



Policy Document

COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Relevant Document

Complaint Template Form

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Complaints Policy-Background

Everyone connected with Saksham Yuwa Nepal, the National Award Operator (“the NAO”) of the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award in Nepal is committed to providing the highest quality support and service to all aspects of the Award. However, we also recognize that sometimes things go wrong, and, in these situations, we have a complaints policy and process. You can read the full document here below, but this page provides a summary of how to complain and what happens when you do.

When to use this process.

Our complaints process should be the last resort. In most cases it is easier to resolve complaints locally. If you have not tried to resolve the matter in your home area, we will ask you try that first, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you have tried to resolve the matter and still wish to complain we ask you to complete the form here at the bottom of this Policy and send it to us at report.doeianepal@gmail.com. Please try to provide all the details we have requested.

When not to use this process

If you believe that someone is in immediate danger or at risk of harm (such as a safeguarding concern) you should contact the National Award Operator immediately. If that’s not possible or appropriate, you should contact the relevant authorities in your area.

We do not accept anonymous complaints because it is not possible to clarify or verify information without talking to you. However, if you ask us to keep your identity confidential, we will do our best to do so but this may mean we will be severely restricted in how we can investigate your complaint.

If the issue you are raising concerns very serious matters such as possible fraud, discrimination, corruption or unethical behavior you may raise the matter under our Whistleblowing policy.

We do not normally accept complaints if more than three months has passed since you became aware of the issue you are contacting us about.

How long will it take?

We will deal with your complaint as quickly as possible. You can expect an acknowledgment of your complaint immediately. We will keep you informed of progress and regularly update you on timescales. We cannot be precise about how long it will take to investigate your complaint as it depends on the complexity of the issues and how long it takes it to gather information from other people. However, we will complete our investigation as soon as we can and keep you informed along the way. We will aim to resolve the matter within 30 days and if that is not possible, we will send you a progress report in this timescale

What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?

Our policy allows for one appeal when the matter will be reconsidered by the National Chair. The details of this process are set out in our policy below.

Saksham Yuwa Nepal, National Award Operator of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award in Nepal is a registered NGO in Nepal and our activities are governed by The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation, a charitable company in the UK whose purpose is to advance the adoption and effective administration of the Award worldwide.

More Information

Before you complain please read the policy document below, which provides full details of how we deal with complaints.

If you need any help or guidance, please do contact us at report.doeianepal@gmail.com and we will do all we can to assist you.

If a person feels that the NAO has not dealt appropriately with a matter of concern, they may make a report to the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation at complaints@intaward.org

Introduction

This Complaints and Disputes Policy (Policy) outlines the process to be used when dealing with a complaint or dispute related to the actions of Award Operators, Award volunteers, or NAO team, where it has not been possible to resolve that matter through informal channels in the locality. It is always our wish that matters are resolved internally, and the procedures and processes stated here should be seen only as a last resort.

This Policy specifically does not cover:

- Activities or actions of individual employee, volunteers or participants related to an Operating Partners (Award Centers and Open Award Centers) that are specific to the work of that Operating Partners. Such specific complaints should be directed to the Operating Partners concerned and will be dealt with in line with their policies.
- Matters of Safeguarding or Whistleblowing which are dealt with using the relevant policies. Although many of the procedures are similar, these matters are addressed under different rules and processes. If a person wishes to raise a Safeguarding or Whistleblowing matter, they should refer to the relevant policies and procedures
- Internal NAO grievances, complaints, disputes and disciplinary issues raised by the NAO employees against other employees as they are covered in the Employee Handbook

Definitions

Operating Partners: means any Award Center or Open Award Center that is sub licensed by the NAO

Complaint and Dispute: means a grievance against or dispute with or between individuals or Operating Partners and the NAO, raised by any individual, Operating Partner, or Award volunteer.

Whistleblowing: means reporting very serious behavior or issues that are in the public interest and cannot be considered a complaint or dispute. Whistleblowing is most often used when illegal activity is discovered, serious or institutional discrimination occurs, possible fraud or corruption or unethical behavior is detected. For full details see the Whistleblowing policy.

Vexatious complaint: means any complaint that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Persists in pursuing a complaint where the procedure for handling complaints has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted
- Repeated unwillingness to accept documented evidence given as being factual, denying receipt of an adequate response, despite correspondence answering their complaint, or not accepting facts that have been verified to a reasonably possible extent
- Regular and continuous focus on a trivial matter to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance
- Persistently raises new issues or seeks to prolong contact by raising further concerns or questions whilst the complaint is being addressed. This specifically excludes new issues which are significantly different to the original complaint and must be addressed.
- Unreasonable complaints or demands which impose a burden on the NAO in terms of required resources which is out of proportion to the seriousness of the allegation or complaint, and where the complaint clearly is designed to disrupt or annoy, or has the effect of harassing another person, or can otherwise be characterized as obsessive or manifestly unreasonable
- Are repetitive complaints and allegations which ignore the actions and responses previously supplied

Purpose of This Policy

The purpose of this Policy is:

- To provide a complaints procedure to be implemented by the NAO, which is fair, clear, and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To ensure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner
- To ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved amicably
- To gather information which helps the NAO to improve its performance and practice, particularly in respect of the overall governance practice of the NAO.
- To ensure the confidentiality of the process of handling complaints to protect both the complainant and any respondent during the process

Actions to Support Implementation

For a full implementation of this Policy, the NAO will:

- Publicize the existence of this Policy and associated procedures by making it easily available on the website
- Make sure all Board Members, NAO team and Award Volunteers are aware of the policy
- Make sure all Operating Partners are aware of this policy
- Make sure all NAO team and Award volunteers engaged in activities for, and on behalf of, the NAO are aware of the process to submit a complaint

If a complaint is received:

- Assign an individual from NAO team to receive and handle communications between the complainant, and the respondent
- Notify the Board Secretary, of any complaints received and of the conclusion of such complaints

Confidentiality

- All complaint information will be handled sensitively and confidentially, providing information to the relevant parties only and in accordance with any relevant data protection requirements and legal requirements in respect of the subject of the complaint.
- Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.
- At the discretion of those investigating the complaint, the identity of the complainant may be withheld from a respondent. This option may only be exercised where withholding the information does not undermine a respondent's ability to address the complaint. It is understood that if the case is referred to public authorities, then the matter of withholding the identity of the complainant may not be an option.

Responsibility

- Overall responsibility for this Policy and its implementation lies with the Board Secretary. The Board Secretary is responsible for the actions, in accordance with this Policy, after a complaint is received.
- One NAO team is designated by the Board Secretary to receive complaints. They are responsible for notifying the Board Secretary of all complaints received and for handling the communication between the complainant, and the respondent.
- Where a complaint is made that concerns the Board Secretary, the National Chair will be informed and the Board Secretary will be immediately removed from the process and another Board Member substituted
- Where a complaint concerns either of the NAO's designated employee that person will be immediately removed from the process by the Board Secretary and another employee substituted.

Principles of the Complaints and Disputes Policy

- Every effort should be made to resolve complaints and disputes as close to the point of conflict as possible. Resorting to the NAO's complaints and disputes policy should be seen as a last resort. Where no effort has been made to resolve the matter internally, the NAO reserves the right to refer the matter to the Operating Partners concerned.
- All complaints and disputes will be taken seriously, managed expeditiously, dealt with in a timely manner, and promote the maintenance of relationships.
- The process of complaint and dispute handling should be robust and safeguard against the ability of any individual to manipulate the outcome of a complaint.
- For a complaint or dispute to be considered, it must:
 - be submitted in writing.
 - be within the scope of this policy.
 - be submitted within three months of the date that the complainant reasonably knew enough facts to report the issue.
 - identify the complainant and provide contact information.
 - state the complainant's relationship to the organisation.

- provide the basis for the complaint in 1,000 words or less, and in a clear and concise statement including whatever evidence is available, including dates and times
 - provide details of the formal or informal resolution actions that have been taken so far to try to resolve the issue.
 - describe what the complainant would see as an acceptable outcome.
 - if there is reasonable belief that a complaint is vexatious or malicious, then it will not be progressed
- This Policy should not be used where individuals disagree with the NAO or International Award Foundation, or guidance provided within the International Handbook. Any concerns about such matters should instead be raised, via the NAO, for consideration using sub-license contract
- The receipt of complaints will be monitored by a NAO employee who will report all complaints received to the Board Secretary.
- The NAO employee responsible for processing the complaint:
 - must provide all parties involved the opportunity to present their views clearly to ensure all facts are clear and understood.
 - must consider all facts and points of view.
 - may, within the constraints of confidentiality, seek the advice of other experts or consultants.
 - should seek a solution that provides a right to a fair hearing, is aligned with our values, and is acceptable for both parties.
 - must record the factors on which they have based their recommendation.
 - should investigate and conclude the process as expeditiously as reasonably possible.
- The process allows for a single appeal on any recommendation arising from a complaint by either the respondent or complainant, and the decision after the appeal process, as approved by the National Chair, will be final.
- If the complaint is considered by the NAO to involve a crime, the complainant must be advised and encouraged to report the matter to the Nepal Police. The NAO will only report the crime directly if, in the considered opinion of the Board Secretary, in consultation with the National Chair and NAO's legal sub-committee, there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegation.
- If the complaint involves a NAO's employee as a respondent, the process is governed by the Employee Handbook. Once the decision is ratified by the Board Secretary, the decision will be implemented by the Board Secretary via the appropriate internal processes with consultation of the National Chair.

Process of Complaint Handling

- As stated above, every effort should be made to resolve complaints and disputes as close to the point of conflict as possible. This means internally. Resorting to the NAO's complaints and disputes process should be seen as a last resort. Where no effort has been made to resolve the matter internally, the NAO reserves the right to refer the matter to the Operating Partners concerned.
- If an internal resolution has not been possible complaints should be submitted to the NAO via the email report.doeianepal@gmail.com

The National Board do not accept or deal with complaints.

On receipt of a complaint:

- The NAO employee acknowledges the complaint within seven days. Acknowledgement does not necessarily mean the complaint has been accepted in accordance with the policy; it is simply a confirmation that the information sent by the complainant has been received.
- The NAO employee log the complaint, and email the Board Secretary, to advise him of a complaint having been received and note the respondent, if one exists. If the respondent to the complaint is the Board Secretary or NAO employee, they will be excluded from that specific complaint and only be notified as the respondent in accordance with the process below.
- If a complaint relates to the National Chair, the matter will be referred to the Foundation. If a complaint is against the NAO employee, the procedure in the Employee Handbook applies.
- The NAO employee receiving complaints will ensure that the complaint complies with the requirements above

If the complaint meets those criteria, then:

- The complainant is notified by the NAO that the complaint has been accepted and is being processed. A concise list of the areas to be investigated is provided and a request for the complainant to confirm they are happy to proceed with an investigation into the complaint on this basis. Once confirmation has been received, the process then continues as below.

If the complaint does not meet those criteria, then:

- The NAO notifies the complainant that the complaint does not meet the requirements of the Policy and requests the complainant to either: restate why it should be considered under the criteria or provide supporting information to allow the NAO to act on the complaint. If, on receipt of the restatement or additional information, the NAO employees agree that the complaint meets the criteria then the process follows.

- If, after being referred back to the complainant, and in consultation with the Board Secretary, it is agreed that insufficient information is provided to justify the complaint meeting the criteria, the NAO will notify the complainant that the complaint does not meet the requirements of the Policy and the process ends.
- If the complaint relates to a person who is also an active volunteer, employee or participant related to an Operating Partner, once the complaint is accepted as valid under this Policy, the NAO, depending on the nature of the matter and balancing between confidentiality and transparency, may, at its discretion, inform the relevant concerned Operating Partner that a complaint has been received in respect of that person.

Processing a Complaint

On receipt of a complaint by the NAO, the designated NAO employee will:

- Confirm that there is no conflict of interest in respect of the complaint
- Where necessary to address the complaint, request additional support from the Board Secretary either directly or to involve experts or consultants with specialized skills

If the matter is deemed to be such that the continued involvement of the respondent constitutes safety or reputational risk to the NAO or the Foundation, the designated NAO employee may:

- Make a recommendation to the National Chair for suspension of the respondent in respect of any NAO activity while the matter is investigated.
- If the respondent is an active volunteer or a member of employee of the Operating Partners, and with the consent of the National Chair, issue a recommendation of suspension and details of the complaint to an appropriate contact in the concerned Operating Partners
- If the respondent is a NAO employee, pass the recommendation for suspension in line with the Employee Handbook to the National Chair for action under the relevant internal processes

Within five working days the designated NAO employee will, via the NAO:

- Complete a complaint document that details the alleged circumstances of the complaint including dates, places time and people involved.
 - Share the complaint document with the complainant and provide between 5 and 14 days (or a reasonable time for the complainant to review and accept the pertinent information), before the complaint document is issued to the respondent: and then,
 - notify the complainant and respondent of a proposed timeline for actions on the complaint
- Should the NAO employee, during the investigation of the matter, identifies further issues beyond those detailed in the complaint document, either by the respondents, the complainants or any third parties, he

will be granted the full process and rights allocated to the initial respondents in the process. Where this requires an adjustment to the timelines previously communicated, such change and the reason therefore shall be notified in writing to all respondents and complainants.

- Once the matter has been investigated and considered, the NAO employee will decide if the complaint (or each part of it) is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld. They will also recommend if any sanction is required and issue an overall recommendation on the complaint to the Board Secretary.
- If the recommendation is one of no sanction, the NAO will notify the complainant and the respondent of this recommendation. Should the complainant object to this, they may at this stage initiate the appeal process detailed below.
- If the recommendation is any form of sanction, the recommendation will be passed to the Board Secretary for ratification. If the recommendation entails multiple independent actions of sanction, the Board Secretary will be permitted to ratify each sanction independently.
- If the Board Secretary approves the recommended sanction of the NAO employee, he will notify the respondent and complainant and take the recommended actions. Should either the complainant or the respondent object to the recommended sanction, they may at this stage initiate the appeal process detailed below
- If the Board Secretary does not approve the recommendation, the recommendation will be referred back to the NAO employee for reconsideration
- Having considered the comments of the Board Secretary, the NAO employee shall issue a revised recommendation and substantiation for the Board Secretary's approval.
- In the event that a matter has multiple respondents, the NAO employee will make separate recommendations for independent consideration in the matter of each individual respondent.
- When informing the complainant and respondent of the outcome, the Board Secretary will clearly state if the complaint is to be upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld and the reasons that led to this decision; referencing, where possible, all the key issues raised by the complainant based on the findings of the investigation. The communication will also identify recommendations that will be undertaken based on the outcome of the complaint in the spirit of continuous improvement.
- It will also explain how the complainant can appeal if they are unhappy with the process undertaken or the outcome of the complaint and how they can be contacted.
- Both the complainant and respondent are entitled to one appeal under this process. Once the appeal as detailed below has been heard, the ratification of the recommendation is final.

Appeal Process

- Either the complainant or the respondent may appeal a decision by email. The appeal letter must provide sufficient basis for the appeal to be heard and present any information required to consider the appeal. This appeal must be submitted within seven working days of the notice being received from the NAO by the complainant or the respondent
- In the event of a matter involving multiple respondents, an appeal will only be considered on an individual-by-individual basis and will only impact on the specific recommendation for which that appeal is lodged and will have no effect on decision relating to the other non-appealing parties.
- The appeal letter will be considered by two Board Members appointed by the National Chair. Should this be deemed to be a valid appeal, the complaint, along with the appeal submitted by the appealing party, will be reviewed by the appointed Board Members supported by such NAO employee as may be required but not including any person who considered the original complaint. Additional people may be recruited to advise and support the appointed Board Members.
- Having considered the appeal and complaint, the appointed Board Members shall issue a recommendation to the National Chair.
- If the National Chair approves the recommendation and sanction (if any), the NAO will notify the respondent and the complainant and take the recommended actions. The approval of the National Chair of this outcome from the appeal is final.
- If the National Chair does not approve the recommendation, the recommendation will be referred back to the appointed Board Members for reconsideration. Having considered the comments of the National Chair, the Board Members shall issue a revised recommendation for approval by the National Chair. Approval of this outcome of the appeal is final. Should the revised recommendation not be accepted, the National Chair will take such action as it deems fit .

Documentation and Recording

- The complaint and recommendation, along with copies of communications with the complainant and respondent will be filed by the NAO for up to five years.
- For the purposes of institutional learning, the Board Secretary will produce an anonymized summary of the complaint and recommendations arising for the use of the NAO in internal communications.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

The Board Secretary will be responsible to report to the National Board annually during AGM on complaints raised and corrective actions required. These reports are to be reviewed annually to identify any trends, which may indicate a need to take further action.

Effectiveness and Applicability

This Policy is reviewed at a minimum of once every three years and updated as required. It is effective as of the adopted date of December 4, 2024

This Policy shall apply to complaints submitted on or after the effective date above.

Complaint Template

DATA PROTECTION: This form is used to collect information for the purpose of gathering complaint details as part of the complaints process. We don't share your personal data provided in this form with any third parties. We take your personal data privacy seriously. The data you provide to us is securely stored and we will keep the data we capture from this form for five years

Name:
Contact Email:
Contact Number:
Preferred Contact Method:
Your relationship to the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Nepal (i.e. volunteer, parent):
Complaint summary (what you think went wrong, including dates and times or any reported incidents. Please provide a clear list of matters you would like investigated. Please don't exceed 1,000 words and note that there will be opportunities to submit further evidence if required.)
Please provide details of any actions that have been taken so far to try to resolve the issue:
What is your desired outcome from the complaint process?

Please note that completion and submission of this form constitutes an e-signature.

I (insert name)

understand that any information given about myself or on behalf of someone else is limited to that which is relevant to the investigation of the complaint, and only disclosed to people who have a need to know it to investigate, respond and resolve the complaint.

Date: