

Complaints Policy

Complaints Policy

Contents

Introduction

Purpose

Scope

Definitions

Roles and Responsibilities

Key Principles and Requirements

Reporting Concerns

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Monitoring and Assurance

Related Documents

Review

Version no.	Version Date	Written by	Changes from previous version
1	03/07/2026	Karin Gerber	New Document
2			

Introduction

The British Association of Critical Care Nurses (BACCN) is committed to promoting education, professional development, collaboration and excellence in critical care nursing. BACCN is also committed to fostering a professional community that values dignity, respect, inclusion, integrity and accountability.

BACCN recognises that concerns and complaints may arise in relation to governance, membership, events, communications, publications, awards, finance, representation, conduct, safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion, or other BACCN activity. Complaints provide an opportunity to respond fairly, resolve concerns where possible and improve BACCN practice.

Complaints Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and consistent process for receiving, reviewing, responding to and learning from complaints. The policy supports accountability, fairness, consistency and transparency across BACCN activity.

This policy should be read alongside the wider BACCN policy suite. Where a concern falls primarily under another policy, such as safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion, finance, data protection or conference conduct, that more specific policy will guide the immediate response while remaining consistent with this complaints policy.

Scope

Unless otherwise stated, this policy applies to BACCN members, Board Directors, committee members, volunteers, contractors, consultants, event speakers and representatives, staff where applicable, and partner organisations working with BACCN.

This policy applies to all BACCN activities, including governance, membership, conferences, educational events, publications, communications, elections, recruitment and appointment processes, awards, grants, research awards, recognition programmes, external representation and regional or committee activity.

This policy does not replace urgent safeguarding, emergency, legal, regulatory, employment, professional registration or whistleblowing routes where those routes are required. Where there is an immediate risk to life, safety or welfare, the matter must be escalated to the appropriate emergency or safeguarding route without delay.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction about BACCN activity, action, inaction, conduct, decision-making process, service, communication or standard of behaviour that requires review and response.
Concern	A matter that may not require a formal complaint process but should be reviewed, clarified, resolved or escalated where appropriate.
Complainant	The person raising the complaint or concern. This may include a member, delegate, speaker, volunteer, partner, contractor, Board Director, committee member or member of the public affected by BACCN activity.

Complaints Policy

Respondent	The person, group or area of BACCN activity that the complaint relates to.
Complaint handler	The person or group assigned to coordinate the complaint process, gather relevant information and communicate with those involved.
Review	A further consideration of how a complaint was handled, usually where the complainant believes the process or outcome was not fair or complete.
Serious concern	A concern involving immediate risk, safeguarding, financial irregularity, discrimination, harassment, significant governance issues, data protection concern, potential breach of law or serious reputational risk.
Board of Directors	The BACCN Board of Directors, being the governing body of BACCN and the body described as the National Board within the Articles of Association.
Board	The BACCN Board of Directors.
Board Director	An individual appointed or elected to the BACCN Board of Directors.

Roles and Responsibilities

The BACCN Board of Directors holds overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented, monitored and reviewed effectively. Operational responsibility may be delegated to a designated lead, committee, working group or complaint handler; however, ultimate accountability for compliance and assurance remains with the Board.

Role or group	Responsibilities
Board of Directors	Maintains oversight of the complaints process, receives assurance on themes and learning, and ensures that complaints inform improvement where appropriate.

Complaints Policy

Chair	May receive or oversee complaints involving Board governance, Board Director conduct, conflict of interest, significant escalation, or complaints where no other route is appropriate.
Designated policy lead or complaint handler	Coordinates the complaint process, acknowledges receipt, gathers relevant information, keeps appropriate records and communicates outcomes.
Board Directors and committee members	Act in line with the policy, raise concerns promptly, cooperate with complaint reviews and maintain confidentiality.
Event, conference or programme leads	Respond to complaints or concerns arising from events, speakers, delegates, conference conduct, programme delivery or event accessibility.
Safeguarding, EDI, finance, environmental sustainability or data protection leads	Advise or lead the response where a complaint relates to their area of responsibility.
Complainants and respondents	Engage with the process respectfully, provide relevant information and maintain confidentiality while the matter is being reviewed.

Key Principles and Requirements

Principles

- Complaints will be taken seriously and handled fairly, consistently and proportionately.
- BACCN will seek early resolutions where possible, provided this is appropriate to the nature and seriousness of the concern.
- The process will be accessible and inclusive, with reasonable adjustments considered where needed.
- Those involved will be treated with dignity and respect.
- Information will be handled sensitively and shared only with those who need it to review, manage or resolve the matter.
- Complaints will be used to support learning and improvement across BACCN activity.

Complaints Policy

- BACCN will not tolerate victimisation or retaliation against a person who raises concern in good faith.

Types of complaint covered by this policy

- Behaviour, conduct, communication or professional standards within BACCN activity.
- Conference, event, speaker, delegate, chairing, programme or accessibility concerns.
- Concerns about fairness, inclusion, discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation.
- Safeguarding, health and safety or welfare concerns, where these are not already being handled through an urgent safeguarding route.
- Financial governance, expenditure, procurement, grants, awards, conflicts of interest or use of BACCN resources.
- Environmental sustainability concerns are linked to BACCN activity or decision-making.
- Data protection, confidentiality, record keeping or information handling concerns.
- Concerns about external representation, working parties, use of the BACCN name, or Board-approved collaborative work.

Complaint stages

Stage	Process
Stage 1: Early resolution	Where appropriate, the concern should be raised with the relevant BACCN lead, event lead, committee lead, Board Director or designated contact. The aim is to clarify the issue, resolve misunderstandings and agree an appropriate response where this can be done safely and fairly.
Stage 2: Formal complaint	Where early resolution is not appropriate or has not resolved the concern, the complaint should be submitted in writing. The complaint should include the nature of the concern, relevant dates, people or activity involved, any supporting information, and the outcome sought.
Stage 3: Review	If the complainant remains dissatisfied with how the complaint was handled, they may request a review. The review should focus on whether the process was fair, whether relevant information was considered, and

	whether the outcome was reasonable.
Stage 4: External escalation	Where the internal process has been completed, or where a serious concern falls outside BACCN's ability to resolve internally, the complainant may be signposted to the relevant external regulator, professional body, emergency service or legal route.

Complaint handling expectations

- Complaints should be acknowledged promptly.
- A complaint handler should confirm the scope of the complaint and the process to be followed.
- Where the issue is complex or involves more than one policy area, the complaint handler should agree the lead, route and involve relevant policy leads as needed.
- Those directly involved should be given a fair opportunity to provide relevant information.
- A written outcome should be provided where the complaint has been handled formally.
- The outcome should describe the issue considered, the findings, any actions agreed, any learning identified and any next stage available.
- Where it is not possible to share full details because of confidentiality, safeguarding, legal or data protection reasons, BACCN will explain this as clearly as possible.

Complaints involving Board Directors or the Chair

Complaints involving a Board Director should normally be referred to the Chair or another appropriate Board Director where the Chair has a conflict of interest. Complaints involving the Chair should be referred to another suitable Board Director or a small group of Board Directors who are not directly involved in the matter.

Where a complaint involves a conflict of interest, the person with the conflict must not lead decision-making on the complaint. They may provide information where relevant but should not be involved in deciding the outcome.

Urgent or serious concerns

- Safeguarding, immediate safety or welfare concerns must be escalated through the relevant safeguarding or emergency route without delay.
- Suspected financial irregularity, fraud, misuse of funds or serious governance concern must be escalated to the

Finance Lead, Chair or Board as appropriate.

- Potential data breaches or confidentiality concerns must be escalated through the relevant data protection route.
- Concerns about discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation must be handled in line with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Code of Conduct, Health and Safeguarding Policy where applicable.
- A complaint may be paused, redirected or managed differently where police, legal, safeguarding, regulatory or professional processes are underway.

Unreasonable, abusive or vexatious behaviour

BACCN will seek to respond to all complaints fairly. However, BACCN may need to manage behaviour that is abusive, threatening, discriminatory, repetitive without new information, or unreasonable in its demands. Any decision to limit contact, change the route of complaint or close a complaint for these reasons should be proportionate, documented and, where appropriate, reviewed by a Board Director not directly involved in the matter.

Reporting Concerns

Anyone who experiences, witnesses, or becomes aware of behaviour or activity that may breach this policy is encouraged to report their concerns promptly. Concerns may be raised through the relevant BACCN reporting route, including the BACCN Chair, a Board Director, the designated policy lead, an event lead where applicable, or the formal complaints process.

Concern type	Likely route
Conduct, bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation	Chair, Board Director, designated policy lead, event lead or formal complaints process.
Safeguarding, health and safety or immediate risk	Event lead, Safeguarding Team, Health and Safety and Safeguarding Lead, emergency services where required.
Conference, speaker, chairing or delegate conduct	Conference Lead, event lead, EDI lead, safeguarding route or complaints process as appropriate.
Financial control, expenditure, procurement or suspected misuse of funds	Finance Lead and Chair, with Board escalation where required.
Grant, research award or funding decision concern	Research and Academic Advisor, Finance Lead, relevant review route or complaints process.
Environmental sustainability concern	Environmental Sustainability Lead, relevant committee or

Complaints Policy

	Board route.
Data protection or confidentiality concern	Designated policy lead or data protection reporting route.
External representation or working party concern	Professional Advisors, Secretary, Chair or Board-approved representative route.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

BACCN will handle complaints, reports and concerns sensitively, fairly and confidentially. Information will only be shared with those who need it to investigate, manage, decide or resolve the matter appropriately.

All information and records will be managed in accordance with UK GDPR, applicable legislation and BACCN data protection requirements. Complaint records should be accurate, proportionate and retained securely in line with applicable retention requirements.

BACCN may need to share information where required for safeguarding, legal, regulatory, insurance, financial, governance or risk management reasons. Where possible and appropriate, BACCN will explain why information needs to be shared.

Monitoring and Assurance

The Board will seek assurance that complaints are managed appropriately and that learning is used to improve BACCN activity. Monitoring should be proportionate and should protect confidentiality.

- Themes and learning from complaints should be reviewed periodically by the Board or delegated group.
- Complaint outcomes should inform policy review, training, event planning, communication, accessibility, inclusion, financial controls, safeguarding arrangements and governance practice where relevant.
- Serious concerns should be escalated promptly to the Board or relevant lead.
- The complaints process should be reviewed where complaint handling identifies gaps, delay, inconsistency or avoidable barriers.

Related Documents

This policy forms part of the BACCN policy suite and should be read in conjunction with other relevant BACCN policies and procedures, including the Articles of Association, Memorandum of Association, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Code of Conduct, Health and Safety and Safeguarding Policy, Conference Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy, EDI Policy for Speakers, Environmental and Sustainability Policy, Finance Policy, Expenses Policy, Data Protection Policy and any associated operational procedures.

Complaints Policy

Where policies overlap, the more specific policy will apply to the immediate situation whilst remaining consistent with overarching BACCN principles and governance arrangements.

Review

This policy will be reviewed by the BACCN Board at least every three years, or sooner where there are changes in legislation, regulatory requirements, organisational arrangements, national guidance, monitoring findings, complaints, incidents, member feedback or other information indicating that revision is required.