

ASE Complaints Policy

The Association for Science Education (ASE) aims to maintain high standards across all its activities. The complaints procedure is aimed at addressing the concerns of individuals and organisations. As well as addressing your concerns, it helps us improve the services we provide as an organisation.

Our complaints policy should be read in conjunction with our [Code of Professional Conduct](#) (available on our website). In cases where it is believed that this Code has been broken, the provisions of the Code should be applied in the first instance before the Complaints Policy is applied.

This complaints procedure is for:

- people who have used our services and aren't happy
- Where anyone feels that the Code of Professional Conduct has been breached and actions taken as a result of a report of that breach has not been satisfactory.

We will make sure that your complaint is:

- treated seriously
- handled fairly without bias or discrimination
- treated confidentially

You should complain within 3 months of the event or outcome that you are complaining about.

You need to tell us:

- what you think went wrong – providing details of the event, date, the action you or others took at the time, whether you raised it with a member of staff and what the outcome was
- what you think we should do to put it right
- your full contact details so that we can contact you for further information if required and to let you know the outcome of any investigation.

There are a number of ways that the ASE can take a complaint forward:-

The difference between a concern and a complaint

We define a concern as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought' and seen as an informal process of discussion and dialogue.

We define a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action that requires an investigation and formal response in writing'.

How to raise a concern

It is in everybody's interest that concerns are resolved as swiftly as possible. Many issues can be resolved informally, without needing to escalate to the formal stages of the complaints process. Issues may be made in person to any member of ASE staff, volunteer or trustee at any of our events/activities. You may call the office on +44 (0) 1707 283000 and speak to our memberships team. Alternatively, concerns and suggestions may be addressed to the responsible staff member or the CEO's PA and sent in writing to ASE at College Lane, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 9AA; by e-mail to info@ase.org.uk.

We take all concerns and suggestions seriously, and if any such issues raise serious internal concern we may escalate this as appropriate.

How to make a complaint

A complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, provided that the third party is able to demonstrate that they have consent to do so.

Depending on the nature of complaint, it should be made to one of following individuals:

1. Complaints relating to ASE events, activities and which relate to ASE members and/or volunteers.

If the complaint relates to one of ASE's conferences or events, and regards one of our members or volunteers or a third party (e.g exhibitor, speaker or sponsor), complaints should be made in the first instance to the team member leading that event – e.g the Events Manager or Director of Professional Learning. Complaints can be made verbally on site, or in writing after the event. Please direct the complaint to the named member of staff citing the event of activity. Emails may be sent to info@ase.org.uk.

2. Complaints regarding a member of ASE personnel – including the Chair Trio, Trustees or Chair of the Board

Complaints should be addressed to the CEO and sent in writing to ASE at College Lane, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 9AA or by e-mail to lynnladbrook@ase.org.uk

3. Complaints about the CEO

Complaints relating to the ASE CEO should be made in writing and addressed to the Chair of Trustees. These may be submitted to the ASE head office - College Lane, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 9AA or by e-mail marked Private and Confidential, FAO Chair of Trustees and emailed to the Director of Finance and Operations at laurarafferty@ase.org.uk. The Director of Finance will forward these to the Chair of the Board for prompt attention.

How the ASE will resolve your complaint

Stage One:

Most complaints are best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

If a complaint has been made in writing, it will be acknowledged and the date on which it was received recorded. A response will be issued within five working days – this response will indicate whether further information is needed or whether a meeting is required to establish further detail. This initial response will give an estimated timeline for full follow up of the complaint or the next steps if an investigation procedure is required. Once this has been completed a follow up response will be issued outlining the investigation outcomes and proposed resolution.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at a higher level (ie if the complaint was initially received by a member of staff, it may be escalated to the CEO, if the complaint was received by the CEO it may be escalated to the Trustee Body). Any request to review must be made within 10 working days of receiving the final report.

The request for a review will be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply. The CEO or Trustee Body may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person or Trustee to do so.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within twenty working days. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent by this time with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final.

During any investigation, the team member, CEO or Trustee body will:

- Interview those involved in the matter including anyone complained of
- Keep a written record of any meetings or interviews in relation to the investigation.

External Stage

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the steps we have taken they, they may make a formal complaint to the Charity Commission at any stage. Details of how to do this can be found [here](#). If the complaint relates to GDPR, they may choose to make a complaint to the ICO. Details of how to do this can be found [here](#).

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, they must inform ASE as soon as possible in writing. If the complainant is unable to confirm their withdrawal of the complaint in writing, ASE will write to them to confirm that their complaint has been withdrawn in accordance with their wishes.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The ASE may vary the complaints procedure where necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the CEO or a Trustee should not also have the CEO or that Trustee as the person leading a Stage Two review.



Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are logged in a Complaints Register. They are reviewed annually by Q&A committee to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action. Reports relating to complaints are kept for 3 years in line with our Retention and Disposal Policy. The Register of Complaints retains information for 10 years.

Last Reviewed by Trustee Board in March 2024

Next Review due by March 2026