



MFDS and Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Complaints Policy and Procedure

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Version number | V1.0 |
| Effective date | 16 th March 2026 |

| Author and Approval | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Name and Job Title | Author/Reviewer/Approval | Date |
| Dental Examinations Secretariat | Author | 10 th March 2026 |
| MFDS and Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations Executive Committees | Approval | 16 th March 2026 |

| Document Revision History | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Version No | Date | Summary of Revisions |
| V1.0 | 16 th March 2026 | Approved for publication |

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this Complaints Policy and Procedure is to outline the process for resolving candidates' concerns regarding the MFDS and Dental Specialty Fellowship Examinations DSFE and MFDS (the examinations) in a fair, consistent, and transparent manner.

1.2 This procedure is distinct from the Appeals Policy and Procedure, which addresses concerns regarding examination results or decisions. Candidates seeking to appeal a decision should refer to the Appeals Policy and Procedure on the website.

1.3 The examinations are administered by the Secretariat.

2. Definition of a Complaint

2.1 For the purposes of this procedure, a complaint is defined as:



2.1.1 A specific concern regarding the delivery, administration, or conduct of the Secretariat, including examiner or staff behaviour.

2.1.2 It does not include disagreements with academic judgments or pass/fail outcomes.

2.2 Candidates submitting a complaint will not be disadvantaged in current or future examinations. Complaints will be investigated fairly and without prejudice.

2.3 Privacy and confidentiality will be upheld throughout the complaints process. Only individuals directly involved in handling the complaint will have access to relevant information. All parties are expected to respect the confidentiality of the process and associated documentation.

3. Types of Complaints

3.1 Complaints can be categorised as follows:

3.1.1 Justified Complaints:

These involve legitimate concerns where the Secretariat failed to follow procedures or provided a substandard service. Examples include:

- Errors in examination communication or documentation.
- Poor service quality.

3.1.2 Unjustified Complaints:

These occur when the Secretariat has adhered to regulations and policies and normal levels of service, but a candidate's misunderstanding or lack of familiarity with these policies leads to dissatisfaction.

4. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Complaints Procedure

4.1 Candidates are encouraged to raise concerns informally with the Secretariat staff during the examination or immediately afterward.

4.1.1 If a complaint is deemed justified, an incident report form will be completed by the staff member, recording input from both the candidate and examination staff.

4.1.2 If the issue is resolved to the candidate's satisfaction at this stage, the complaint will be closed.

4.2 If the candidate remains dissatisfied, they may proceed to the formal complaints process outlined in Stage 2.

4.3 Anonymous complaints will not be considered. Complaints must be submitted on an individual basis.

Stage 2: Formal Complaints Procedure

4.4 Formal complaints should be submitted via the online Complaint Form available at www.dsfe.org.uk including:

- A detailed explanation of the complaint.
- Supporting evidence.
- The desired outcome/resolution.

4.5 Complaints must be submitted within 30 calendar days of the incident. Complaints received after this period will not be processed.

4.6 Upon receipt, the Secretariat will:

- Acknowledge the complaint within 10 working days.
- Assess its validity.

4.7 If a complaint is deemed unjustified, the candidate will be informed in writing, including reasons for rejection.

4.8 If justified, the Secretariat will conduct a further investigation. Where a conflict of interest is identified by the Secretariat, this will be acknowledged and a suitable neutral staff member shall be identified by the Dental Secretariat Director of Examinations.

4.9 A written response, detailing the findings and outcome, will be provided to the complainant within 30 calendar days of receipt of the formal complaint. If an extended investigation is required, the complainant will be notified and an estimated timescale for investigation provided.

4.10 If the complaint is upheld, the Secretariat will implement corrective actions, including appropriate redress for the candidate. Corrective action will seek to restore the candidate to the position they would have been in had the matter being complained about not occurred.

5. Dissatisfaction with Outcome

5.1 If a candidate is dissatisfied with the resolution, they may request a review by the Executive Committee within 10 working days of receiving the decision. This can be requested via the Quality Assurance Lead at qualityandstandards@dsfe.org.uk.



Membership
of the Faculty
of Dental
Surgery



Dental
Specialty
Fellowship
Examinations

5.2 The candidate must provide:

- A restatement of the complaint.
- Reasons for dissatisfaction.
- Copies of previous correspondence.

5.3 The committee will review the case and respond within 30 calendar days. If the investigation requires more time, the candidate will be informed.

5.4 The decision of the Executive Committee is final.



The ROYAL
COLLEGE of
SURGEONS of
EDINBURGH



Royal College
of Surgeons
of England



ROYAL COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS AND
SURGEONS OF GLASGOW