

The Centre for Advancing Practice

Appeals and complaints policy

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Appeals and complaints policy

Purpose and scope

This document sets out the procedures for handling appeals and complaints relating to The Centre for Advancing Practice's ('the Centre's') recognition processes and decisions on the removal of digital badges, as well as the standards we follow.

An appeal is a request for the re-consideration of a decision regarding the outcome of a recognition process (see below) or the removal of a digital badge based on the reasonable belief that a procedural irregularity and/or administrative error has occurred. The Centre is concerned to address any such occurrences and learn from them in how it enacts its role.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of services provided in relation to the Centre's recognition processes or process for the removal of digital badges. The Centre recognises that, on occasion, there may be legitimate complaints which individuals will wish to raise. The Centre can benefit from exploring such issues, and we will take action to learn from complaints so that improvements can be made to our service.

This policy does not relate to:

- Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations 2004 compliance matters as they have a separate statutory process
- complaints from doctors in training – further information is available on the relevant [Workforce, training and education website section](#) (former Health Education England)
- complaints about postgraduate training of doctors or dentists – further information is available on the relevant [Workforce, training and education website section](#) (former Health Education England)
- complaints about the practice of individual practitioners working in advancing practice roles – further information is available for [feedback and complaints about NHS services](#) (Appendix A outlines the process for handling clinically related complaints)
- complaints about NHS services - further information is available for [feedback and complaints about NHS services](#)
- complaints about professional standards processes
- complaints about Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)

Making an appeal

An appeal can be made in relation to outcomes of the following recognition processes:

- programme accreditation
- ePortfolio (supported) Route

- area specific capabilities ('Credential') endorsement
- module/s self-declaration process for the First Contact Practitioner (FCP) Taught Route

An appeal can only be made on the grounds that the individual or organisation making the appeal reasonably believes that a procedural irregularity and/or administrative error has occurred in how their application for recognition has been considered. An individual cannot appeal to challenge the judgement of the reviewers or the Centre's Education Assurance Group who ratifies the outcomes.

Please note that in the case of the ePortfolio (supported) Route, individual outcome decisions are made by a contracted supplier ('the Supplier'), normally an education provider, and not by the Education Assurance Group.

An appeal can also be made in relation to a decision to remove a digital badge. An appeal can only be made on the grounds that the individual making the appeal reasonably believes that a procedural irregularity and/or administrative error has occurred in the process of making a decision to remove a digital badge.

The fact that an individual believes that they deserve a different outcome cannot constitute grounds for appeal.

An appeal must be made within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome of the recognition application, in keeping with the [Gold Guide – 10th Edition – Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans \(2024\)](#). When an appeal relates to removing digital badges, an appeal must be made within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome of the digital badge investigation.

An appeal must be made in writing and addressed to the Head of the Centre for Advancing Practice and emailed via: england.advancedpractice@nhs.net.

The written appeal should include:

- the name and address of the individual making the appeal
- details of decision(s) being challenged?
- a concise statement of the grounds of appeal
- the date, nature, and other relevant details of the procedural irregularity and/or administrative error
- any information or evidence that supports the appeal

Upon receipt of an appeal, it will be recorded as being received by the Centre. A written acknowledgment of receipt will be sent to the individual within five working days of the appeal being received. Please refer to Appendix B for the timescales for appeals.

For appeals relating to recognition processes, the relevant head of process – with functional responsibility for the route described (such as programme accreditation, ePortfolio (supported Route), area specific capabilities ('credential') endorsement, and FCP self-declarations) – will prepare a report outlining the details of the application, including timelines, for the appeal panel.

Where it becomes clear that a procedural irregularity and/or administrative error has occurred, the Head of the Centre for Advancing Practice (or delegate) can request that the relevant lead of the process take action to rectify. The individual will be notified of the action taken and, if they agree, the appeals process will be closed.

For appeals relating to the removal of digital badges, the Head of the Centre for Advancing Practice (or delegate) will review the appeal documentation and where it becomes clear that a procedural irregularity and/or administrative error has occurred they can take action to rectify. The individual will be notified of the action taken and, if they agree, the appeals process will be closed.

The Centre will establish a panel to consider the appeal if it is not resolved at an earlier point.

Membership of an appeals panel

A panel shall comprise at least three members and shall include:

- no more than two people who are on a statutory register with knowledge of the [Multi-professional framework for advanced practice in England \(2025\)](#)
- one patient and public voice representative

A person is not eligible to be a member of a panel if they have been involved in any other capacity in the submission which is to be considered by the appeal panel.

If necessary, the appeal panel may undertake further information gathering and fact finding, including receiving written statements or conducting interviews, or request further evidence from any party involved.

Outcomes

The appeal panel will make its findings based on the available evidence and can determine that:

- one or more procedural irregularities and/or administrative errors occurred
- the evidence presented would have materially altered the outcome
- there were no procedural irregularities and/or administrative errors and therefore, the original decision stands, and the appeal is dismissed

Where an appeal is upheld, the panel can:

- substitute a different outcome
- remit the matter back to the Head of the Centre for Advancing Practice (or delegate) with directions about what must happen next (e.g. that an accreditation submission is reassessed by a new panel of reviewers)

The decision of the appeal panel will be sent to the individual, or individual who submitted the appeal on behalf of the organisation, in writing normally within ten working days of the appeal panel being convened. Where it is not possible to meet this deadline, due to unforeseen circumstances or the need to undertake a more detailed investigation, the Centre will inform the individual of the revised time scales.

The outcome will include the reason(s) for reaching that decision. The decision of the panel is final.

A record will be retained by the Centre, in line with NHS England's data retention schedule.

The outcome of the appeal will also be notified to relevant parties including, as appropriate, the Chair of the Education Assurance Group and/or the Supplier (in respect of the ePortfolio (supported) Route).

Making a complaint

The Centre regards a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service provided in relation to the Centre's functions.

Complaints may relate to:

- the quality of the recognition processes the Centre provides
- the behaviour of staff involved in providing the recognition processes
- dissatisfaction with the Centre's processes relating to recognition, including the recognition process activity delivered by outsourced suppliers; and/or
- the process adopted in connection with the removal of digital badges

The Centre cannot deal with some matters through the complaint's procedure, including, but not limited to:

- a request under Freedom of Information
- a request under Data Protection legislation. Instead, these should be directed to england.dpo-crm@nhs.net.
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- an appeal about a recognition outcome or a decision on the removal of a digital badge

- an issue which is being, or has been, considered by a court, tribunal, or statutory regulatory body
- an attempt to have a complaint reconsidered where the Centre has already given the final decision following an investigation

How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made to us via NHS England's Customer Contact Centre or directly to the Centre:

- by email direct to the Centre, addressed to the Head of The Centre for Advancing Practice: england.advancedpractice@nhs.net
- by email: england.contactus@nhs.net
- by telephone: 0300 311 22 33
- in writing: NHS England, PO Box 16738, Redditch, B97 9PT

We will consider all accessibility and reasonable adjustment requirements of people who wish to make a complaint in an alternative way. We will record any reasonable adjustments we make.

Provide as much information as possible to allow NHS England to investigate your complaint. Include the following:

- the complainant's full name and address
- a phone number in case we need to contact you for additional information
- details about the complaint, including any decision(s) being challenged
- copies of any documentation to support the complaint
- outcome sought

Early resolution

We focus on early resolution, and the Centre encourages any resolution of complaints in an informal way with the individual, team and/or supplier involved in the first instance.

Timescale for making a complaint

Complaints must be made to us within 12 months from the date the incident occurred, or from the date of knowledge about the complaint, whichever is the later date.

If a complaint is made to us after 12-month, you will need to demonstrate that:

- you had good reasons for not making the complaint earlier, and
- it is still possible to properly consider the complaint (without causing unfairness)

If we find that there was not a good reason for the delay, or we think it is not possible to properly consider the complaint (or any part of it), we will write to the person who has made the complaint to explain this. We will also explain that they can complain to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman if they are not happy with that decision.

Once a complaint is received

The Centre and/or a representative from NHS England will acknowledge all complaints no later than the third working day after the day the complaint is received.

The complaint will be investigated, and you will receive a written response. If we can learn and improve because of your complaint, we will tell you about this in the written response.

The amount of time the investigation will take will depend on what the complaint is about and how complex it is. Communication is important and we will keep you updated throughout the process. The process may take 20 working days or longer. Please refer to Appendix C for timescales for formal complaints.

NHS England's [complaints policy](#) has further details on how complaints are handled.

We publish clear information about our complaints process and how people can get advice and support with their complaint through their local independent NHS complaints advocacy service and other specialist independent advice services that operate nationally. Further information is available on [our website](#).

Upon receipt of a complaint, it will be recorded as being received by the Centre, and the Head of the Centre for Advancing Practice (or delegate) will review the complaint and consider whether it can be dealt with informally. This might involve informal discussions with the complainant and any individual involved. If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the Head of the Centre for Advancing Practice (or delegate) will nominate a member of the Centre's senior staff to undertake an investigation into the matter(s) outlined in the complaint and prepare a short report outlining the recommended action to take if required.

Where the formal complaint process is used, the response to the complaint is agreed with the Head of Centre for Advancing Practice (or delegate) and communicated in writing to the complainant normally within 20 working days (though this may be longer dependent on the nature of the complaint). A record will be retained by the Centre in line with NHS England's data retention schedule. Appendix C provides further details of the approval steps for finalising and sending responses.

The Centre will act on the recommendations from the investigation which may result in a change process, or training, or potentially disciplinary action if the conduct of an employee is unacceptable. This process is the only process for raising and managing complaints and there is no further mechanism for complaint within the Centre.

Quality assurance

A sample of, or a minimum of three (whichever is larger), appeals and complaints will be audited annually as part of the Centre's quality assurance process. The findings will be subsequently presented at the Centre Leadership Group and the Programme Management Group for any learning gained.

Approved

Appendix A: Process for handling clinically related complaints

This Appendix outlines the process for responding to clinically related complaints received by the Centre for Advancing Practice.

A clinically related complaint is a complaint or correspondence received by the Centre for Advancing Practice related to clinical care and/or the conduct of a healthcare professional.

Such clinically related complaints may potentially raise patient safety concerns, safeguarding concerns, and/or fitness to practice concerns, and hence may require different actions than are noted in this policy for dealing with other types of complaints.

Process to be followed:

- Record the receipt of the clinically related complaint on the Centre's appeals and complaints log.
- Escalate with Head of Centre for Advancing Practice (or their registrant delegate) for review and, if required, further action. This escalation point is to the Head of Centre (as a healthcare registrant with a duty of care) or, where delegated, another suitable healthcare registrant delegate. This escalation point supports compliance with the duty of care and professional standards of the Head of Centre (as a registrant) and any designated registrant delegate. This escalation enables timely consideration of any patient safety, safeguarding, or fitness-to-practice implications.
- If the complaint raises potential patient safety concerns, safeguarding concerns, and/or fitness to practice concerns the Head of Centre for Advancing Practice (or their registrant delegate) should discuss the escalation with another healthcare registrant within the wider programme team before taking any further actions.
- Further actions might include, for example, directly contacting the correspondent and/or directly contacting the service the correspondent is complaining about. Such actions should align with the relevant regulatory requirements (the Nursing and Midwifery Council - 'The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates; and/or the Health and Care Professions Council - 'Standards of conduct, performance and ethics'), such as managing risk, raising concerns, being open when things go wrong, and maintaining appropriate records.

- If no actions arising the Centre team should confirm with the Head of Centre for Advancing Practice (or their registrant delegate) that the below template response can be shared with the correspondent.
- Arising actions should be recorded on the Centre's appeals and complaints log.
- If appropriate and relevant to do so, and in agreement with the Head of Centre for Advancing Practice (or delegate), the formatted template response should be shared with correspondent via the Centre's email address.
- Any follow-on responses should be escalated with the Head of the Centre for Advancing Practice (or their clinical delegate) for further review and, if required, further action.

Template response to be used for replying to clinically related complaints:

Dear [Insert name],

Thank you for contacting the Centre for Advancing Practice regarding the concerns you have raised.

Please note the Centre for Advancing Practice does not have responsibility for the practice of individual practitioners or of the running of healthcare services and hence does not investigate complaints or enquiries related to quality of care, practitioners, or services.

Local [Integrated care Boards \(ICBs\)](#) are responsible for planning and funding most local NHS services. This includes primary care services (GPs, dentists, opticians or pharmacists) and secondary care, such as hospital care, mental health services, out-of-hours services, NHS 111, and community services like district nursing.

Many issues can be resolved quickly by speaking directly to the staff at the place where you received care or accessed a service. Alternatively, the [Patient Advice and Liaison Service \(PALS\)](#) is a free, confidential and independent service that you'll find in most areas.

The guidance for making complaints about NHS services can be accessed via [this link](#) and the NHS England complaints guidance and policy can be accessed via [this link](#).

We hope this further information is helpful - please do ask if you have any other questions.

Kind regards,

Centre for Advancing Practice

Appendix B: Summary timeline for appeals

Working days after receipt of the appeal	Action
Day 0	Receipt of the appeal and any additional evidence by the Head of The Centre for Advancing Practice via the england.advancedpractice@nhs.net email address.
+5 days	The Head of the Centre (or delegate) will acknowledge receipt of the appeal via email and convene the appeal panel.
+10 days	The relevant lead (or delegate) of the recognition process being appealed against produces a report outlining the details of the application, including timelines and submits to the appeal panel. For appeals against digital badge removals the Head of the Centre for Advancing Practice (or delegate) will review the matter and provide a report outlining the details of the process of removing the badge and submits to the appeal panel.
+15 days	The appeal panel is convened and considers the documentation provided. The panel determines whether there are grounds for appeal and any actions to be taken.
+20 days	The panel decision is notified to the appellant, the Programme Management Group (PMG), and the Education and Training Senior Leadership Team (SLT). A record of the outcome is kept on file.

Appendix C: Summary timeline for complaints

Working days after receipt of a complaint	Action
Day 0	Receipt of the complaint via england.advancedpractice@nhs.net .
+5 days	The Head of the Centre (or delegate) acknowledges receipt of the complaint via email. The Head of the Centre (or delegate) identifies a member of senior Centre staff to investigate the matter.
+10 days	The member of staff reviews the matter and prepares a short report outlining the issues and any recommended actions to be taken and sends to the Head of the Centre.
+20 days	The response is approved by the Head of Centre for Advancing Practice (or delegate), the Deputy Director of Allied Health Professionals (or delegate), the Strategic Lead for Education Reform (or delegate), and either the Head of Education Reform or Deputy Director of Education Reform (or delegate). After approval, it is sent to the NHS Customer Contact Centre, to be formatted, authorised by the relevant national director, and sent to the complainant, outlining any action to be taken and the timescales involved. The outcome is notified to the Programme Management Group (PMG) and is kept on file.

Appendix D: Glossary

‘Appeal’ means a written request to review the outcome of a recognition route specified in this procedure, based on alleged procedural irregularity and/or administrative error during the submission, assessment, or ratification of the application.

‘Appellant’ means the individual, or the individual submitting an appeal on behalf of an organisation, who makes a written appeal under this policy.

‘Applicant’ means an individual or organisation who has gone or is going through a recognition process specified in this procedure.

‘Centre’ means The Centre for Advancing Practice.

‘Clinical’ means a healthcare registrant member of the Centre for Advancing Practice team.

‘Clinically related’ means a complaint or correspondence received by the Centre for Advancing Practice related to the clinical care and/or the conduct of a healthcare professional.

‘Complaint’ means an expression of dissatisfaction by an individual practitioner the Centre’s action or lack of action, about the standard of service provided in relation to the recognition routes listed at the start of the document.

‘Complainant’ means a person raising a complaint about the Centre’s processes.

‘Customer Contact Centre’ means the section of NHS England which processes complaints.

‘Delegate’ means a person formally authorised by the Head of the Centre for Advancing Practice to act on their behalf for a specified task or decision under this policy, within any defined limits of that delegation. Where the policy refers to a “registrant delegate”, this means a suitably qualified healthcare professional on a statutory register.

‘Digital badge’ refers to the Centre’s online verification offered to graduates of Centre-accredited MSc advanced practice programmes, completers of the ePortfolio (supported) Route, or completers of any equivalent Centre-recognised route.

‘Education Assurance Group’ means a Group established to oversee the Centre’s recognition processes as set out in its Terms of Reference.

‘Lead of the process’ means the person responsible for the delivery of one of the Centre’s recognition processes (e.g. programme accreditation).

‘Individual making an appeal’ means a person making an appeal, including appeals made on behalf of an organisation (e.g. an education provider).

‘Panel’ means three or more individuals requested to convene to review the appeal or complaint and the supporting evidence.

‘Patient and public voice representative’ means a person who is a member of NHS England’s People’s Advisory Forum.

‘Programme Management Group’ is the decision-making and oversight group of the NHS England advanced practice programme.

‘Senior Leadership Team’ is the senior leaders group of the Education and Training sub-Directorate of the NHS England ‘People’ Directorate.

‘Supplier’ means an education provider or other supplier contracted to deliver the ePortfolio (supported) route.

Version history	Changes
Version 1 / 2021	Original drafting of policy in Health Education England.
Version 2 / 12 April 2022	Inclusion of First Contact Practitioner taught route modules and corrections related to the evolving direction of the Centre.
Version 3 / 6 September 2022	Additional First Contact Practitioner route details and Programme Management Group approval
Version 4 / 5 August 2026 (Approved PMG 11 th August 2026)	Reformatting of the policy in NHS England template version. Updating of terminology - ‘credentials’ to ‘area specific capabilities’, and ‘NHS England’ replacing ‘Health Education England’. Alignment of the complaints section of the policy with the NHS England national complaints policy and processes. Revisions to policy following reviews for internal and external legal advice. Internal legal advice - reviewed and amended wording throughout the policy to improve clarity, consistency and procedural accuracy. Key changes included standardising references to procedural irregularity and/or administrative error, refining wording on complaints and appeals, clarifying information required when submitting an appeal or complaint, strengthening wording on complaint timescales and late submissions, and making minor grammatical and style corrections across the document. Also subsequent consideration of the additional inclusion of Appendix A for the management of clinically related complaints.

	External legal advice - for specific review of processes related to the removal of digital badges from individual applicants and inclusion of information related to that enacting that removal process. 'Delegate' actions integrated for all role functions. Glossary of terms updated - Appellant, Clinical, Clinically related, Delegate, Digital badge, PMG, SLT.
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