



Complaints Policy

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists (RCOphth) is a membership organisation that promotes and supports the ophthalmic profession in the UK and overseas. We provide professional development guidance, training and educational activities for all our members. As the voice of our members, we influence national eye health policy for the benefit of patients and the profession of ophthalmology.

We are not a regulatory body and complaints about individual doctors should be dealt with by the local procedures of the hospital, practice or clinic and, if necessary, referred to the General Medical Council.

The College takes complaints about conduct and standards of service seriously and we define a complaint as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction or concern about a product, service, policy, or behaviour that a person believes is inadequate, unacceptable, or has not met their expectations.”

The College is committed to resolving complaints promptly, fairly, and effectively. All complaints will be handled sympathetically. Confidentiality is a fundamental component of our complaints policy, ensuring that all information related to a complaint is handled with the utmost discretion and care.

This Complaints Policy does not apply to:

- RCOphth examination results. If you would like to appeal these, please visit our website for full details of the [examinations appeals procedure](#)
- Employee (staff) incidents, issues and concerns covered in our Employee Handbook.

Making a complaint

If you have an incident, issue or concern that you would like to raise with the College, please contact us by emailing contact@rcophth.ac.uk.

Your complaint must include:

- your name

- full contact details
- the nature of the complaint
- how you would like to see the matter resolved
- any supporting evidence of the incident, issue or concern.

Please note that without full details of the complaint the College will be unable to investigate the concern thoroughly and this may result in the complaint being closed due to lack of information.

Complaints should ideally be made within one month of the problem or concern. This will help us to effectively establish what happened and gather any information or evidence needed to carry out a full investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within 15 working days of receiving it and aim to resolve the matter for you within a reasonable timeframe.

If additional information is required to investigate the complaint thoroughly, the College expects to receive this within 10 working days of the request being made.

To make sure we comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, we consider adjustments for people with protected characteristics such as hearing or sight impairments, language difficulties or other specific needs. If you require reasonable adjustments to this process, you can contact us by telephone on 0300 030 2020 or write to us at:

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists
18 Stephenson Way
London
NW1 2HD.

Examples of reasonable adjustments to our complaints process would be:

- flexible meeting arrangements
- alternative formats
- extended timeframes
- allowing complainants to be accompanied by a support person who can assist them throughout the process.

Once a complaint has been received an internal investigation will take place and a College representative will inform you of the outcome and any steps taken to resolve the issue.

Appeal by an Appeal Panel

If you are not satisfied with how your complaint has been handled, or if you are the subject of a complaint and would like to appeal, an appeal request should be made in writing to the Chief Executive. Complaints involving the Chief Executive should be sent to our Honorary Secretary.

Your appeal application must include:

- your name
- full contact details
- full details of the initial complaint (including any evidence)
- who has been involved so far
- what has/has not been done
- why you disagree with the outcome
- how you would like to see the matter resolved.

Please note that without full details of the complaint the College will be unable to investigate the concern thoroughly and this may result in the complaint being closed due to lack of information.

The Chief Executive/Honorary Secretary will chair the Appeal Panel and carry out a full investigation regarding the complaint.

If it is agreed that there are grounds in support of the appeal, the Chair will convene an Appeal Panel within eight weeks of the complainant's appeal request being received, if reasonably practicable.

The Appeal Panel will comprise:

- the Chief Executive or Honorary Secretary, who will act as Chair of the Appeal Panel
- a member of the College Council
- a member of the College Lay Advisory Group or a Lay Trustee
- a member of the College senior management team.

Members of the Appeal Panel will not have had any previous involvement with the initial complaint to ensure a fresh perspective on the issue. Nor can a member of the Appeal Panel be a subject of the complaint.

The Panel will consider the appeal in light of written evidence presented and will afford the appellant the opportunity of a hearing to present their case in person. The Panel Chair will coordinate the time and date for the hearing.

The complainant will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend. The friend may advise and counsel the complainant but will not be allowed to make statements or take any part in the proceedings.

The Appeal Panel may request corroborative evidence from the complainant, and this must be submitted to the Panel. The Panel may also seek evidence from any other person and may request that person to give evidence at the hearing.

The Appeal Panel and the appellant may question any person before it. All evidence must be received four weeks prior to the hearing to ensure that all members of the panel and the appellant can consider it.

If the appeal is rejected, the Panel Chair will inform the complainant of the reasons for the decision.

If the Appeal Panel upholds an appeal for outcomes requested, the Panel Chair will inform the complainant and those subject to the complaint of the decision.

The appellant will normally be informed of the decision regarding an appeal within 28 days of the hearing. The appellant will be informed if any delay is likely to occur.

The decision of the panel is final.

Participation

The College encourages feedback, about all the activities we provide as it helps us identify areas for improvement and innovation.

Throughout the complaints process the College expects all parties to treat each other with dignity and respect.

The College has a set of values and behaviors that staff and members are expected to uphold. These are available on our [website](#).

Whether you are a complainant or an individual who has been the subject of a complaint, it is expected that you will follow this procedure and engage with the process.

Failure to engage with our Complaints Policy may result in a decision being taken based on the evidence to hand or the case may be closed due to a lack of information. This decision will be taken after our 10-working day deadline for additional information requests has passed.

Failure to follow College policies may also result in your membership of the College being rescinded due to insubordination depending on the severity of the specific situation.

Persons Named in a Complaint

Any person who is the subject of a complaint shall be entitled to view all the paperwork submitted in connection with that complaint and make representation to the Appeal Panel. All documentation must be shared with the subject of a complaint four weeks in advance of the Appeal Panel meeting.

Record keeping

A central register of formal complaints will be maintained by the College. This will detail the nature of complaints and the outcomes which will be reviewed on a periodic basis by the College's Trustee Board.

Documents relating to a complaint will be kept for seven years in line with the College's Data Retention Policy.