

# Complaints Policy and Procedure

Our aim:

The Institute of Acoustics (IOA) is committed to providing a quality service for its members and working in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of all our stakeholders. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our members, customers and stakeholders, and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

Therefore, we aim to ensure that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
- we respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc;
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and periodically review our complaints policy and procedures.

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally and dealt with quickly. Our aims are to:

- resolve informal concerns quickly;
- keep matters low-key;
- enable mediation between the complainant and the respondent (the person a complaint is made against).

An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved; but if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

## Categories of complaint

There are two basic categories of complaint:

1. Complaints about a member who has broken our Code of Conduct. Such complaints are dealt with under our Code of Conduct complaints procedures. Details can be found on our website at <https://www.ioa.org.uk/about-us/our-members-code-conduct>
2. Complaints about the Institute of Acoustics' policy and practice or staff, Trustees, members or contractors operating on behalf of the Institute of Acoustics. The policy for this category of complaint is provided in this document.

## Preamble

**Definition:** The IOA defines a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction (related to category 2 above) that relates to the IOA and that requires a formal response'.

**Purpose:** The formal complaints procedure is intended to make sure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and, wherever possible, resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

**The IOA's responsibilities will be to:**

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing (this may be by email if the initial complaint was by email);
- respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint;
- take action, where appropriate.

## **A complainant's responsibilities are to:**

- bring their complaint, in writing, to the IOA's attention, normally within 8 weeks of the issue arising;
- raise concerns promptly and directly with a member of staff in the IOA;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including relevant action taken to date;
- allow the IOA a reasonable period of time to deal with the matter;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the IOA's control.

**Responsibility for Action:** All staff, the IOA representatives and Trustees of the IOA. The Trustees of the Institute of Acoustics are the Institute's Council.

**Confidentiality:** Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to make sure that both the complainant and the IOA maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

**Monitoring and Reporting:** Each complaint will be judged on its own merit and the Institute's Executive (comprising of 5 senior Trustees) informed of any complaints and action being taken. The Institute's full Council meet quarterly and will review all complaints (anonymised, where possible) to determine any lessons to be learnt and associated policy or procedural changes required. Where a complaint raises the need for immediate action by Council, Executive will bring this matter immediately to Council's attention.

## **Formal Complaints Procedure**

### **Stage 1 General Complaints**

**Complaints about the IOA staff or representatives** (e.g. members acting on behalf of the Institute, examiners, tutors, interviewers or apprenticeship assessors)

In the first instance, if you are unable to resolve the issue informally, you should write to the member of staff or Institute of Acoustics representative who dealt with you (copied to the Chief Executive) so that they have a chance to put things right. The matter will be raised as a formal complaint and addressed appropriately.

### **Complaints about the Chief Executive of Trustees**

If your complaint concerns a Trustee of the IOA or the Chief Executive, rather than a member of the IOA's staff or representative, you should write formally to the individual concerned and copy to the President of the Institute of Acoustics.

### **Complaints about the President**

If your complaint relates directly to the actions of the President of the Institute, you should write formally to the President, copying to the Chief Executive who will inform the other members of the Executive Council.

### **Complaints about the Institute's Policy or Procedures**

If your complaint is not about the actions of an individual(s) but about the Institute's policy or procedures, then you should formally write to the Chief Executive.

### **Content of a Formal Complaint Letter**

In your letter, you should set out the details of your complaint, the consequences for you as a result, and the remedy you are seeking.

### **Institute of Acoustics Response**

You can expect your complaint to be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt.

### **Institute of Acoustics Contact Details**

Our contact details can be found on the IOA Website.

## Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the initial response to the complaint, then you can write to the IOA's Chief Executive (President if the complaint relates directly to the Chief Executive) and ask for your complaint and the response to be reviewed. You can expect the Chief Executive/President to acknowledge your request within 5 working days of receipt.

The IOA's aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, inevitably some issues will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated, consequently timescales given for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing this process, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

## Final Stage

If you are not satisfied with the subsequent reply from the IOA's Chief Executive, then you have the option of writing to the President of the Institute of Acoustics, stating the reason why you are dissatisfied with the outcome. Our contact details can be found on the IOA Website. You must do this within 10 days of receiving the written response from the IOA's Chief Executive.

The President (or their nominee) will respond to inform you of the action which will be taken to investigate your complaint, and when you can expect to hear the outcome of the investigation.

**Note.** If your original complaint was against the President or Chief Executive, then the final stage will be handled by the Immediate Past President or the President Elect.

## Note from the Trustees

Please note that the Trustees of the IOA who are tasked with reviewing complaints are experienced within the industry who allocate their time to this process alongside their own professional responsibilities, most of whom are working. We ask that you are patient and recognise that investigations can take time.

We also ask that you are sure that your complaint is justified with valid evidence and not just a difference of opinion. Although we will review a reasonable amount of evidence submitted with the case, excessive or superfluous information will only hinder the investigation and obfuscate matters.