

Tier 1 Formal Complaint Response Template

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your support in investigating this complaint. We have outlined below some key guidance for you to consider in writing the complaint response. We hope this will be helpful.

What you need to do

Your written response is important because it sets out your investigation findings. It should help the person who made the complaint understand what has happened, before reassuring them either:

- that having looked into the matter carefully, you have found that nothing went wrong, or
- that you found something went wrong and you acknowledge and accept this

It is also your chance to:

- show that you understand the impact any failings have had
- explain how you will put things right for them and potentially for other users of the service

You must use the response template below (page 3) to structure your response. A key thing to think about when drafting your response is, 'Would I be happy to receive a letter like this?'.

Written Response Checklist – think about the below points in drafting your response:	
1. My letter outlines the findings against all the in-scope elements of the complaint and references the outcome the complainant is seeking.	☐
2. The draft response is written in plain English with all terms and acronyms explained (if applicable).	☐
3. The tone of the letter is appropriate and includes an apology when something that went wrong is identified.	☐
4. References to policies, processes, guidance and standards are clear when outlining what should have happened.	☐
5. The actions identified to put things right follow the Creating SMART Complaint Actions guidance .	☐
6. The draft response has been reviewed by my Council Complaint Lead before being shared with the UKRI Complaints team.	☐

How to offer an apology (click for further guidance)

Keep it short and straightforward. Once you have apologised, don't labour the point.

Try to avoid using the words 'if', 'but', 'however' or 'any' in your apology.

Think about the '4Rs of Apology'

- Regret (*I am sorry*)
- Responsibility (*we didn't provide you with information following your application*)
- Reason (*we were short-staffed at the time*)
- Remedy (*these are the actions we are going to take as a result of your complaint*)



The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has a detailed guide on writing and communicating your final response: [Writing and communicating your final response | Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman \(PHSO\)](#).

If you need any further support, please do not hesitate to contact your Council Complaint Lead or the UKRI Complaints team at complaints@ukri.org.

Best

[Redacted signature]

Director Risk, Assurance and Counter Fraud

[Redacted signature]

Complaints Lead

Private & Confidential

[[CORRESPONDENT_NAME]]

Sent by email: [[CORRESPONDENT_EMAIL]]

[[CORRESPONDENT_ADDRESS]]

DELETE EMAIL ADDRESS/POSTAL ADDRESS AS NEEDED

[[LETTER_DATE_NO_TH]]

Dear [[CORRESPONDENT_FAMILIAR_NAME]],

Formal complaint: [[CASE_REF]]

Thank you for taking the time to contact us on [[CORRESPONDENCE_DATE_NO_TH]]
[[ENQUIRY_METHOD_LOWERCASE]].

We were sorry to learn of your concerns. We appreciate the decision to make a complaint is not taken lightly, so would like to extend our thanks for contacting us and for your patience whilst the complaint has been investigated. *[Add apology if the response has been delayed]* We apologise that this response has been sent later than we hoped.

The issues you have raised have been investigated by the [Role Title, Department/Directorate], who had no prior knowledge or involvement in the matter.

Add rationale if appropriate as to why they are an appropriate lead to investigate (e.g. independent, investigation skills or lead for department).

Summary of findings

The scope of the investigation was outlined to you in the acknowledgement email sent on [date]. The scope of the UKRI Complaints Procedure is defined on our [website](#), and a summary of the complaint findings is as follows:

This section should be a bulleted or numbered list containing a succinct summary of the high-level findings of the investigation and whether you uphold, not uphold or partially uphold each element of the complaint that was agreed as in scope, with a reason why.

Methodology

In reviewing the complaint, we have:

- *Outline the approach you have taken to considering the issues.*
- *State what specific evidence you have reviewed as part of investigation (e.g. policies, guidance of legislation) and statements / interviews that have been taken*
- *Include a rationale regarding any element of the complaint (or information that was presented by the complainant) which was not explored, with reasons why*

Investigation findings

Separate each individual agreed complaint point in this section (e.g. with a sub-heading). You should provide an individual explanation and outcome for each complaint concern.

- Explain if something has gone wrong or not
- 'What happened' vs 'what should have happened'

Explain any failings and the impact they have had

- If there are failings, give a meaningful apology (see guidance on cover sheet above)
- This can be an apology for individual errors and state what is being done to address them i.e. whether a process review / change is necessary, further training required or whether this is an isolated human error which we feedback to the individual and subsequently monitor.
- If there is no clear fault on our part, this should be made clear with acknowledgement where they may not have felt sufficiently reassured by our actions at the time.

Explain how we will put things right for them

- Make this specific to any outcomes the complainant has explained they are seeking in the original complaint (e.g. if the complainant has asked for compensation, a new peer review or reassessment – a decision should be given in relation to this)

If relevant, explain how we will put things right for other service users

- Explain any wider learning points you have identified

Actions

UKRI recognises the value of continuous improvement and uses complaint actions as an opportunity for improvement. As a result of this investigation and the conclusions reached, the following actions will be undertaken and monitored through to completion.

Specify actions that will be taken (including action owner's Role Title and timescales) and broader lessons learnt and how these will be shared throughout the organisation. Refer to the SMART action guidance [link on the cover sheet above].

1. SMART action description
Lead [Role Title only]: . Timescale:
2. SMART action description
Lead [Role Title only]: . Timescale:

We do hope that our response has addressed your concerns. We have now completed our investigation. Under our complaints procedure, you have the right to appeal the outcome of this complaint. Before doing so, please ensure you read and consider the requirements of making an appeal, detailed on our [website](#). The appeal should be received within one calendar month of this letter outlining the grounds for making the appeal; the contact details for the UKRI Complaints team are indicated at the bottom of the letter.

Outline any legal route for escalation (Delete if not applicable) where a complainant is unhappy with a decision that has a right of appeal, referral to or review by a tribunal or court of law e.g Option for judicial review.



Please note that there is the option for you to raise this decision through a statutory right of appeal, namely a judicial review. You may wish to seek some legal advice about what this means and how you do this.

Yours Sincerely,

Complaints Team

UK Research and Innovation

complaints@ukri.org