



Speak to the Future: Complaints Procedure

In line with Good Governance Procedures for Small Organisations with two or fewer staff, it is proposed that the following model for developing an appropriate Complaints Procedure may be adapted and adopted for Speak to the Future.

Full guidance can be found here:

<http://www.governancecode.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Principle-6-Resource-3-Model-Complaints-Policy-and-Procedure.pdf>

Complaints Policy of Speak to the Future – the national campaign for languages

Speak to the Future (S2F) views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person [or organisation] that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To make sure everyone at Speak to the Future knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Speak to the Future.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from e.g. any person or organisation who has an interest in Speak to the Future, the campaign for languages.

Due to the small size of the organisation, complaints must be put in writing and comply with the published Speak to the Future Complaints Procedure.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know, and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Trustees.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on: 3 December 2014 at the meeting the Board of Trustees

1. Last reviewed: 3 February 2014

Complaints Procedure of Speak to the Future

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to Professor Michael Kelly OBE, Honorary Secretary, Speak to the Future, Head of Modern Languages, Faculty of Humanities, University of Southampton, Southampton, SO17 1BF, Tel: +44 23 80592191

or by e-mail: M.H.Kelly@soton.ac.uk

Receiving Verbal Complaints

In the case of face-to-face complaints during public engagements, or otherwise, any official representative, volunteer, trustee or supporter of Speak to the Future should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint.
- Take the complainant's name, email address and telephone number.
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Speak to the Future (for example: an S2F supporter, a member of the language community, a member of the general public, an external partner)
- Tell the complainant that S2F has a complaints procedure and refer them to the website.
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and give an idea of how long it will take.
- Ask the complainant to send a written account by email, so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

(For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see Appendix 1)

Resolving Complaints

Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, that person may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so, if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to a nominated trustee within one week from receiving the complaint.

On receiving the complaint, the nominated trustee records it officially on behalf of the Trustees. If it has not already been resolved, the nominated trustee may delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond (e.g. an opportunity to provide a personal account of the circumstances leading to the complaint and any relevant further information or evidence.)

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, s/he can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chair and the full board of Trustees.

The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it, if this is possible. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The person who receives Stage Two complaints may investigate the facts of the case or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage Two review.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation.
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words.

Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam".

- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry.
- Show an interest in what is being said.
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details.

- Ask for clarification, wherever necessary.
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that s/he is being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation.
e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you".
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise.
- Ask the person what s/he would like done to resolve the issue.
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver.
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met.
- Make sure that the person understands what s/he has been told.
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.