



HEIR Complaints and Appeals Policy

Policy	Complaints & Appeals
Author	Anna Collins
Owner	HEIR UK Steering Group
Ratification	Tuesday 29th March 2022
Review date	Tuesday 29th March 2023
Published	Thursday 31st March 2022
Version	V1.0

Introduction

Being accepted to the Human Equine Interaction Register indicates that applicants have provided evidence to meet the following criteria:-

Professionalism: competence to practice and commitment to professional development

Equine welfare: high equine welfare and management standards

Service provision and service user engagement: communication of services and the potential benefits

Benefits and impact: professional reflection of the benefits and impact of the service being provided

Governance: sufficient management and governance structures in place

Scope

This policy relates to complaints being made about the decision taken to include / exclude / remove applicants to the Register. It does not relate to the practice of provider organisations. Any such complaints should be made via the organisation in question in the first instance or escalated to their regulatory body eg Local Authority, BHS, RSPCA or Professional Regulatory Body.

All HEIR registrants hold professional indemnity insurance and public liability cover. Any complaints regarding a loss caused by a practitioner should therefore be made to the practitioner directly.

Operating Principles

In all cases, complaints will be considered in a fair, consistent and timely manner.

No service user, commissioner or interested stakeholder will be disadvantaged by making a complaint.

Where a complaint is presented which is found to be malicious or vexatious, the HEIR Committee reserve the right to take action against the relevant party where appropriate. This may include informing relevant authorities, professional bodies and/or registers.

Vexatious activity may include continuous or regular false or inaccurate communications to damage the reputation of an individual practitioner or organisation, or complaints without supporting evidence.

The HEIR Complaints Process cannot consider:-

- Complaints about practitioners or organisations who are not (current or historic) HEIR Registrants;
- legal matters; or
- claims for compensation/refunds.

Annual Review of Complaints

The HEIR Committee will keep a log of complaints received

All comments, concerns and complaints will be reviewed, considered and investigated to inform enhancements to the Register on an annual basis.

This will result in an Action Plan presented to the HEIR Committee for discussion relating to the operation of the Register and the compliance with the Criteria.

HEIR also welcomes stakeholder feedback on Register application process.

Complaints

An aggrieved party who wishes to make a complaint about a decision taken to include / exclude / remove applicants to the Register should write in the first instance to [HETI](#)

There are 3 stages of the complaints procedure:

- **Initial Investigation – stage 1:** HETI will review the complaint in conjunction with the HEIR UK Steering Group / Committee
- **Formal Investigation – stage 2:** The HETI Office may escalate complex or repeat concerns to the HETI Board, leading to a formal investigation.
- **Formal Appeal and Review – stage 3:** The complainant may seek an independent or third party opinion

Process and Timescales

The complaint must be submitted within 6 months of the action / decision to which the complaint relates.

Stage 1 – Initial Investigation

- Concern/complaint is received by HETI “**Day Zero**”. The complaint is logged and allocated a reference number to be used on all correspondence relating to the complaint.
- An acknowledgement receipt to be sent to complainant within **3 working days of Day Zero**
- HETI to contact a member of the HEIR Committee within **5 working days of Day Zero**
- Initial review/investigation of concern concluded **within 10 working days of Day Zero** against the HEIR Criteria. This review to consider submitted documentation, evidence available in the public domain, and evidence received in the most recent register application.
- The review/investigation should be concluded **within 28 working days of Day** including communication with the HEIR Registrant about any required resolution.
- Outline of resolution (or escalation of case) shared with complainant **within 28 working days of Day Zero**.
- Outline of complaint and resolution recorded on Complaint Log for annual monitoring **within 28 days of Day Zero**. Investigation may determine

Investigation may determine

- No further action – complaint is dropped
- Further communication with complainant
- Review of any evidence of mitigation activity
- Agree Resolution actions
- Escalation to next stage

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation by HETI

- Concern/complaint is received by HETI Office “**Day Zero**”
- An acknowledgement receipt to be sent to Complainant within **3 working days of Day Zero**

- HETI to contact a member of the HETI Board / Committee within **5 working days of Day Zero**
- HETI Committee to review complaint including HEIR and Complainant perspectives.
- No less than three (3) HETI Committee members to investigate the case, to be concluded **within 30 working days of Day Zero.**

Investigation may determine

- No further action – complaint is dropped
 - Further communication with complainant
 - Review of any evidence of mitigation activity
 - Agree Resolution actions
 - Escalation to next stage
- Outline of resolution, if required, shared with complainant, HEIR Registrant and HEIR Committee **within 35 working days** of Day Zero.
 - Resolution may include
 - No further action – complaint is dropped
 - Request for remedial action by HEIR registrant
 - Continued suspension from the Register until all remedial action has been completed
 - Notification of other registers/professional bodies as relevant
 - Outline of complaint and resolution recorded on Complaint Log for annual monitoring **within 35 working days** of Day Zero

Stage 3 – Formal Appeal and Independent Review

- Correspondence from complainant to request an independent review is received by HETI Office “**Day Zero**”
- An acknowledgement receipt to be sent to aggrieved party within **3 working days of Day Zero**
- HETI to establish 3 members of an independent review body to consider the complaint and outcomes at Stages 1 & 2.
- Independent Review body to consist of Chair plus two additional members from within the sector, equine industry or external sector / organisation. They must not have been involved in the previous stages of the process in any way.
- Formal review of the case and resultant decisions to be concluded **within 30 working days of Day Zero.** Investigation may include
 - Further communication with original complainant
 - Review of any mitigation activity
 - Review of any additional evidence
 - Consideration with respect to other cases
- Outline of Appeal decision shared complainant, Registrant and HEIR Committee Chair **within 35 working days** of Day Zero. Appeal decision may include
 - Original decision stands
 - Original decision is revoked
 - Original decision is amended
- Outline of complaint and resolution recorded on Complaint Log for annual monitoring **within 35 working days** of Day Zero

Note: any suspension from the Register will remain during any Stage 3 review