

Written Complaint Responses – A Guide

Although UKRI has a formal complaints procedure ([outlined on our website](#)), some complaints received by the UKRI Complaints team fall outside the scope of the formal process and need to be addressed by subject-matter experts in Councils, while others are received directly by Councils. The following information is to support Council colleagues who write responses in either of these instances.

The written response to a complaint is important because it sets out the findings from your review of the issues raised. It should help the complainant understand what has happened, before reassuring them that, having looked into the matter carefully, you have found that nothing went wrong, or that something did, and you acknowledge and accept this.

It is also your chance to show that you understand the impact of any failings and to explain how you will put things right for them and, potentially, for other users of the service.

Below are some points to consider when writing your response, with a paragraph description and example response on page 2.

Style, word usage, etc.

- Clear language – explain any acronyms, e.g. The Funding Service (TFS)
- Plain English with no ambiguity or nuance, i.e. avoid bureaucratic language
- Active voice – Grammarly can help with this
- Sincere and courteous tone of voice
- Keep to the point; only address the points raised in the complaint
- Ensure the complainant's personal data is excluded from any usage of AI tools

Before sending the response

- Check spelling and grammar
- Careful checking for accuracy and consistency of all facts and figures
- Ensure all the points raised in the complaint have been addressed
- Proofread the email before sending
- Think about whether you would be happy to receive the email you've written

After sending the response

- Putting things right – ensure the teams responsible for actions are clear about the next steps
- Sharing learning - any learnings from the complaint should be shared with appropriate teams (ensuring the complainant's personal data is redacted if sharing the complaint and/or response). Consider whether there is another way to share the learning besides sharing the original complaint.

Further guidance

[Complaints Communications guidance](#) – part of the Complaints Investigator's Toolkit and can be found on the [UKRI Complaints Source page](#).

['Writing and communicating your final response'](#) - UK Central Government Complaint Standards guide

Contacts

Contact your [Council Complaint Lead](#) or complaints@ukri.org (for complaints related to Central Hub teams)

Response Format / Outline

Paragraph	What should be included in the response?
1	Thank you – for contacting us, for bringing this matter to our attention
2	Explain how the matter has been investigated/looked into (documents reviewed, people spoken to – use titles and not given names)
3	Offer a clear explanation of what should have happened (policy or procedure) and what did happen, if it differs It is often useful to include links to relevant published UKRI or Council guidance, briefings and information if it supports your explanation.
4	If something went wrong: Accept responsibility Outline what we will do to address what has gone wrong to put things right Offer a meaningful apology If nothing went wrong: Acknowledge the complainant's point of view or concern, and that the findings/outcome may be disappointing to them
5	Offer reassurance in the value UKRI places on receiving complaints and feedback.
6	Signpost what to do if not satisfied by our response > link to Make a Complaint webpage.

Example

Dear <complainant name>,

Thank you for your email and for taking the time to provide us with this feedback. Please accept my apologies for the delay in this response.

The tone and delivery of constructive, relevant feedback are always important for us to reflect on. Robust challenge and criticism are central facets of written peer review and key to our mission to fund excellent research. Nevertheless, it would be wrong not to acknowledge that the context applicants bring to their reading of our reviews varies, and that there will be differing views and perceptions of how the reviews have been constructed. The key aspect for us is the usability of reviews, ensuring that, overall, reviewers have engaged with the application and provided substantive reflections and points of challenge that applicants can address in their responses.

We empower our moderators and reviewers to adhere to [Council] guidance and principles, ensuring that applications and reviews are moderated consistently and effectively. The Applicant Response is the place where we encourage applicants to correct any factual errors or conceptual misunderstandings, or to respond to any queries highlighted in the reviewer comments. To reassure you, the application moderators would have received all reviews, the Applicant Response, and the full application, and would have taken into account all relevant information provided when determining the final score.

In terms of highlighting [Council]'s EDI commitment to reviewers, this is something we will continue to do through training and wider engagement with our Peer Review College. We are cognisant of the need to continuously improve and update guidance in this space, and we are prioritising this over the next year.

We hope this has helped to address your concerns. If you have any outstanding issues, you can reply to this email address for further clarification.

If you would like to pursue a formal complaint, please confirm this, along with the issues you feel remain unresolved, by emailing complaints@ukri.org. Your concerns will be assessed in line with the published [UKRI Complaints Procedure](#).

Complaints are a valuable form of feedback, and we appreciate the time you've taken to raise your concerns with us.

Kind regards,
<your name and title/signature>