
NFER Policies

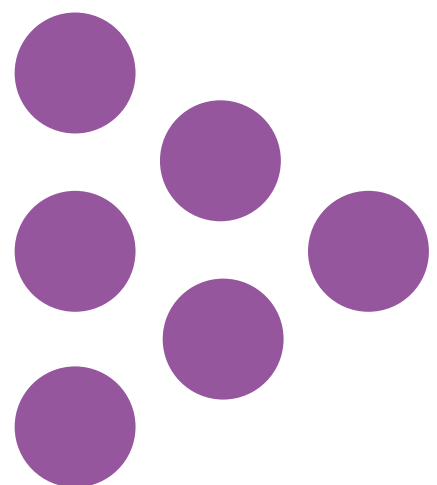
Complaints Policy

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

Restricted

July 2025

Version Control	Update Date	By who
1	October 2011	Stella Harding
2	December 2018	Stella Harding
3	April 2021	Louise Wiseman
4	July 2025	Frankie Abrahart



Introduction

NFER is committed to conducting education research, assessment and information services of the highest quality. Our aim is that all our dealings with you or your organisation are courteous and effective.

If you are not happy with any aspect of the way the Foundation operates, or you consider that we have fallen short of the level of service or behaviour that you would expect, we would like to know. Many complaints can be sorted out at an early stage by discussing the problem with us.

We will work with you to listen to your concerns, understand the situation and make improvements where necessary. Your complaint will be handled respectfully, sensitively and treated in confidence to the extent possible, as it may be discussed with the individuals involved, senior management and the Board of Trustees as appropriate and in line with data protection legislation.

We welcome suggestions and ideas to help us improve our procedures. We will draw upon the experience and feedback to improve our level of service in the future. If you have any suggestions or questions, please contact the Complaints Officer (see below).

Who this policy applies to:

This policy is for individuals external to NFER who wish to make a complaint; these include but are not limited to:

- Parent/pupil
- Research participant or school
- Stakeholders and partners
- Associates and temporary workers

Complaints could be made about: the organisation, a department, an employee or group of employees, or other representatives of NFER.

Employees of NFER who wish to raise a grievance or concern should do so under NFER's Grievance Procedure. NFER's Trustees should raise any concerns they may have at Board meetings or with the Chair of the Board, and not through this policy.

Complaints Process

Informal Procedure

In the first instance, and if applicable, please contact the person or department with whom you have direct contact. They will have a clear understanding of your needs and will be able to deal with your query or issue most efficiently. You'll be asked to provide your name and contact details and give details as to the nature of your concerns. We will aim to respond as soon as is reasonably possible.

After discussing your concerns, if you remain dissatisfied, you can make a formal complaint.

If you are unsure of who to raise your informal concern to, please send an email to hr@nfer.ac.uk. The relevant NFER employee will then contact you accordingly.

Formal Complaints Procedure

If you wish to make a formal complaint, you can do so by contacting the Complaints Officer.

We may ask you to verify your identity before we proceed with our complaint procedure.

Whilst we reserve the right not to investigate your complaint, we will aim to bring about a fair and satisfactory resolution, wherever possible.

Who to contact:

The Foundation has a Complaints Officer who is able to assist you. You can contact them by e-mail.

Charlotte Hussein, Head of HR And Organisational Development

E-mail: c.hussein@nfer.ac.uk

What information do we need?

To help us deal with your complaint promptly and appropriately, we ask you to provide the following information:

- the NFER department/project or individual involved in your complaint
- a clear description of your complaint, including dates

- any supporting evidence
- your full contact details, including a phone number and email address.

Critical comments will not be treated as a complaint unless formally lodged as such.

Step-by-Step Process

When investigating your complaint, the Complaints Officer will coordinate the complaints process.

Acknowledgement

We aim to send an acknowledgement within ten working days of receipt of your complaint, which will include a copy of NFER's Complaints Policy and Complaints Privacy Notice.

Investigation

The Complaints Officer may investigate your complaint or may appoint an investigator to undertake an investigation on their behalf.

- To ensure a balanced and fair investigation, we aim to ensure that the investigator has no conflict of interest in relation to the matters under investigation.
- We aim to ensure that the investigator is at a similar or higher grade to any individuals being investigated.
- If your complaint is about the CEO, it will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees.
- If your complaint is about one of NFER's Trustees, the approach will be agreed by the Board of remaining Trustees.
- In some instances, an independent, external investigator may be appointed if NFER considers this to be appropriate.

NFER will ensure that the process is handled fairly and transparently.

An investigation could include any or all of the following: a desk-based investigation; speaking to you and the individual/s who are the subject of your complaint; reviewing relevant documentation and talking with witnesses.

We may ask you for more information or for a meeting. Alternatively, we may conclude that there is no need for any further investigation.

Concluding the investigation

We aim to deal with complaints within one month, depending upon their complexity.

We may provide you with written confirmation that the investigation has concluded. Where appropriate, this may include details of the outcome.

In some instances, we may choose not to provide you with a response to your complaint.

Please note that we are unlikely to share with you any action taken in respect of individuals involved in your complaint for data protection reasons.

Other considerations

NFER's decision on whether or not to investigate a complaint

If we consider that your complaint is vexatious, retaliatory, without substance, or wholly irrelevant to NFER, we reserve the right not to follow our formal complaints process.

Withdrawing a complaint

The complaint may be withdrawn verbally or in writing at any time by the complainant by contacting the Complaints Officer.

Requesting anonymity

We are unable to process complaints that are made completely anonymously, however, should you want to be kept anonymous from the subject of your complaint, we will discuss with you if this is reasonably possible.

Criminal Activity

If your complaint involves details of criminal activity, your details and the complaint will also be shared with the Police and the Charity Commission.

Complaints Privacy Notice

When concerns or complaints are raised with us, we process personal data to resolve them. We will process the personal data of the original complainant, and depending on the nature of the complaint, the person against whom the complaint is made and any witnesses.

The Complaints Privacy Notice sets out how personal data is used in responding to complaints. You can find a copy [here](#).