint at stage 1.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

A senior manager will be involved in every stage 2 complaint:

Stage 2(a) – a senior manager will oversee the complaint resolution.

Stage 2(b) – a senior manager will take lead responsibility for complaint resolution.

Stage 2(a) The complaint cannot be resolved within 5 working days

If the complaint requires some investigation or cannot be resolved within 5 working days for some other reason, the complainant will be sent an email acknowledgement of their complaint within 5 working days of receipt.

The acknowledgement will:

1. advise the names and contact details of the team members dealing with the complaint; 2. indicate when the complainant can expect to be contacted with an update.

Responsibility for stage 2(a) complaint resolution will be allocated as follows:

<i>Nature of complaint:</i>	<i>Responsible manager:</i>	<i>Responsible senior manager:</i>
Complaints about NEBDN examinations	Assessment and Awards Lead	Operations Manager

Complaints about NEBDN course providers	Quality Assurance Lead	Operations Manager
Complaints about NEBDN quality assurance	Quality Assurance Lead	Operations Manager
Complaints about NEBDN invoicing or credit control	Finance Lead	Chief Executive
All other complaints	Executive Assistant (<i>who will acknowledge complaint and allocate responsibility to a named manager</i>)	Operations Manager or Chief Executive

Stage 2(b) The complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint at stage 1

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint at stage 1 and wishes to escalate their complaint, they must inform NEBDN in writing within 5 working days of being notified of the outcome at stage 1. The complainant must explain why they believe the outcome of the informal stage was not a satisfactory resolution.

Responsibility for stage 2(b) complaint resolution will be allocated as follows:

<i>Nature of complaint:</i>	<i>Responsible senior manager:</i>
Complaints about NEBDN examinations	Operations Manager
Complaints about NEBDN course providers	Operations Manager
Complaints about NEBDN quality assurance	Operations Manager
Complaints about NEBDN invoicing or credit control	Chief Executive
All other complaints	Operations Manager or Chief Executive

All formal (stage 2) complaints:

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.

Complainants should expect a written response to their Stage 2 Formal Complaint within 25 working days of receipt of their complaint. In exceptional circumstances where this timescale cannot be met, the complainant will be notified in writing.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal investigation under stage 2, they may have grounds to request a review of complaint handling (stage 3).

Stage 3 – Review of complaint handling

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:

- It is alleged the formal stage 2 investigation was not conducted fairly.
- It is alleged the formal stage 2 investigation failed to take account of relevant material.
- It is alleged the decision reached was wholly unreasonable.

The Chief Executive or a nominated trustee will take lead responsibility for stage 3. In cases where the Chief Executive has been involved/responsible at stage 2, a member of the NEBDN Board of Trustees will lead the stage 3 review.

A request for a stage 3 review must be made in writing to the Chief Executive within 10 working days of being notified of the outcome at stage 2. The complainant must explain their grounds for requesting a stage 3 review and supply evidence to support their claim that a review of the complaint handling is necessary.

The Chief Executive/nominated trustee will examine the original complaint and all of the evidence and material assessed during the formal investigation at stage 2. The complainant may be asked for additional information either verbally or in writing or in the form of documentation or other evidential material.

As a result, the Chief Executive/nominated trustee may:

- conclude the matter by offering a resolution;
- instigate a new and independent investigation into the original complaint;
- convene a panel* to review the case and offer a resolution.

*The panel will include, as a minimum, the Chief Executive and two trustees. In cases where a trustee is leading the stage 3 review, the panel will include 3 trustees as a minimum and will *not* include the Chief Executive.

Complainants should expect a written outcome within 25 working days. In exceptional circumstances where this timescale cannot be met, the complainant will be notified in writing of what further action is deemed necessary and the timeline for completion.

NEBDN is committed to handling and resolving all complaints in a consistent, fair and timely manner. However, complainants should be aware that they have the option to refer their complaint to an external body, such as a regulator, at any time.

NEBDN Complaints Process

