

Complaints and Grievance Procedure

Introduction and General Principles

BCPC aims to provide a service of the highest standard to all our users. The intention of this Complaints Policy and Procedure is to provide a clear framework to help any individual who is not satisfied with the services of BCPC or any of its members to raise their concerns and to ensure that BCPC responds effectively.

BCPC aspires to operate within the framework of Humanistic Core Values in all dealings with others and in every part of the organisation. These values include respect for difference, honesty and an open and transparent process in dealing with conflict at all levels. Complaints will be treated in accordance with BCPC's policy on equality and fairness.

All practitioners are expected to adhere to the professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for BCPC Counselling and Psychotherapy Practitioners and those of their regulatory bodies such as UKCP and/or BACP. To view our Code of Practice and Statement of Ethical Principles go to our website: [BCPC | Our Policies](#)

Anonymous or malicious complaints will not normally be investigated.

About this Policy

If you are a member of the public who wishes to register a concern or complaint about a **BCPC Accredited Practitioner**, please see **Section A**.

If you are a member of the public who wishes to register a concern or complaint about a **BCPC Student Practitioner**, please see **Section B**.

For all other concerns and complains see **Section C**.

If you are unsure as to how to proceed, please contact the BCPC office:

officemanager@bcpc.org.uk

admin@bcpc.org.uk

Call 01225 429720

Section A: Complaints against Registered Practitioners

Anyone who wants to make a complaint about a **qualified BCPC trained counsellor or psychotherapist** should approach the practitioner's regulatory body directly in the first instance.

Fitness to Practice Concerns

If BCPC receives a concern or a complaint with allegations of gross negligence or professional misconduct, or any matter that calls into question a registered practitioner's fitness to practice, the complainant will be advised to contact UKCP or BACP as follows:

UKCP: contact complaints@ukcp.org.uk

<https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/ukcp-members/complaints/how-to-make-a-complaint/>

BACP: the information can be found here: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/about-us/protecting-the-public/professional-conduct/how-to-complain-about-a-bacp-member/>

A member of the **BCPC Diversity Standards & Ethics Committee (DSE)** will assist with the initial approach to UKCP or BACP if requested to do so, at ethics@bcpc.org.uk

Other Concerns

For concerns or complaints relating to practitioners that do not concern fitness to practice or indicate any breach of the UKCP/ BACP Code of Ethics, the following process should be followed:

1. Initiating a Complaint with BCPC

- 1.1. If that matter is not resolved through direct communication, or where this is too difficult or challenging for the complainant, the next step is to contact the BCPC Diversity Standards & Ethics Committee (ethics@bcpc.org.uk).
- 1.2. The complainant will receive a response from the Diversity Standards & Ethics Committee within 5 working days and will be offered the opportunity to explain the details of their concern in a confidential setting via telephone.
- 1.3. A record is made of when the issue arose and how the matter was first addressed by the practitioner. This record and all correspondence and written material pertaining to the process will be held with the utmost confidentiality.

2. The Next Steps

- 2.1. With the agreement of the complainant, the practitioner who is subject to the complaint may be advised of the complaint. The practitioner will then be sent a copy of the documentation as well as a copy of the procedure.
- 2.2. The practitioner is invited by the appointed member of the Diversity Standards & Ethics Committee to respond in writing to any complaint within the following 10 working days. Should the practitioner decline to give their account in writing, the procedure moves on regardless.
- 2.3. The complainant can then consider the response of the practitioner and discuss this with the designated DSE Committee member. This may be sufficient to allow for direct communication to take place between the complainant and the practitioner and decide together how to achieve completion.
- 2.4. If a resolution can be achieved at this point, then the process stops here.
- 2.5. If a resolution has not been possible, both parties, together with the DSE Committee member, may suggest alternative solutions.

Possible Outcomes at this Stage:

- Resolution is reached via the process with the DSE member that is agreed by both parties.
- Offer of Mediation.

3. Mediation

- 3.1. If mediation is an acceptable way forward for both parties, a meeting is arranged. This meeting would take place at a mutually agreed and suitable venue and last up to two hours. Mediation is aimed at promoting understanding and resolution and is an opportunity for dialogue, response and restoration of relationship.
- 3.2. The intention of mediation is to repair the harm done to the relationship and to move forward. In any dialogue that takes place, attention will be given to the power dynamics of the relationship involved. It may be that this can be addressed by inviting parties to bring a non-legal representative with them for support during the mediation meeting. This will be negotiated beforehand to ensure both parties agree on this or any other proposed option.

3.3. The mediator will only be appointed with the agreement of both parties and is engaged by the designated member of the Diversity Standards & Ethics Committee. The mediator's impartiality and expertise would be regarded as paramount. If an independent mediator is requested and costs are incurred these costs are shared between the parties. BCPC does not cover costs.

3.4. If the mediation procedures employed do not lead to a mutually satisfactory outcome, both parties will be offered options on how to move forward. One option is to consider whether an additional meeting might bring about a satisfactory resolution.

4. Appeal

4.1. The **Diversity Standards & Ethics Committee** of BCPC is entrusted with the process of dealing with informal complaints as stated above. It is a sub-committee of the Trustees, and if a complainant is not satisfied with the way a complaint has been handled, they may write to the Chair of Trustees (via the office) at trustees@bcpc.org.uk

4.2. After the complaints procedure has been completed, the parties involved are invited to give feedback on the process.

Section B: Complaints against BCPC Student Practitioners

Introduction

This section applies to concerns and complaints from members of the public about a **student practitioner** currently in training with BCPC.

The BCPC Director is responsible for managing all such concerns and complaints.

- If you are unsure whether the practitioner is a BCPC student, please contact the BCPC Office: officemanager@bcpc.org.uk
- To contact the Director directly: rhianwengilson@bcpc.org.uk

1. Step 1: Informal Investigation

1.1. Receipt of Complaint

The Director receives the complaint and initiates an informal investigation.

1.2. Initial Contact

The Director confirms receipt of the complaint with the complainant and outlines the immediate process they will follow.

- The Director contacts the student to inform them of the complaint and to arrange an informal meeting to discuss the matter.
- The Director contacts the student's supervisor to inform them of the complaint and arrange a meeting to discuss the matter.
- The Director may also contact the relevant Course Leader to inform them of the complaint received.

1.3. Meetings

The Director meets with:

- The student (to hear their account)
- The student's supervisor (for input)

Additional input may be sought from others (e.g., Course Leader). The Director may also meet with the complainant.

1.4. Assessment and Decision

The Director reviews all information and decides if informal action is needed. Possible actions may include:

- Additional supervision
- Practice restrictions
- Reflective tasks

1.5. Communication of Outcome

A written outcome is provided to:

- The student
- The student's supervisor
- The complainant

1.6. Timeframe

- The outcome is communicated to the complainant, the student and their supervisor within 4 working weeks of receipt.

- If the process will be delayed (e.g., due to academic holidays), the complainant is informed, and a revised timeline is agreed.

1.7. Escalation

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal investigation, they may proceed to **Step 2: Formal Investigation**.

2. Step 2: Formal Investigation

2.1. Submission of Complaint

- A formal complaint must be submitted in writing and signed by the complainant (this can be via email)
- The complaint needs to clearly describe the issue, relevant dates and evidence and their desired outcome

2.2. Acknowledgement

- Receipt of the complaint is acknowledged by the Director within 5 working days
- The student receives a written copy
- Both complainant and student are informed of the next steps

2.3. Meetings and Consultations

The Director will:

- Meet with the student and/or complainant.
- Meet with the student's supervisor and other parties (e.g.) Course Leader).
- Consult the Diversity Standards and Ethics (DSE) Committee.

2.4. Possible Outcomes at this Stage

- Early resolution reached via a proposal from the Director that is agreed by both parties
- Offer of mediation
- Full investigation

3. Step 3: Optional Mediation

3.1. Mediation Guidelines

Participation is voluntary. If mediation is acceptable to both parties a meeting is arranged. This meeting would take place at a mutually agreed and suitable venue and last up to two hours. If an independent mediator is requested and costs are incurred these costs are shared between the parties. BCPC does not cover costs.

Mediation is aimed at promoting understanding and resolution and is an opportunity for dialogue, response and restoration of relationship.

- Mediation will be facilitated by an agreed neutral party (internal or external).
- In any mediation that takes place attention will be given to the power dynamics of the relationship involved. Parties may be invited to bring a non-legal representative with them for support during the mediation meeting. This will be discussed and agreed with both parties in advance of the mediation meeting.
- A written summary of the meeting is signed by both parties within 5 working days.

3.2. Mediation Outcomes

- If mediation is successful, the complaint is closed
- If mediation is unsuccessful or declined, the complaint proceeds to a full investigation
- The Director may delegate the matter to the DSE Committee or an independent third party

4. Step 4: Formal Full Investigation by DSE Committee or Third Party

4.1. Investigation Process

DSE Committee or third party will:

- Review the complaint
- Examine all information and correspondence
- Interview relevant parties
- Write a report on their findings and send this to the Director

4.2. Timeline

- Investigation concludes within 20 working days.
- If the process will be delayed (e.g., due to academic holidays), the complainant is informed, and a revised timeline is agreed.
- Both parties are kept informed.

4.3. Administration

- A dedicated email address will manage all correspondence.

5. Step 5: Outcome and Resolution

Possible Findings

- Complaint not upheld
- Complaint upheld (in full or part)

Possible Actions

- Additional supervision or training is required by the student
- A written warning or formal sanction is given to the student by the Director
- If the matter is considered to be a serious breach of ethics the student may be dismissed from the training.

6. Step 6: Appeals

Right to Appeal

Either party may appeal within 10 working days.

Valid grounds for appeal:

- Procedural unfairness
- New significant evidence
- Disproportionate outcome

Appeal Review

- Appeals are handled by an independent panel with no prior involvement.
- The independent panel will comprise a minimum of three members
- Members may include a BCPC Trustee, a professional in the same field, a neutral peer or manager
- A note taker will attend to record proceedings.

7. Step 7: Record-Keeping

Data Protection

- All records stored securely, per data protection laws
 - Retained for 7 years from conclusion
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Section C – Complaints About Training Issues

Occasionally, a student may feel dissatisfied with some aspect of their training at BCPC and wishes to make a complaint.

- For Academic Appeals (e.g., against assessments), students should follow the Academic Appeals Procedure (available in the relevant exam submission pack).
- For other training related complaints students should follow the procedure outlined below:

1. Informal Stage

1.1 Initial Discussion

- The student contacts the Course Leader via email to outline their concerns and a time for a preliminary and confidential discussion is agreed.

1.2 Review and Response

- Course Leader consults with relevant parties and responds to the student within 14 working days.
- If the process will be delayed (e.g., due to academic holidays), the student is informed, and a revised timeline is agreed.

1.3 Possible Outcomes at this stage

- A resolution is proposed by the Course Leader in consultation with all relevant parties.
- If the resolution is agreed, then the matter will not proceed further in this process.
- Offer of Mediation
- Full investigation

2. Mediation

2.1. Mediation

Where resolution has not been possible at the initial informal stage the Course Leader will discuss the matter with the Director, and an offer of mediation may be made.

If agreed by both student and BCPC:

- Mediation will begin within 10 working days from the agreement to hold a mediation meeting.
- The Mediator may be:
 - Course Leader / Director
 - An independent person (e.g., a Trustee of the organisation)

Conflicts of interest and boundaries will be managed appropriately and any boundary issues, perceived or actual, will be respected and any conflicts of interest will be declared at the outset.

2.2. Mediation Costs

If an independent mediator is requested and costs are incurred these costs are shared between the parties. BCPC does not cover costs.

2.3. Documentation

- A written record will be made of any actions to be taken or of a resolution agreed as a result of mediation. Where appropriate the process may end here.
- Written records of actions and outcomes are kept.

2.4. Mediation Not Suitable

If mediation is declined by either party, deemed to be inappropriate, or mediation held does not bring resolution, then **the Formal Stage will be initiated.**

3. Formal Stage

3.1. Submitting a Formal Complaint

- A Formal Complaint needs to be submitted in writing to the Director and should include a clear explanation of the issue and any supporting evidence that is available.
- Deadline: A Formal Complaint should be submitted by the student within 10 working days of concluding the informal stage.

3.2. Review Process

- The Director will discuss the matter with the relevant Course Leader and other staff members as appropriate.
- The Director will meet with the student to hear a fuller account of the complaint.
- The Director will meet with relevant staff to understand context and background.

3.3. Response

- Director responds to student within 10 working days, proposing a resolution.
- If the process will be delayed (e.g., due to academic holidays), the complainant is informed, and a revised timeline is agreed.
- The Director may consult with a member of the Training Committee member for an independent perspective and input.
- The Director will propose a resolution, in consultation with all relevant parties.
- The Formal Stage process should conclude within one calendar month.

3.4. Documentation

A written record of all actions, decisions and resolutions will be made and kept.

4. Review or Appeal Stage

4.1. Submitting an Appeal

- If dissatisfied, the student may appeal to the Training Committee.
- This appeal should be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Training Committee (c/o the BCPC Office), within 10 working days of the Director's proposed resolution.

- The appeal should include a clear statement of the grounds for the appeal, a summary of the reasons for the appeal (including any new evidence), any supporting documentation and the outcome that they are seeking.
- The Chair of the Training Committee will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 5 working days.
- The role of the Training Committee is to consider whether the complaint has been dealt with fairly and according to the published Complaints and Grievance Procedure.

4.2. Initial Contact

- The Training Committee will appoint a minimum of two committee members or other appropriate individuals to consider the appeal.
- One of these individuals will contact the student to ensure that they understand the complaint being made and to clarify and verify any details as needed.

4.3. Gathering Information

The Training Committee representatives may:

- Request tutor and Director input, and discussion as needed where clarification is required.
- Request Supervision reports / Tutor reports / Student assignments or self-assessments.
- Consult staff.
- Proceed to make a final decision as per 4.5., if the Training Committee representatives decide that no appeal meeting is necessary.

4.4. Appeal Meeting (if offered)

- Student may be invited to a meeting with the two individuals appointed by the Training Committee.
- A peer support person (who is not a legal representative) may accompany the student.
- The student will be given up to 10 working days' notice of the meeting and a mutually convenient time will be sought for all parties.

4.5. Final Decision

- The Training Committee representatives will meet to make a final decision.
- The Training Committee representatives will report their findings to the Director and to the Training Committee within 7 working days of the Appeal Meeting or the decision not to proceed with an Appeal Meeting (see 4.3).
- The decision of the Training Committee representatives may include actions to be undertaken by the organisation and/ or the complainant. Where this is the case, actions will be provided in writing.
- The student will be informed of the decision within 5 working days after the decision is finalised.
- The decision of the Training Committee is final, and no further steps are available to the student within BCPC.
- A Completion of Procedures letter is issued to the student. This letter will summarise the complaint, the findings of the investigation, the final decision taken in response to the complaint and the reasoning behind this decision. This letter is required should the student wish to appeal to an external body about the outcome of the BCPC internal process.

4.6. Escalation to an External Body

If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal BCPC process their complaint can be escalated to an external body:

- An appeal to the **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education** (OIAHE), an independent body set up to review student complaints about higher education providers in England and Wales. <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>
- BCPC Students enrolled on the MA in Psychotherapy may also follow the **Middlesex University** 'Complaints in relation to collaborative partner institutions. This route can only be taken once the BCPC complaints process has been fully exhausted. Information is available here: <https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/policies/complaints/>

Policy ownership	BCPC Trustees BCPC Diversity Standards and Ethics Committee BCPC AGM
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