



**The
International
Academy**

Complaints Policy

Aim

- To give learners the opportunity to raise matters of concern about their examinations or assessment via a formal and documented process.
- To protect the interests of all learners.
- To facilitate a learner's ultimate right of complaint to Pearson, where it is appropriate.

In order to do this, the centre will:

- Inform all learners of the complaints procedure at induction and make it accessible to all learners.
- Have a staged complaints procedure.
- Take appropriate action to try and resolve learner concerns.
- Record, track and respond to all complaints in line with the complaints procedure.
- Monitor complaints to inform quality improvement.
- Forward the complaint to Pearson, should it not be resolved within 28 days of receipt.
- Keep complaints records for the appropriate document retention period.

Procedure:

- **Learner induction:** the learner should be informed of the centre's complaint procedure and where it is available.
- **Learner complaints procedure:** The procedure which will allow a centre to address its learners' concerns or complaints. The centre should have the opportunity to investigate and respond to a learner's concerns before Pearson becomes involved. (with the exception of malpractice cases).

Possible complaints procedure stages:

- **Stage 1 - Informal:** learner lets an appropriate member of centre staff (e.g. teacher or exams officer) know about their concerns and the member of staff attempts to satisfactorily resolve any issues. The outcome should be documented and if unresolved, move to **Stage 2**.

- **Stage 2 - Formal review:** learner submits their complaint through the formal centre complaints channel and appropriate manager at the centre investigates and addresses their concerns. Learner notified of findings and outcome in writing. If remain dissatisfied, move to **Stage 3**.
- **Stage 3 - Formal review at a point of escalation:** learner escalates their complaint through the formal complaints channel and appropriate senior manager at the centre investigates and addresses their ongoing concerns. Learner notified of findings and outcome in writing. If remain dissatisfied, move to **Stage 4**.
- **Stage 4 - Formal review at final point of escalation:** learner escalates their complaint through the formal complaints channel and Board of Directors reviews the case to address the learner's ongoing concerns. Learner notified of findings and outcome in writing. If remain dissatisfied, move to **Stage 5**.
- **Stage 5 - Escalation to Pearson for information on next steps*.** Information on the Pearson complaints procedure can be found at qualifications.pearson.com/complaintsandfeedback

*Please note that once a learner has exhausted a centre's complaints procedure, there will only be certain matters Pearson can then assist with. We cannot assist with matters which are between the centre and learner, for example, fee disputes or complaints about the delivery of a qualification.

- **Recording complaints:** all complaints correspondence should be recorded in writing and dated. Letters of complaint and their responses should be kept for the appropriate time period based on the centre's own document retention policy.
- **Monitoring of complaints and outcomes:** undertaken by senior management at the centre to inform development and quality improvement.
- **Support with the resolution of complaints:** At any point during the investigation of a complaint, a centre can make contact with Pearson for information, support or advice. We would not normally get involved with a complaint until the centre complaints procedure has been fully exhausted, and there are some centre matters which we are not able to support, for example, fees. A centre should also forward Pearson a copy of all complaints received related to Pearson qualifications, which are not resolved within 28 days of receipt, and co-operate with Pearson in respect of any action Pearson needs to take to resolve such matters.

This policy will be reviewed every 6 months by the school board and administration.

Part Two: Internal School Complaints Policy

The Difference Between a Concern and a Complaint

- **Concern:** An expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered important, for which reassurances are sought.
- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The International Academy-Benghazi takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

Aims/Objectives

- Foster fruitful and trusting relationships between school and parents.
- Provide parents an opportunity to express opinions/grievances through a defined procedure.
- Minimise conflict by providing parents an opportunity to liaise with the class teacher.

Introduction

Only written and signed complaints about teachers by parents/guardians may be investigated formally by the Board of Directors, except in cases where the complaints are deemed:

- Matters of professional competence, which are to be referred to the Ministry of Education.
- Frivolous or vexatious, and which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school.
- Complaints in which either party has recourse to law or another existing procedure.

Unwritten complaints not in the above categories may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

Stage 1

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should approach the class teacher to resolve the complaint.
2. If unresolved, the parent/guardian should approach the Principal.
3. If still unresolved, the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

Stage 2

1. If the complaint is unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue it further, they should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Directors.
2. The Chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter within 5 days of receipt.

Stage 3

1. If unresolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the general authorization of the Board:
 - Supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint.
 - Arrange a meeting with the teacher and, where applicable, the Principal to resolve the complaint. This meeting should occur within 10 days of receipt.

Stage 4

1. If still unresolved, the Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board within 10 days of the meeting.
2. If the Board finds the complaint unsubstantiated, the teacher and complainant should be informed within 3 days of the Board meeting.
3. If substantiated or warranting further investigation:
 - Inform the teacher that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage.
 - Provide the teacher with any written evidence supporting the complaint.
 - Request a written statement from the teacher in response.
 - Afford the teacher an opportunity to present their case to the Board, accompanied by a friend if desired.
 - The Board meeting will take place within 10 days of the previous meeting.

Stage 5

1. When the Board completes its investigation, the Chairperson should convey the decision in writing to the teacher and complainant within 5 days.
2. The decision of the Board shall be final.

Note: In this policy, 'days' means school days.

How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing, or by telephone. Third parties may also make complaints on behalf of someone, with appropriate consent.

- **Concerns:** Should be raised with the class teacher, then the Principal if unresolved.
- **Formal Complaints:** Made if the issue remains unresolved.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated. However, the Principal or Chair of Governors may determine if an investigation is warranted.

Time Scales

Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident or last associated incident. Exceptions may apply under exceptional circumstances.

Complaints Received Outside of Term Time

Complaints made outside of term time will be considered received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Confidentiality

All parties agree to keep the complaints procedure confidential, including personal information, the content, timeline, and result of the complaint. Disclosure is permitted only to professionals or volunteers involved in the procedure or as required by law.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, they must confirm this in writing.

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

The International Academy-Benghazi aims to handle all complaints fairly and impartially. However, unreasonable behaviour that hinders consideration of complaints will not be tolerated, including:

- Refusing to articulate complaints or specify grounds.
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints process.
- Insisting on handling complaints outside the defined procedure.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant information.
- Making unjustified complaints about staff.
- Changing the complaint basis during the investigation.
- Repeatedly making the same complaint.
- Refusing to accept investigation findings.
- Seeking unrealistic outcomes.
- Excessive contact causing significant disruption.
- Using threats, abusive language, or falsifying information.
- Publishing unacceptable information on social media.

Complainants should limit communication while the complaint is being processed. Excessive correspondence may delay the outcome.

The Principal or Chair of Directors will discuss concerns informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If behaviour continues, the Principal will write to the

complainant to request a change. In serious cases, methods of communication may be specified and limited in a communication plan, reviewed after six months.

Serious incidents of aggression or violence will be reported to the police and may result in barring from the Academy.

Success Criteria

- Swift and efficient resolution of grievances.
- Parent/Teacher satisfaction.
- Positive school community feedback.
- Reviews of school policies as issues arise.

Implementation

This policy has been in operation since April 2024 and is next due for review in August 2025.