

Dental Examinations Executive Complaints Policy and Procedure

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V1.0	16 th March 2026	Approved for publication
V1.1	7 th April 2026	Branding update – logos and reference to Secretariat amended to Executive.

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this Complaints Policy and Procedure is to outline the process for resolving candidates' concerns regarding the Dental Examinations Executive ("the Executive") and its component 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 Executive.

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 Executive, 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 Executive 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 Executive 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 Executive 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 Complaint Form 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 Executive 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 Executive will conduct a further investigation. Where a conflict of interest is identified by the Executive, this will be acknowledged and a suitable neutral staff member shall be identified by the Executive's 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 Executive 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.

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.