



MRS Company Partner Complaints Procedure: A Summary

This guidance note outlines the MRS Company Partner Complaints Procedure. Full details are available from the MRS Standards department

STAGE 1

On receipt of a complaint the MRS Standards department makes an initial investigation and reports to the Chair of the Market Research Standards Board (MRSB) who appoints a sub-committee made up of 3 members of MRSB called the Quality Commitment Investigations Committee (QCIC) to consider the matter.

The QCIC reviews the information provided from the initial enquiries of Standards department and decides upon one of the following:

1. There has been no breach of the Quality Commitment, in which case the procedure progresses to Stage 2(a).
2. There has been a breach of the Quality Commitment, with a recommendation for action to be taken by the MRSB, in which case the procedure progresses to Stage 2(b).
3. The matter relates to a minor, trivial or isolated breach of the Quality Commitment which does not warrant further action or inquiry. If appropriate it may informally advise the MRS Company Partner of the breach and remedial or preventative steps that should be taken.

STAGE 2(a)

The QCIC reports its decision to the MRSB that there has been no breach of the Quality Commitment.

The MRSB shall consider the findings and recommendations of the QCIC. If agreed, the Standards department will,

1. Inform the MRS Company Partner under investigation of the outcome

2. Inform the complainant of the outcome

The complainant may have the decision reviewed, by the Reviewer of Complaints, up to one month after the decision has been made. After this period a review can only take place if in the opinion of the Reviewer of Complaints fresh evidence has emerged to justify such consideration.

If the Reviewer of Complaints finds one of the following, the case is referred back to the QCIC (only in instances where lack of independence has been found would a new QCIC have to be formed):

- Fresh evidence
- Failure of the QCIC to follow procedure
- Lack of independence by a member of the Investigations Committee
- The decision by the Investigations Committee was not reasonably arrived at upon consideration of the evidence

If the QCIC still finds no case to be pursued, and the MRSB supports this decision, the case is then closed. If evidence suggests that there may be a case to be pursued the procedure moves onto stage 2(b).

STAGE 2(b)

If it considers that there has been a breach of the Quality Commitment, the QCIC will recommend appropriate action and present the case to the MRSB. The MRSB shall consider the findings and recommendations of the Investigations Committee.

The MRSB shall then reach one of the following decisions:

1. that the MRS Company Partner has not acted in breach of the MRS Quality Commitment, in which case the Reviewer of Complaints procedure outlined above will apply.
2. that the MRS Company Partner has acted in breach of the MRS Quality Commitment but that no action should be taken,
3. that the MRS Company Partner has acted in breach of the MRS Quality Commitment (which breach is minor, trivial or isolated) and that the MRS Company Partner shall be formally advised of the breach and of the steps it is required to take to remedy the breach and/or other corrective action it is required

to take (which may include issuing an apology in appropriate terms to the complainant),

4. that the MRS Company Partner has acted in breach of the MRS Quality Commitment (which breach is not minor, trivial or isolated), and that :
 - a. the MRS Company Partner shall be formally advised of the breach and of the steps it is required to take to remedy the breach and/or other corrective action it is required to take (which may include issuing an apology in appropriate terms to the complainant), and/ or
 - b. the matter shall be referred to MRS Council to consider whether a formal written notice of breach should be issued to the MRS Company Partner, or
5. that the MRS Company Partner has acted in serious breach of the MRS Quality Commitment and that the matter shall be referred to MRS Council to consider whether the agreement with the MRS Company Partner should be terminated.

The decision shall be published, if appropriate, in such form and manner chosen by the MRSB.