



Policy – Quality Concerns and Complaints

Purpose

The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (the College) supports any participant in the College's quality framework to raise and resolve concerns and/or complaints that may occur regarding the College's quality framework (e.g. assessment outcomes or assessor conduct).

Background

The College's quality framework ensures New Zealand general practices are held to a quality standard. The College provides general practices the quality programmes, support and a list of College-endorsed assessors. The College also provides assessor training and moderation to ensure assessment is fair and balanced.

Objectives

The College has a strong commitment to ensure all concerns and complaints related to the College's quality programmes are responded to and resolved in a timely, consistent, transparent, fair and equitable manner.

This policy sets out the principles by which an individual or group can raise and have resolved complaints or concerns regarding an experience with the College's quality programmes, College-endorsed assessors, assessment training, assessment process and/or outcomes, Quality advisors and wider College staff.

In scope

An individual, general practice team or PHO participating in the College's quality framework (i.e. Foundation Standard or a Cornerstone module).

Concerns and complaints individuals, general practice teams or PHOs may have with:

- › College quality framework
- › College quality programmes
- › College-endorsed assessors
- › Assessment process and/or outcomes
- › Assessor training programme
- › Participation in a quality programme assessment process
- › College Quality team
- › Wider College staff

Out of scope

This policy does not apply to concerns or complaints arising from:

- › Patient concerns about a general practice. These should be lodged through the general practice's formal complaints process
- › Employment-specific issues arising from the assessor employment contract
- › Harassment, bullying or discrimination issues. These are covered by the College's Harassment, Bullying or Discrimination Policy
- › Any issues that meet the threshold for mandatory referral to the Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ), Nursing Council, Health and Disability Commission, etc. (e.g. concerns about a registered health practitioner's health that might be impacting on their ability to practise safely).

Policy Statements

Policy Principles

The following principles govern how concerns and complaints are dealt with by the College, regardless of the specific nature of the concern or complaint:

- › Individuals, general practice teams or PHOs participating in the quality programmes or assessor training programmes receive accurate, timely, clear, and consistent information on concerns and complaints policy and procedures.
- › The concerns and complaints of individual, general practice teams or PHOs participating in the quality programmes or assessor training programmes are considered and addressed in a fair, transparent, valid and timely manner.
- › The rights of both the complainant and respondent are protected, and both parties are treated fairly and without prejudice.
- › All parties named in a complaint have the right to natural justice.
- › Support is available to all parties involved, which may include a nominated support person for all parties.
- › Processes will be culturally appropriate and may include Tikanga Māori.
- › The provisions of the Privacy Act apply.
- › Personal information related to complaints is strictly confidential to the College.
- › A complaint may be withdrawn by the complainant at any stage.
- › Wherever possible, improvement is brought about as a result of a complainant's concern or complaint.

General Policy

Where an individual, general practice team or PHO wishes to raise a concern or complaint about an assessment outcome and/or College-endorsed assessor, they should in the first instance (where possible) raise this directly with the parties concerned, and notify the College.

Concerns and complaints should be raised as soon as practicable, but within 30 working days of the alleged incident or situation occurring.

Concerns

A concern is generally a situation where an individual or group's expectations regarding the quality framework or assessor training programme have not been met or an individual or group wishes to raise a query with the College

about an issue or concern. The impact on the individual, general practice team or PHO has not been significant, and it is likely a resolution can be met by direct, informal discussion with all the parties involved.

In the first instance, the complainant should raise their concern(s) directly with the person(s) concerned either in person, by phone or by email if appropriate, as soon as possible after the alleged incident or situation occurred.

Where the concern(s) directly relates to a College Quality Advisor or wider College staff, the matter should be communicated to the Quality Team Leader or the Head of Quality.

Complaints

A complaint is generally a situation where an individual or group seeks some form of redress or a change to a current situation directly related to their experience within the quality framework or assessor training programme. The impact and effect on the individual, general practice team or PHO has been significant and requires a formal process of resolution.

A formal complaint must be made in writing by the complainant and submitted to the Head of Quality. The complaint must provide sufficient detail to enable the College to investigate.

The Procedures for Quality Complaints apply. The procedures detail the processes, identify the roles and responsibilities and clearly define the various steps and timeframes.

Exclusions to the Policy

The College cannot provide direct legal assistance to an individual or group in any matter.

The College will not investigate or progress:

- › anonymous concerns or complaints based on hearsay.
- › complaints or concerns raised by another party on the behalf of an individual, general practice team or PHO.
- › complaints that are made more than 30 working days after the alleged incident or situation occurred.
- › a complaint related to findings or decisions made by regulators or in other legal proceedings.
- › a complaint that has previously been dealt with under this Policy.

Reconsideration, Review and Appeals

Rights of appeal and procedures on appeal are to be found in the Appeals Policy.

If a complainant does not accept the outcome of the Head of Quality, or equivalent's investigation, they may appeal the decision and request a review of the complaint by the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive will rule on the appeal and inform the complainant of the outcome.