

# **Society of Antiquaries of London**

## **Complaints Procedure**

**(March 2021)**

### **Introduction**

We are committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone we deal with, so we need you to give us any comments about our service, and to tell us when we get things wrong. We want to help you resolve any complaint as quickly as possible.

We treat as a complaint any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response. We listen to your complaints, treat them seriously, and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our service.

Our policy covers complaints about:

- the standard of service we provide
- the behaviour of our staff
- maladministration
- any action or lack of action by staff affecting an individual, group or organisation.

Our complaints policy does not cover:

- anonymous complaints
- complaints about the conduct of Fellows of the Society (these are handled through a different process – see [How we are run - Society of Antiquaries of London \(sal.org.uk\)](https://www.sal.org.uk) for our Ethical Conduct Body Terms of Reference).

Complaints may be submitted by letter or email.

### **Our standards for complaints handling**

We treat all complaints seriously.

- You will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times - we would expect, too, that you will be courteous and fair in your dealings with our staff at all times.
- We will deal with your complaint promptly - we will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within 5 working days and we will send you a full reply within 20 working days of receipt.
- If we cannot send a full reply within 20 working days of receipt, we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full.
- Complaints will be dealt with confidentially and, in accordance with requirements of the Data Protection Act, we ask you also to treat the matter confidentially during this procedure.
- We will publish information in our annual report on the numbers and categories of complaints we receive, and the percentage of complaints upheld.

### **The stages of the complaints procedure**

We have a 2-stage complaints procedure. At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including any documents and correspondence as well as the grounds for your dissatisfaction.

#### **Stage 1**

This is the Society's first opportunity to respond to a complainant's dissatisfaction, and we aim to resolve the majority of complaints at this stage. In the first instance, we will try to get your complaint resolved by the member of staff or team against whom the complaint has been made.

## Stage 2

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you may request a review by the Chief Executive.

At each stage, please send your complaint to Mr John Lewis FSA (letter) or [jlewis@sal.org.uk](mailto:jlewis@sal.org.uk) (email). You should state clearly the reasons why you are not satisfied with the resolution at stage 1.

### **Timescales for handling a complaint**

Stages 1 and 2 - maximum 20 working days each

- acknowledgement within 5 working days
- full response within 20 working days.

We aim to complete all complaints within the timescales above. However, if a complaint is very complex it may occasionally be necessary to extend the time limit. If this is the case, we will keep the complainant informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay and the new deadline.

Following Stage 1 of the procedure, a complainant has a maximum of 14 working days from the date of the final response to request that their complaint be progressed to Stage 2.

### **If you remain dissatisfied**

If, having followed the 2 stages of our complaints procedure, you still remain dissatisfied, you can ask to have your complaint reviewed by two of the Society's Trustees who will respond within 14 working days.

You should contact the Treasurer in the first instance on [treasurer@sal.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@sal.org.uk)

This is the final stage of the procedure.

### **Remedies**

When we get things wrong, we will act to:

- accept responsibility
- explain what went wrong and why
- put things right by making any changes required.

The general principle we follow is that a complainant should, as far as possible, be put in the position he or she would have been in had things not gone wrong.

The remedy chosen needs to be proportionate and appropriate to the failure in service, and to take into account what people are looking for when they complain.

Appropriate remedies may be:

- a sincere and meaningful apology, explaining what happened and what went wrong.
- reviewing or changing a decision on the service given to an individual complainant.
- putting things right (for example, changing procedures to prevent future difficulties of a similar kind, either for the complainant or others).
- additional training of staff.

In the event that the Society decides to take formal action against a staff member as a result of a complaint, this matter will remain between the staff member and the Society. The complainant will not be informed of any such action, as this is a confidential employment matter.