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# Policy on Complaints

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## Purpose of this document

This document sets out the way that Catalyse CAT Ltd (trading as Catalyse) will respond to, investigate and resolve complaints from any of our clients about our conduct or our services. The term 'Client' includes anyone to whom we provide a service; recipients of personal reformulations, practitioner course trainees, CPD day attendees, those commissioning projects; those streaming our films.

Complaints arising from any of the workstreams can be considered by Catalyse but Catalyse does not have the authority to make judgments about clinical practice and other matters amounting to professional misconduct should be redirected to the appropriate professional body of the Associate.

## Definition of a complaint

We use the NHS definition, that a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an act, omission or decision, either verbal or written, and, whether justified or not, which requires a response.

We actively seek and welcome all feedback, positive or negative, about our services and our conduct, and not all negative feedback (e.g. uncomfortable chairs at a teaching day) would require a response or for this complaints procedure to be followed. If it is not clear, we will check with the person giving feedback whether they wish to make a formal complaint.

## Resolutions of Complaints and Sanctions

Catalyse has four options for resolution of complaints.

The first option is through a decision that the matter falls outside Catalyse's remit with explicit advice as to where remedy can be sought

The second option allows an agreed outcome within a workstream in the form of an acknowledgment, apology or agreed actions to resolve the complaint. The complainant has the right to request that the complaint is escalated to Executive and Board level.

The third option is escalation to Executive level where it has not been possible to resolve the matter to mutual satisfaction within the workstream.

Finally, the complaint can be heard at Board level (whether directly or through appeal) and the Board has the additional sanctions of a) an apology on behalf of the Organisation (along with appropriate offer of remedy where appropriate) or exceptionally by recommending the removal of

the Associate from Catalyse. The Associate then has the right of appeal against that decision which would be heard by a separate panel constituted from the Board members, with the option of additional legal advice on fairness of process at the discretion of the Board.

### **Statement of intent**

We understand that if a client makes a complaint, it is a signal that something has gone wrong and we welcome this feedback. We want to provide a very high quality service and all feedback is helpful for us to learn how to improve what we do. We also want to preserve our good reputation, and we aim to respond to any complaints promptly, transparently, empathically. Our clients have no reason to understand the complex nature of our organisation, where there are several levels of accountability, in terms of the Associates, work streams, executive and board. At every level of response, the aim is to help the aggrieved person resolve their difficulty in a way that satisfies them and is also fair and just.

Part of the process of dealing with complaints is for the organisation to learn from them, and rectify problems. The Board will receive an annual Assurance Report covering complaints received, to evidence that any lessons learned have been actioned and monitored.

### **Associates' accountability**

Every Associate is a fully qualified professional, who has agreed to practise in line with the ethical codes of their core profession and of ACAT. Each Associate is accountable for their own practice standards. If an individual Associate receives a complaint concerning any Catalyse role, they should try to resolve it but must also make it clear to their client that if they are not satisfied their complaint will be passed on to Catalyse. Associates should also make it clear to clients their right to lodge a formal complaint with the Associate's professional body. However, if the relationship between the Associate and the client has broken down, it is likely that the client will not complain directly to the Associate but will contact Catalyse directly.

If any safeguarding issue arises out of the investigation the matter would be discussed with the relevant local safeguarding lead within the appropriate local authority or, where relevant, NHS Trust.

### **Workstream accountability**

There are five workstreams: Practitioner Course, Personal Reformulations, CPD, Other training, and Projects (includes Research & Evaluation). It is possible that the workstream lead is first made aware of a complaint about an Associate. The workstream lead must inform the Catalyse Board, including directly to the Chair of the Board that a complaint has been received. If a client contacts the Catalyse Chair or any Executive group member, it will be first referred to the workstream lead to investigate and resolve. If the issue is not resolved within the workstream, the Executive group will then convene a more formal investigation.

Each workstream has contributors who are not Catalyse Associates, for example PR therapists and trainers in CPD and Projects workstreams who are contributors to the work of Catalyse. If a complaint is lodged about any of these, it is the responsibility of the workstream lead with the Executive to take responsibility for investigating the complaint. The Practitioner Course is a special case in that a number of people who are not Catalyse Associates provide services to support the course, as supervisors, trainers, seminar group leaders etc. If a complaint is lodged about any of

these, it is the responsibility of the course lead with the Trainers' Group to take responsibility for investigating the complaint. In each case the investigators will ask the individual to take appropriate action, and check that the matter has been resolved.

Exceptionally, the decision may be that the individual should not be used again by Catalyse as a result of the complaint and in that case the individual will be informed about the decision and why it was made.

The individual then has the right of appeal against that decision which would be heard by a separate panel constituted from the Board members, with the option of additional legal advice on fairness of process at the discretion of the Board.

### Executive accountability

The Executive group will inform the Catalyse Board that a complaint has been received. In the case of a complaint about an Associate, the Executive will convene a panel of three members who are independent of the workstream and the Associate involved. The panel will take evidence from the complainant and the Associate and will attempt to resolve the complaint, giving a written response; this will be communicated to the Complainant, the Associate and the Board. If the panel feels there is an issue of *malpractice* or *unethical behaviour*, this must immediately proceed to the Board for a second stage hearing and a final decision. The second stage will also be invoked if the complainant or the Associate appeals against the Executive decision.

If the complaint is about the Executive Group as a whole, the second stage is immediately actioned by the Chair of the Board.

### Board accountability

The Board will have full oversight of each stage of the complaint procedure and will consider cases referred from the Executive group or through appeal. A panel of three non-Executive members will investigate the complaint in a stage 2 hearing, and make a recommendation to the Board. If it is not possible to find three non-Execs to serve on the panel (for example, due to their temporary absence or lack of independence) the Board Chair may appoint an independent, external person to act in this capacity.

The Catalyse Board is the only body constituted in Catalyse to decide on a final response, e.g. whether to remove an Associate, or other individual working with Catalyse, from Catalyse, or to report an Associate or other individual to their professional body or to ACAT.

[This paragraph does not preclude *any* individual reporting serious concerns to a professional body in their own right].

### Conflicts of interest

If a member of the Executive group or the Board is the subject of a complaint, they will be excluded from the management of the complaint and any discussion arising. All Catalyse Associates including Executive or Board members who are asked to investigate a complaint are required to declare any other conflict of interest (e.g. a close personal friendship) and to recuse themselves.

## Appeals

Complaints which are not satisfactorily resolved within a workstream are automatically referred to the Executive Group. A complainant or Associate who is unsatisfied by the Executive's judgement may appeal the decision, which will then go to the Board for the next stage of the process. The Board's decision is final. Complainants are always informed of their right to complain to the Associate's registration body and professional association and nothing in this policy affects that.

## Reporting

Numbers of complaints received and the actions taken will be reported at the Catalyse AGM, together with any lessons learned. All personal details will be anonymised.

## Summary of process

Workstreams inform the Executive of a complaint being processed, and if resolved, report back with no further action. These matters are taken under Reserved Business.

Executive action is only taken when a workstream is unable to resolve the complaint to mutual satisfaction. A formal panel is constituted, and the Board is informed.

The Board gets involved if the Executive panel suggests malpractice or a violation of the ACAT code of ethics, or if an appeal is received. This is known as a Stage 2 Hearing.

The Stage 2 Panel normally has three members and will include Board members not previously involved and will have a non-Executive Chair. The Stage 2 panel is empowered to seek further advice as needed and reasonable costs for seeking legal advice when required should be an accepted charge on Catalyse resources.

Exceptionally, the chair of the appeal is empowered to ask for another experienced therapist from another organisation to take part if the nature of the complaint causes too many Executive and Non-Executive Board members to have to be recused.

All complaints are logged and the organisational learning arising is agreed by the Executive and monitored annually by the Board.

Nothing in this procedure shall be taken to prevent other appropriate forms of legal redress.