

The British  
Psychological Society

Promoting excellence in psychology

# Society Qualifications

Making a Complaint  
against a Society  
Qualification



[www.bps.org.uk/qualifications](http://www.bps.org.uk/qualifications)



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## 1. Purpose and scope

For the purposes of this document, a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more candidates about the Society's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Society. This definition embraces both the definition of a complaint within the UK Quality Code and as worded by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

## 2. Early resolution

Routine candidate concerns and minor complaints should, in the first instance, be raised with the Qualifications Team who will endeavour to resolve them swiftly and informally.

The Society will always aim to resolve issues raised through an informal resolution process in an effort to address concerns and arrive at satisfactory solutions in a timely manner.

## 3. Formal complaint

### 3.1

Where it has not been possible to resolve matters informally, a formal written complaint should be submitted to the Qualifications Manager via a Complaint Form (available from the Qualifications Office) and addressed to the Qualifications Manager. Escalation to the formal stage will typically occur when:

- The complainant has declined to engage with early resolution and has initiated the formal process.
- The complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the early resolution process.
- It is clear that early resolution is not appropriate or possible, and that a concern will need to be addressed formally.

### 3.2

To ensure a prompt response, the complaint must be specific, detailed and fully documented. The complainant must complete the Complaint Form and include the following:

- Name, address, membership number and the qualification on which they are/were enrolled.
- All relevant documentation, dates, locations and witnesses as appropriate.
- Details of any previous attempts at resolution.
- Outline of expected/desired outcome(s).

### 3.3 Consideration of a formal complaint

3.3.1 Once the Qualifications Manager receives the complaint, the complaint will be formally logged and a written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 5 working days from the date it was received.

3.3.2 The Qualifications Manager will review the complaint and all accompanying documentation against the Candidate Handbook and Regulations for the Society's Postgraduate Qualifications to determine if the claim is submitted under the correct procedures, whether it is valid and if provided information is complete.

3.3.3 If it is deemed valid and evidence sufficient, the complaint will be thoroughly investigated by the Qualifications Manager in a process that aims to be transparent and fair.

3.3.4 If the complaint is not accepted for consideration, the complainant will be notified in writing of the reasons for rejecting the complaint. The complainant will be notified of their right to refer the matter to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), where appropriate, should they be dissatisfied with the outcome.

### 3.4

The Society will aim to fully respond to all complaints within one calendar month. In cases where additional information or evidence may be required, this response time will begin when that information has been received.

### 3.5

In the rare event that a response is likely to exceed one calendar month, complainants will be notified in writing. This will most likely be limited to cases which are complex or multifaceted.

## 4. Review stage

### 4.1

In the event that a complaint has been closed, but the complainant feels the matter remains unresolved or the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, a review process can be triggered by completing the Review Request Form (available from the Qualifications Office) with a clear reference to the original complaint number.

### 4.2

When triggering a review, full and specific details explaining the reason for why the complainant is challenging the decision as well as the preferred outcome will need to be outlined.

### 4.3

The request for a review will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days from when the request has been received. Unless the complaint under review is very complex, the review process will not exceed one calendar month. The complainant will be kept informed of the process and relevant dates at each stage.

### 4.4

All reviews will be carried out by the Director of Qualifications and Standards and include a thorough and unbiased consideration of the formal complaint process, including:

- a review of the procedures followed at the formal stage.
- a consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable.
- a consideration of new material evidence which the complainant was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.

The review will **not** normally involve a further investigation of issues considered at the formal stage. The complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review.

### 4.5

If the review process is likely to exceed one calendar month, complainants will be informed in writing and given a clear indication of the expected review completion time.

### 4.6

The Society will always aim to ensure the quality and robustness of its complaints and review processes.

### 4.7

The outcome of the review process is the final decision of the Society, and no further internal investigation will take place in relation to the original complaint.

## 5. Complaints that cannot be resolved by the Society

### 5.1

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the review stage, they have the right to appeal to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) where appropriate.

### 5.2

The Society will support any external review of an investigation into a complaint whilst ensuring compliance with the Data Protection Act.

## 6. Other information

### 6.1

Unless there are compelling reasons not to do so, the Society will share the complaint with the relevant Qualification Board in order to enable the Board to supply a comprehensive response where required. Complainants should, therefore, be aware that, whilst complaints will be handled sensitively and proportionately, anonymity and confidentiality cannot be protected.

### 6.2

Most Society qualifications are approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The HCPC has processes for considering concerns about the qualifications it approves and about the fitness to practise for individuals involved in the delivery of those qualifications.

There is no obligation on the Society or those participating in the investigatory processes outlined in this document to share the details of the complaint with the HCPC. However, the Society reserves the right to do so, particularly where:

- the information provided suggests that the qualification may no longer be meeting the HCPC's standards.
- the information provided raises concerns about an individual registrant's fitness to practise.





