



The National Institute for Canine Ethics

Concerns policy

It is our policy to enable members and affiliates to provide feedback or raise a concern about any aspect of our service or the operation of our establishment or facilities.

Concerns received by the NICE are seen as an opportunity for improvement. All feedback is taken seriously.

We will make all reasonable efforts to understand issues or concerns, and to resolve concerns within the service when they arise.

The timely and efficient management of concerns fosters a positive, cooperative attitude with tutors, students, graduates, and affiliates.

Concerns will be addressed promptly with the aim of providing a formal response within 48 working hours. We will communicate with you openly and regularly while we work to resolve your concern. The complainant will be actively involved in resolving the issue. Once a resolution has been reached, we will talk with you to make sure you're satisfied with the outcome of your concern.

If you are not happy with the outcome of your concern, you can appeal our decision. We can also assist you in accessing external complaint resolution mechanisms.

Complaints must be lodged in writing. This will assist with understanding the nature of the complaint and ensure that the facts provided are correct.

Should someone give a verbal complaint, they should be asked to put their concern in writing to the secretary via info@nicemembership.com to facilitate the tracking of feedback by the service provider.

Concerns procedure

The complainant must put their concern in writing to the secretary via info@nicemembership.com in the first instance, including evidence that supports the concern. Concerns will be acknowledged on receipt, with a time frame of 14 days from receipt to resolution where possible.

The joint principals will investigate the concern thoroughly and may ask for additional information if this is required. If necessary any tutors concerned in the concern will be asked to provide information.

A decision will be made within 14 days and the complainant informed of this in writing.

Investigation timelines and summary process

We aim to action and resolve all stages of the investigation within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint.

The fundamental principle of all investigations is to conduct them in a fair, reasonable and legal manner, ensuring that all relevant evidence is considered without bias. In doing so investigations will be based around the following broad objectives:

- To establish the facts relating to allegations/complaints in order to determine whether any irregularities have occurred.
- To identify the cause of the irregularities and those involved.
- To establish the scale of the irregularities.
- To evaluate any action already taken
- To determine whether remedial action is required to reduce the risk to current registered learners and to preserve the integrity of NICE and the membership.
- To identify any adverse patterns or trends.

The investigation may involve a request for further information from relevant parties and/or interviews with personnel involved in the investigation. Therefore, we will:

- Ensure all material collected as part of an investigation must be kept secure.
- If an investigation leads to invalidation of certificates, or criminal or civil prosecution, all records and original documentation relating to the case will be retained until the case and any appeals have been heard and for five years thereafter.
- Expect all parties, who are either directly or indirectly involved in the investigation, to fully co-operate with us.

Where a member of the NICE staff or a NICE associate is under investigation, we may suspend them or move them to other duties until the investigation is complete.

Throughout the investigation our directors will be responsible for overseeing the work of the investigation team to ensure that due process is being followed, appropriate evidence has been gathered and reviewed and for liaising with and keeping informed relevant external parties.

Investigation report

After an investigation, we will produce a draft report for the parties concerned to check the factual accuracy. Any subsequent amendments will be agreed between the parties concerned and us. The report will:

- Identify where the breach, if any, occurred.
- Confirm the facts of the case.
- Identify who is responsible for the breach (if any)
- Confirm an appropriate level of remedial action to be applied.

We will make the final report available to the parties concerned and to the regulatory authorities and other external agencies as required.

If it was an independent/third party that notified us of the suspected or actual case of malpractice, we'll also inform them of the outcome – normally within 10 working days of making our decision - in doing so we may withhold some details if to disclose such information would breach a duty of confidentiality or any other legal duty.

If it is an internal investigation against a member of our staff, the report will be agreed by the principal, along with the relevant tutors, and appropriate internal disciplinary procedures will be implemented.

Investigation outcomes

If the investigation confirms that malpractice or maladministration has taken place we will consider what action to take in order to:

- Minimise the risk to the integrity of certification now and in the future.
- Maintain public confidence in the delivery and awarding of qualifications.
- Discourage others from carrying out similar instances of malpractice or maladministration.
- Ensure there has been no gain from compromising our standards.

The action we take may include:

- Imposing actions in order to address the instance of malpractice/maladministration and to prevent it from reoccurring.
- Informing relevant third parties of our findings in case they need to take relevant action in relation to the centre.
- Removal of staff members or organisation members.

In addition, to the above the directors will record any lessons learnt from the investigation and pass these onto relevant internal colleagues to help prevent the same instance from reoccurring.

Appeals

Should the complainant disagree with the decision, they have the right to appeal and this should be in writing via info@nicemembership.com

The Directors will consider the appeal and decide, informing the complainant within 14 days from the date of appeal.