

DEEP FOUNDATIONS INSTITUTE

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



Policy and Procedure # D10

APPROVED: 11/14/2022

Journal Complaints Policy and Procedure

A. Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear statement of intent with regards to the process, assessment, handling, and investigation of complaints pertaining to any matter involving the DFI Journal.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all complaints are handled in a consistent and regulated manner, and that further complaint incidents are mitigated and where possible, prevented. When a person has cause to complain, the complaints handling procedure will be followed in every instance and include creating a record with the complaint nature and details, to help improve DFI's services and reduce the occurrence of similar complaints.

B. Purpose

DFI' Journal is committed to delivering a fair, open and clear process for complaints and ensuring a satisfactory outcome for all complainants. We provide thorough staff training in our internal complaint handling procedures and support our staff in how to handle complaints.

This policy sets out our intent and objectives for how we handle complaints, to identify the cause(s), issue(s) and corrective action(s) regarding the complaint, and to implement measures to prevent reoccurrences where applicable.

C. Scope

The policy relates to all staff (meaning permanent, fixed term, and temporary staff, any third-party representatives or sub-contractors, agency workers, volunteers, interns and agents engaged with DFI's Journal) within the organization and has been created to ensure that staff deal with the area that this policy relates to in accordance with legal, regulatory, contractual and business expectations and requirements.

D. Responsibilities

DFI's Journal will ensure that all relevant staff are provided with the time, resources and support to learn, understand and deal with complaints, and that full training will be provided for new and existing employees on the complaint handling policy, procedures and expectations.

A Complaints Officer will be appointed the role of overseeing, investigating and recording all complaints, and be responsible for regular auditing of the complaints log to ensure mitigating actions and improvements are put into place where possible.

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1. The Complaints Officer

DFI's Journal has an appointed Complaints Officer who is provided with the training and support to understand, investigate and respond to complaints of all types. Where the complaint involves personal data, the Complaints Officer is assisted by the Editorial Board to ensure that the Regulation and laws are followed, and the individuals' rights are exercised and complied with.

The Complaints Officer can complete their complaint handling duties independently and without bias and each complaint is reviewed to ensure that there is no conflict of interest with the appointed officer. If a conflict is identified (i.e., the complaint involves the investigating person) a deputy has been trained to handle the complaint.

The Complaints Officer has full authority and internal credibility to ask questions, carry out investigations and interviews, obtain and analyse evidence, recommend policy and process changes and be involved in department functions for the purposes of complaint handling.

E. Objectives

DFI Journal's objectives are laid out below regarding complaint handling. For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is defined as any written contact whereby a negative communication or outcome has occurred. The complainant does not have to formally address their communication as an official complaint or to request a response for THE DFI JOURNAL to treat the incident as a complaint and to follow the related procedures.

DFI Journal's objectives for internal complaint handling are:

1. To provide a fair complaints procedure that is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
2. To ensure that our complaints procedure is fully accessible so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
3. To make sure everyone at DFI knows what to do if a complaint is received.
4. To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
5. To gather information that helps us to improve what we do and how we do it.
6. To ensure that the Journal Ombudsman (or appointed person) is involved in any complaints relating to technical and scientific issues.
7. Complaints and relating information will be handled in a confidential manner.

DFI Journal's objectives for the complaint handling process are:

1. Complaints will be investigated and responded to within 8 weeks from the initial complainant contact.
2. Complaint responses will always be provided in writing.
3. Complaint procedures and submission forms will be available via the DFI's Journal website (dfi-journal.org/complaints).
4. All complaints will be investigated by a trained member of staff and a full outcome summary provided to Senior Management and Chief Editors(s).

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5. Complaint records will be used to revise company procedures and to improve communication and business practices where applicable.

DFI Journal will abide by the following principles when investigating complaints and appeals:

- **Fairness:** we will endeavour to treat all parties involved in a complaint fairly and to avoid bias either in process or outcome. We will avoid conflicts of interest.
- **Confidentiality:** we will only disclose information necessary to resolve a complaint, and in accordance with applicable regulations.
- **Clarity:** we will seek to be clear in all our communication, considering the needs of those we are communicating with.
- **Speed:** we will endeavour to resolve complaints as quickly as possible. It should be noted that some investigations will be complex and take time to resolve equitably.

F. Procedures & Guidelines

1. Raising a Complaint

Complainants who lodge a complaint will be provided a copy of the acceptance notice that outlines the following steps and expectations. Verbal complaints will not be accepted. Verbal complainants will be asked to raise their complaint in writing (via the electronic submission form) as soon as possible after the incident for the complaint to be processed. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted; complainant personal information will be handled confidentially.

2. Data Protection Related Complaints

Where a complaint is related to the processing of personal data, this policy ensures that DFI's Journal complies with required data protection laws and notification requirements. Every individual has the right to lodge a complaint with the applicable supervisory authority where they consider that the processing of personal data relating to them infringes the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) or we have breached data protection law. All individuals using our products or services and those employed by us are notified of this right via our Privacy Policy, and in our complaint handling procedures. The supervisory authority with which the complaint has been lodged, is responsible for informing the complainant on the progress and the outcome of the complaint.

3. Informal Complaint Resolution

DFI' Journal considers and responds to all complaints and issues. Some issues and complaints we can resolve immediately or within a 10-working day timeframe and are referred to as informal complaints. Such instances are where an investigation is not required because the nature of the complaint is clear, and a resolution can be obtained without further review of the facts. Where we resolve a complaint within the timeframe, the details are still logged on our Complaints Register, and the complainant is still informed of their rights.

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DFI's Journal takes every opportunity to resolve complaints at the first initial point of contact where feasible and possible. Informal resolution is always attempted where the issues raised are straightforward and potentially easily resolved, requiring little or no investigation.

Where an informal complaint is received, it is acceptable for the point of contact or delegated employee to attempt to resolve the issue without involving the Journal Ombudsman. However, any issue relating to data protection infringements or breaches, no matter how small or informal, are always brought to the attention of an appointed staff member and Editors in Chief.

Frontline staff are trained to deal with basic issues and informal complaint resolution and are aware of their obligations and the subsequent reporting lines. Such employees are equipped to attempt to resolve a complaint relevant to their area of service or expertise, wherever possible.

4. Responding to a Complaint

When a formal complaint has been received or an informal complaint was unable to be resolved at the initial contact, a written acknowledgement is sent to the complainant within 3 working days. The response should detail the complaint handling procedure and provide approximate timelines and expectations for the investigation and future responses.

5. Investigating the Complaint

A designated employee (the DFI Journal Complaints Officer, as per section G.7) will be assigned the role of investigating complaints and will gather all necessary documents, correspondences, and information to make an independent review of the incident.

If internal interviews are to be conducted, a note taker will be present alongside the investigator and interviewee and a copy of the interview notes will be written up and signed by the interviewer and interviewee prior to them being added to the complaint history.

Every effort will be made to complete all investigations within 4-weeks of the initial complaint being received so that a final response (decision letter) can be sent to the complainant within our designated 8-week period.

Investigations must utilize all the facts and any previous, related information to produce an unbiased outcome and an expected course of action. A complaint Case ID should be assigned and all documents relevant to the complaint should have the Case ID written on them for continuity.

The CASE ID will also be added to the Complaints Register so that complaint and documents can be audited and traced back in the future.

All employees are provided with clear guidelines of when a complaint is formal and requires an appropriate investigation.

Complaints must be referred to the Journal Ombudsman where:

- The complainant has requested a formal referral or investigation.
- The complaint involves any type of personal data issue.
- The informal complaint resolution process failed or was inappropriate.

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- There is a conflict of interest between the complainant and an employee.
- The issues are complex and require an investigation.
- The complaint represents a high or serious risk to the DFI Journal.
- The facts are unclear, or the complaint will require additional time to resolve.
- The complainant is identified as being vulnerable.
- There has been any media contact or attention.
- The issues do or may affect more consumers (whether identified or not).

6. Decision Letter (Final Response)

After the complaint has been investigated in full and an outcome and action decision has been reached, the designated employee or Journal Ombudsman will draft a final response letter to the complainant with their findings and decision regarding any action(s) to be taken.

The final response must be sent within 8 weeks of the initial response being raised and will also specify the complainant's right to refer or lodge the complaint with the appropriate body (where applicable) should the complainant be unhappy with the decision received. For complaints related to personal data and/or breaches of the data protection laws and regulations, the final response will reiterate the complainant's right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority.

G. Complaint Recording

All complaints, whether formal or informal, are recorded on a Complaints Register. The register should consist of the following information and should be audited on a bi-yearly basis to ensure that incidents are not being repeated and improvements are being made.

- Date
- Nature of complaint
- Department(s) involved
- Complaint reference
- Lead investigator
- Investigation outcome
- Decision letter (including the date sent)
- Date complaint was closed

The log is made available to any relevant authority, regulator, or ombudsman or body who relates or oversee the DFI Journal's complaints.

Michael Wysockey, President

J. Erik Loehr, Secretary