

The IB complaints and whistleblowing procedure

This procedure has been created to assist all of the International Baccalaureate's ("IB") external stakeholders with the resolution of complaints related to certain IB services.

The IB is committed to providing an excellent quality of service. We value your views and feedback we receive and aim to make continuous improvements to this mission.

The IB Answers service (ibid@ibo.org, ibanswers.ibo.org) is a dedicated hotline to answer your queries.

If you have a query, please contact IB Answers so that wherever possible we can answer any queries before they become complaints.

To enable the IB to handle your complaints effectively we ask that you follow the procedure defined below.

Principles of the procedure

To ensure the complaints process is effective, the following principles are applied throughout the complaints process and provide a framework for communication between stakeholders and IB staff.

Fairness – we aim to have a fair complaints procedure that ensures everyone is treated equally.

Courtesy – all communication in relation to this procedure should be based on mutual respect, trust and courtesy.

Accessibility – we aim to have a complaints procedure that is easy to understand, easy to access and well publicized.

Timeliness – we aim to ensure that all complaints are dealt with in a timely manner.

Effectiveness – the complaints procedure is monitored and reviewed to ensure it continues to be effective.

Attentiveness – you will be given every opportunity to put forward your complaint and you can be assured that we are listening. We will update you on the process and status of your complaint as appropriate.

Scope of the procedure

What this procedure covers

Anyone who has directly accessed our programmes or services (such as workshops, products sold on the IB store or IB Educator Certificates) can make a complaint to the IB which, in most cases, will result in a formal response.

Anyone who has directly accessed our programmes or services (such as workshops, products sold on the IB store or IB Educator Certificates) and has concerns about improper practices occurring within an IB World School should refer to the whistleblowing section of this procedure for further information

In order to maximize the chances of a quick resolution, we ask that you submit your complaint within a period of 3 months following the incident. The IB is committed to handle it sensitively and efficiently in line with the principles of our procedure as listed above.

What this procedure does not cover

Please be aware that there are some matters that cannot be dealt with under this procedure because the IB has no legal right to do so or because there already is a separate procedure in place. The matters that cannot be dealt with are:

- *Complaints regarding decisions made by an IB World School*

IB World Schools are entirely independent from the IB and are solely responsible for the implementation and quality of teaching of the programmes. The IB has no jurisdiction over decisions made by the IB World Schools, as set forth in the General Regulations

As a result, the IB does not resolve complaints by students, their legal guardians or teachers regarding decisions which fall within the remit of the IB World Schools. If you wish to make a complaint regarding such decisions you will need to contact the IB World School and, where they exist, you should follow the internal complaints procedures set out by the relevant IB World School.

Although we cannot treat such matters as a complaint under this policy, where matters regarding the implementation of IB programmes by an IB World School are brought to the attention of IB Answers they will be passed onto the appropriate regional school services team for their information. When appropriate, matters may be raised or passed onto the school in question.

- *Requests for the re-marking of Diploma Programme work; appeals against examination results or other decisions of the Final Awards Committee*

There is a separate procedure to deal with re-marking of Diploma Programme work and requests for reconsideration or appeals against decisions of the Final Award Committee. All requests for the re-marking of work or appeals against examination results or other decisions of the Final Awards Committee must follow the procedures outlined in the handbooks of procedures for coordinators and the General Regulations. Requests for remarking must be initiated by the IB DP Coordinator, who also registers candidates for retakes and will assist with any assessment issues. Candidates or their legal guardians should contact the IB Coordinator in their school.

- *Other areas that are covered by separate policy and/or procedures*

Making a complaint

Prior to making a complaint

Before submitting a complaint under this procedure you need to determine if your issue relates to a matter that can be dealt with through this process¹.

¹ Complaints submitted which concern matters that cannot be dealt with via this procedure will not be treated as a complaint. The IB Answers team will respond and try to direct your enquiry on to the correct person or process for your matter.

1. In the first instance you should check in the section above to see if your issue is a matter that the IB can help resolve and what is the most appropriate channel for you to use to address your issue.
2. If your issue relates to a decision of the Final Award Committee or the marking of examination work you must follow the procedures found in the *General regulations: Diploma Programme* (<http://www.ibo.org/become/resources/>) or contact your DP coordinator, as appropriate.
3. If you have an issue that relates to an IB service or department that you are already in contact with we encourage that, where possible, you initially try to resolve the situation informally before submitting a formal complaint under this procedure. Attempting to resolve the situation informally does not prevent you from making a formal complaint at a later stage if necessary.

Submitting a formal complaint

If it has not been possible to resolve your issue informally or you wish to submit a formal complaint, the following procedure outlines how to submit your complaint to the IB:

Initial submission of a formal complaint²

IB Answers is the dedicated assistance service provided by the IB to answer all queries and, as the case may be, deal with complaints. IB Answers staff is trained to process complaints efficiently. They will ensure that your complaint is passed on to the person best able to deal with the matter and will track the progress of your complaint.

When you contact IB Answers to lodge your complaint, it is important that you make clear whether you are requiring assistance with an enquiry or if you wish to submit a complaint as a confusion as to the real nature of your issue may delay its resolution.

In order to ensure your complaint is quickly identified and dealt with your complaint should be submitted to the email address complaints@ibo.org³.

Please provide as much information as possible about the nature of your complaint and the IB World School, departments or services involved. Specifically you must supply us with the following:

- Your name, a contact address and telephone number or email address to allow the IB to contact you with regards to the complaint.
- If you are an IB student (or legal guardian of an IB student), the name and code of the IB World School which you attend or have attended.
- If you are an IB Educator, your personal code and your role(s).
- The IB World School, service, process, department or decision your complaint relates to.
- The details of your complaint including any previous attempts to resolve the matter and copies of all relevant documentation (where available).

IB Answers will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three business days and will forward your complaint to the appropriate head of department, director or chief officer.

The head of department, director or chief officer will oversee an investigation of the matter and you may be contacted for further information if this is necessary. The head, director or chief officer will aim to respond to

² Please note that complaints that are not submitted in accordance with this process will not be processed.

³ Please note that the IB cannot accept formal complaints via telephone.

you through IB Answers with his or her conclusions within 15 business days of receipt of the complaint from IB Answers. Where more time is required you will be notified, with an estimate of the timeline for receiving a final response.

The IB reserves the right to cease corresponding with a complainant if their correspondence is, in our reasonable opinion, frivolous, vexatious or abusive.

Appeal against the response of the head of department, director or chief officer

If you remain dissatisfied with the response you receive you may appeal to the Director General of the IB.

The appeal to the Director General should be made within 15 business days of you receiving a final response from the head, director or chief officer. Please provide full details of the reasons for the appeal and any relevant information including all correspondence with the IB in relation to the complaint and the response you have received from the head, director or chief officer.

Your appeal should be clearly marked as “an appeal against the response received in relation to a complaint”, be addressed to the Director General and emailed to: director.general@ibo.org

Please note that you will not receive a response if you have not first submitted your complaint through IB Answers and received a reply from a head of department, director or chief officer and as with the submission of complaints, receipt of your application will be acknowledged within 3 business days.

The Director General will aim to communicate to you the outcome of his/her review within 30 business days of receiving your application. Where more time is required, you will be contacted without delay and provided with an update on progress of the review, and an estimate of when you will receive a final response.

Whistleblowing

This section is for anyone who has directly accessed our programmes or services (such as workshops, products sold on the IB store or IB Educator Certificates) and has concerns about improper practices occurring within an IB World School (in this section further referred to as “whistleblower”). Improper practices can include, but are not limited to, academic misconduct relating to examinations and assessment, financial misconduct, dangerous or illegal activities.

Prior to submitting a report to the IB

Depending on the nature of the allegation, discussing your concerns with the IB World School administration may be the most appropriate course of action. If you remain concerned by the response provided by the IB World School, if you don't feel able to raise a concern, or you feel that the most appropriate course of action is to bring the allegation to the attention of the IB, a report should be submitted in writing to complaints@ibo.org

What happens after submitting a whistleblowing report to the IB?

The IB will acknowledge receipt of the allegation and forward it to the relevant department for further investigation. If necessary, the IB will contact the stakeholder to request additional information that may be required for the investigation. Please note that for privacy reasons, the IB will not provide the whistleblower with information relating to the steps taken by the IB or any outcomes resulting from the allegation and subsequent investigations.

As much as possible, the IB will treat any information provided in a sensitive and confidential way. The identity of the whistleblower will be kept confidential if so requested, however, the IB may disclose this information if required by law.

What happens if the stakeholder wishes to submit a report to the Ombudsman?

The stakeholder still has the option to bring an allegation to the attention of the Ombudsman; however discussions with the IB Ombudsman do not constitute notice to the IB and do not guarantee any further action by the IB as detailed in the section below.

Office of the Ombudsman as an alternative, informal option

The IB Office of the Ombudsman is an independent, informal, impartial and confidential resource observing the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice under the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). The Office is accessible to those with an IB-related concern, such as one related to an IB decision, process, policy or practice.

The IB Ombudsman is an alternative and independent channel that offers an informal and confidential method of dealing with your complaint or concern, however the IB Ombudsman is not able to change a decision made by the IB under the formal complaints procedure.

The Ombudsman is an off-the-record and impartial resource that listens, helps to evaluate and assess the matter, and may work with the individual or group to help generate options for addressing an issue. As an alternative channel, s/he may act as a third party to facilitate or mediate a resolution if appropriate. The Ombudsman may also help identify relevant procedures, policies or information, and may accept or give referrals to other resources at the IB, including guidance on the IB formal Complaints Procedure. The Ombudsman considers multiple perspectives and tries to help interested parties reach an understanding that would work for all concerned. S/he does not advocate for a person, entity or a position. Feedback about the IB is always welcome through the Ombudsman channel, and the Ombudsman will forward such feedback to the appropriate IB area(s).

It is important to note that the Ombudsman is a voluntary place of contact, supplements the IB's complaint procedure, but is independent of that procedure and other formal processes.

Identifying records are not maintained by the Office, and confidentiality is strictly observed by the Ombudsman (except in the case of an imminent risk of serious harm). As an independent, informal, confidential and impartial resource, the Ombudsman does not serve as a place of notice to the IB or act as its agent, and cannot take sides on a matter or participate in formal processes on behalf of the IB or anyone who contacts the Office. The IB Ombudsman works within the scope of the IB's reach as an organization, and it is important to understand that s/he cannot interfere in a school's internal operations or governance. Those seeking to use the Office as a resource are expected to respect the Ombudsman's function under the IOA Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, which may not be waived.

For more information on the IB Office of the Ombudsman, please visit <http://www.ibo.org/en/contact-the-ib/complaints-and-compliments/ib-office-of-the-ombudsman/about-the-ib-ombudsman/>. The Ombudsman's confidential message centre can be reached at +1 301 202 3018, where name, contact phone, time zone and availability should be provided.