



Complaints Policy

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	28 th September 2016	H Adams	New version
1.1	9 th April 2020	M Carpenter	Revised for electronic changes
Board Approved 2 nd May 2020			

Rowing Ireland 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 Rowing Ireland 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 Rowing Ireland.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in Rowing Ireland, *e.g.* members, funders, members of the local community etc.

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, email or in writing.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use the Disciplinary and Grievance policies as detailed in the Staff Handbook.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively for all concerned.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the CEO.

Review

This policy is reviewed every three years and updated as required.

Complaints Procedure

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints

Written complaints may be sent to the CEO of Rowing Ireland c/o National Rowing Centre, Farran Wood, Co. Cork or by e-mail at info@rowingireland.ie

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 021 743 4044 or in person to any of Rowing Ireland's volunteers or board members and followed up in writing.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints received by telephone or in person must be recorded. The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint.
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number.
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Rowing Ireland.
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure.
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take.
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.
- If the relevant officer responsible is not in the office, an alternative point of contact is the Chair of the Board.

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 they are 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 apologies.
- Ask the person what they 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 they have been told.

- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.

Resolving Complaints

Stage One.

On receiving the complaint, the CEO records it in the complaints electronic log. If it has not already been resolved, they should identify the appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within one week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply.

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.

The designated complaint handler is exempt from any complaints related to their role in managing or processing the complaint, ensuring impartiality and adherence to the established procedure.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is officially reviewed by the CEO. At this stage, the complaint will also be passed to the President of Rowing Ireland/Chair to note.

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive at Stage One, you can take this further by writing to the CEO by letter or e-mail.

Please tell us, if you have not already:

- what happened;
- when it happened;
- who dealt with you;
- what you would like us to do to put things right

You must do this within two weeks of receiving our response to stage one.

If you cannot make your complaint in writing, please contact our CEO on 021 743 4044 for advice.

When will I hear from you?

Within three working days of receiving your 'second stage' complaint we will write or phone to say that we have received it. We will also tell you how you can contact the person who is dealing with your complaint and when you can expect a reply.

You will receive a reply to your complaint within 10 working days. If we cannot give a full reply by this time, we will tell you why and when you are likely to receive it.

If we consider it worthwhile, we may ask you to come to a meeting with us to discuss your complaint in more detail. This meeting would normally be held within 10 working days of us receiving your complaint.

We will send you a written record of the meeting and a formal reply to your complaint.

Stage Three

If the complainant feels that the problem has still not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage Two, they can request that the complaint is officially reviewed by the President/Chair.

The request to the President/Chair for an official review should be acknowledged within one week of receiving it advising who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The President may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so.

This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the CEO who dealt with the complaint at Stage Two.

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

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within an additional 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 of the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

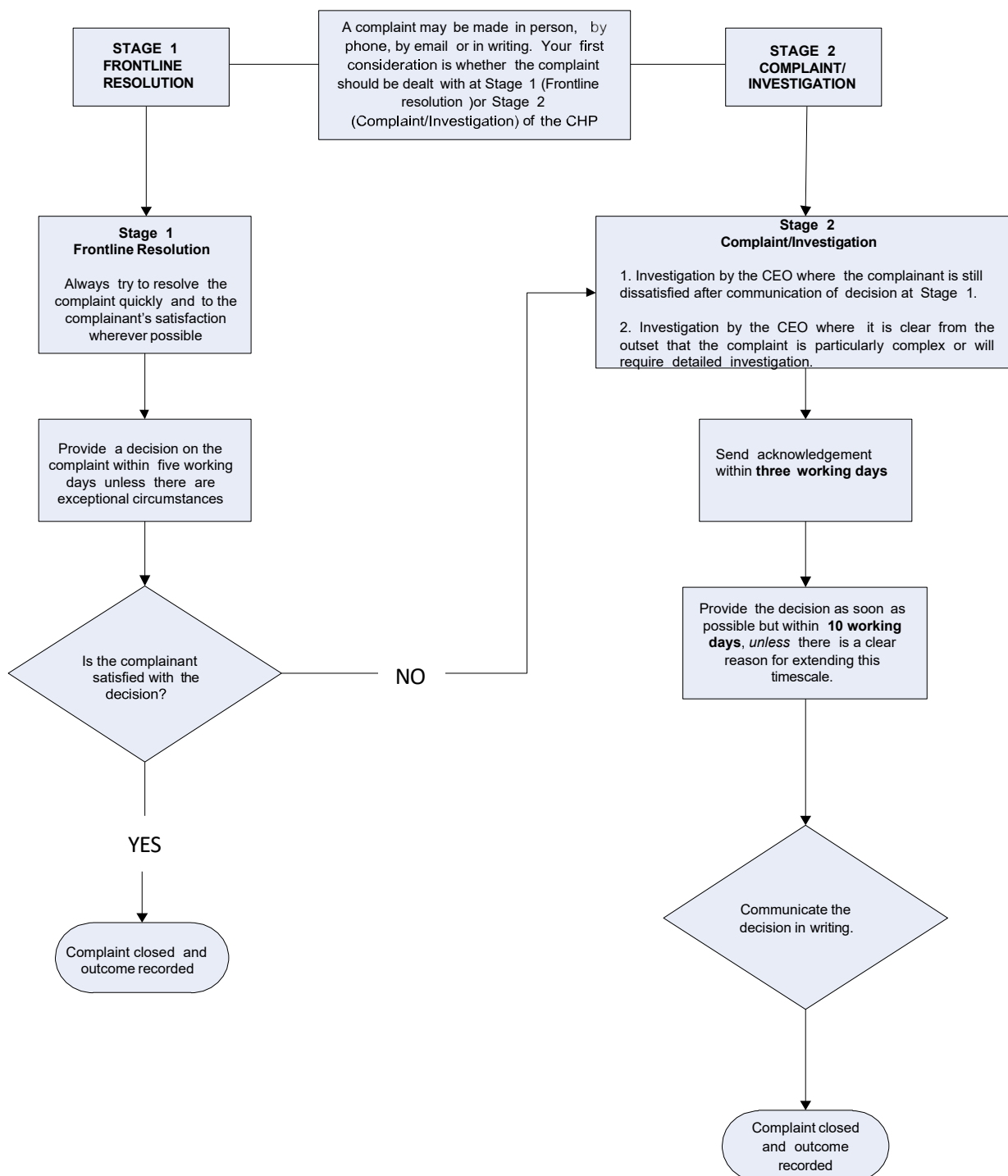
The decision taken at Stage Three is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance for a resolution.

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 President should not also have the President/Chair as the person leading a review.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

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



Note a Stage Three final appeal mechanism to the President is available if all other mechanisms have been exhausted. The Stage Three outcome is final.