

UKRI Complaints: Investigator's Guidance

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Guidance Statement and Aims

This document offers guidance for investigating complaints raised under the [UKRI Complaints Procedure](#).

We aim to ensure that UKRI take a thorough, proportionate and balanced look into the issues raised in a complaint. Investigations must be based on the relevant facts and evidence to enable UKRI to improve the service it delivers.

All employees can receive support and advice throughout the process, regardless of their involvement in it (including investigators, note-takers and witnesses). Where required, UKRI encourages those colleagues impacted by the complaint to seek support during the investigation. Signposting to such support will be provided during the process.

Management Statement

This guidance document and other corresponding guidance and templates that make up the UKRI Complaints Investigator's Toolkit have been approved by the Director, Risk & Assurance.

Documents making up the Toolkit will be regularly reviewed by the UKRI Complaints team to incorporate changes in best-practice and relevant user feedback, normally every two years.

The next scheduled review date is October 2026.

Version Number	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Owner
Version 3.0	October 2024	New guidance	UKRI Complaints team

1. Scope

This guidance is for use by all UKRI employees appointed to undertake UKRI Complaints investigations. It has been produced in line with the best-practice complaint handling guidance contained in the [UK Central Government Complaint Standards](#).

The Complaint Standards work alongside several other [important sets of guidance](#). Where relevant, these should be reviewed before commencing any complaints investigation.

- UK Central Government Complaint Standards
- Her Majesty's Treasury Managing Public Money
- A Modern Civil Service as set out in the Declaration on Government Reform
- The Civil Service Code
- The Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)
- Other UK Central Government guidance and [UKRI complaints guidance](#)

2. What you should do

The important principle is 'investigate once, investigate well'. Our aim is to carry out one investigation that deals with the concerns raised thoroughly and fairly.

A good investigation starts with gathering the evidence that will help you conclude whether something went wrong or not. Your aim is to answer these questions:

- What happened?
- What should have happened?
- If there is a difference, what was the cause of any identified failings?
- If there were failings, what impact (if any) have they had on the complainant?
- How can that impact be put right for them and any others who might be similarly affected?

You will need to base your conclusion on an objective analysis of the evidence and explain this analysis clearly in the draft response letter.

An investigation should be approached sensitively; [see Section 6](#) for a list of the support available to staff. Confidentiality should be exercised throughout the investigation by all parties involved.

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has published several [good complaint handling guides](#). These provide detailed guidance to help you meet the UK Central Government Complaint Standards.

Investigators are encouraged to review the most relevant of these prior to beginning their investigation:

[Carrying out the investigation | Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman \(PHSO\)](#)

[Writing and communicating your final response | Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman \(PHSO\)](#)

3. Definitions

Investigator: the person assigned to investigate the complaint. This routinely will be someone with no prior involvement with the issue complained about and with relevant expertise.

Scope of the investigation: this sets out what is being reviewed by the investigator and is outlined in the formal complaint acknowledgement which is sent to the complainant. This is forwarded to the investigator by the UKRI Complaints team.

4. Investigation Responsibilities

The investigator is responsible for:

- reviewing the scope of the case and ensuring that they have understood the complainant's issues and concerns
- planning how they intend to approach the investigation, including any reasonable adjustments needed which the complainant may have discussed and agreed with the UKRI Complaints team. The plan may change based on evidence presented, for example, if further information is received from the complainant or those involved in the complaint
- ensuring upfront that time is allocated to undertake the investigation, including anticipating the time which will be needed to prepare a written draft response letter
- ensuring that the investigation is objective and evidence-based. As such, any potential conflicts of interest should be declared as soon as possible to the UKRI Complaints team for consideration
- ensuring that the personal data of the complainant and those involved in the investigation of the complaint is handled in line with our [data protection obligations](#)
- requesting any information and written inputs as required from those involved to support the investigation
- organising and documenting any meetings to support the investigation, including ensuring those involved have an opportunity to review and agree their statement

before it is accepted as evidence

- providing appropriate signposting to support the employees involved in the complaint investigation (if required)
- producing a fair and balanced draft response letter (a template is provided) which brings together the facts of the case and identifies appropriate actions (if applicable)

The UKRI Complaints team are responsible for:

- triaging the allegation/concerns raised to identify those that are in scope of the formal complaints process; acknowledging receipt to the complainant which confirms the scope of the complaint investigation and confirming the expected response date from the UKRI Complaints team
- advising the Council Complaint Lead the complaint has been received and has been triaged as in scope of the [UKRI Complaints procedure](#)
- allocating the complaint to the Council Complaint Lead to commission or lead on the investigation
- carrying out tasks identified for Council Complaint Leads (see below) when the investigation is for a formal appeal (CMPT2 case type)

The Council Complaint Lead is responsible for:

- identifying a suitable investigator for formal complaint cases (CMPT1 case type) and assisting the UKRI Complaints team in identifying a suitable investigator for CMPT2 cases, where requested
- providing advice and support to the investigator during the investigation with regard (but not limited) to the investigation process and writing the draft response letter
- retaining a local case file for CMPT1 investigation cases. Records can include but are not limited to interview notes and statements, case meeting notes, relevant internal policy and guidance documents reviewed
- reviewing the initial draft response letter before it is sent to the UKRI Complaint team to ensure:
 - they are satisfied that the investigation has been completed thoroughly and fairly
 - the investigation has addressed the in-scope elements of the complaint
 - any actions identified will resolve or improve the issues raised in the complaint and follow the [Creating SMART Complaint Actions guidance](#).

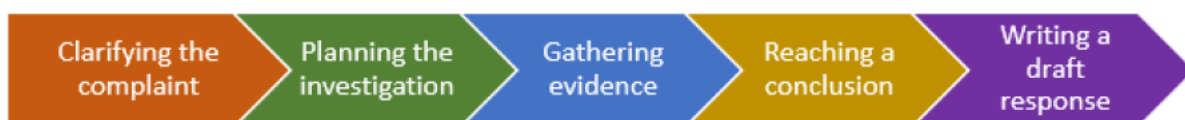
Witnesses and colleagues relevant to the investigation are responsible for conducting themselves in line with the [UKRI Code of Conduct](#) which includes:

- co-operating with the investigation
- maintaining confidentiality and being respectful to others during the process
- providing statements and evidence relevant to the issues being investigated or that they are asked to provide by the investigator, within the timescales set out

- being open and honest about the events that they are being asked about and providing the facts as they understand them to have happened
- seeking support if needed during the process as outlined in [Section 6](#)

5. Investigation Stages

The investigation will generally proceed along the following stages:



The following resources in the [Investigator's Toolkit found on the Source](#) will help to complete each of these stages:

Toolkit Resource	Description
Investigator's Guidance (this document)	Investigation pre-reading. Outlines complaint and investigation roles, responsibilities, best practice and statutory reference documents.
Formal Response Template	Includes best-practice guidance about writing complaint responses, links to further reading and identifies the information to be included in each section of the template.
Redacted Sample Response Letters	Provides an example of how other complaints have been responded to.
Complaints Communication Guidance	Useful information about communicating with complainants and guidance on including an apology in the written response.
SMART Actions Guidance	Examples of SMART actions, to ensure the wording of any improvements for UKRI are specific, accurate and achievable.
Investigation Meeting Notes template	A document providing guidance for conducting the meeting and a template for use when documenting an interview
Invitation to Complaints Investigation Meeting template	Pro-forma document for inviting colleagues to an investigation meeting
Investigation Planning Form	A blank form to assist in planning the investigation, helping ensure all complaint issues are addressed.

6. Support for Staff

Where a colleague is impacted by a complaint they are involved with, support can be sought from:

- their Trade Union representation, where employees are members of a Trade Union
- accompanying UKRI colleagues who are not involved in the investigation but are providing support, for example a line manager
- the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP) – a confidential service available to support employees with both work-related and personal problems
- the [UKRI Wellbeing Ambassador Network](#) – UKRI's in-house wellbeing support service available to employees
- the Council Complaint Lead if you're involved in a complaint investigation (CMPT1) or the UKRI Complaints team if involved in a complaint appeal investigation (CMPT2)