

# Complaints Procedure

## General

Complaints from natural parents must be made through the partners. Natural parents must not communicate directly with SEE unless a contract has been signed which does not involve a partner.

Complaints about a host family must not be accompanied by photographs of a host family unless the photographs were taken either with the host family's permission or when accompanied by a SEE staff member investigating the complaint.

Complaints must not be aired on social media.

## Complaints against SEE

### *Stage 1 - Informal*

In the first instance, all complaints should be made informally, to the national manager (eve@southenglandexchange.org). A record should be kept, in chronological order, of all correspondence, subsequent responses and action taken. SEE will respond to all complaints within 2 full days, although an extension can be agreed with the complainant. The response will give a full explanation of the decision and refer the complainant to the director if they wish to further pursue their complaint.

It is to be hoped that the matter will be resolved satisfactorily between the parties involved at this stage. If appropriate, it can be helpful to call informally upon the services of an impartial arbitrator who has some experience and prior knowledge of the circumstances, which led to the declaration of a grievance.

### *Stage 2 - Formal*

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, then grievances should be directed in writing to the director - The Director, South England Exchange Ltd., 12 Russell Mews, Brighton BN1 2HZ; email: info@southenglandexchange.org; Telephone: +44 7796 997780

As for Stage 1, a record should be kept, in chronological order, of all correspondence, subsequent responses and action taken. The director will respond to the complaint within 2 full days if no extension has been agreed with the complainant. The response will give a full explanation of the decision and refer the complainant to the panel stage if they wish to further pursue their complaint.

Only where steps 1 and 2 do not lead to a solution, can the student speak to the partner. It is desirable that the partner keeps records of any complaints correspondence.

The partner will try to resolve the problem with South England Exchange as set out in the "complaints against BIS" procedure steps 1 and 2 above.

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## *Stage 3 - Panel*

If the grievance cannot be resolved successfully at stage 2, both parties may make formal representations, in writing, to the trustees of AEGIS (The Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students) c/o: Yasemin Wigglesworth - Executive Officer AEGIS; The Wheelhouse Bond's Mill Estate Bristol Road Stonehouse Gloucestershire GL10 3RF. E-mail: info@aegisuk.net Telephone: +44 (0) 1453 821293

A complaints panel comprising three people, one of whom will act as chair, will be appointed by the trustees to hear the grievance. The panel will be made up of independent and impartial arbiters. In those cases where it is deemed necessary, an interpreter may be in attendance. The decision of the panel will be final. AEGIS will keep a written record of the complaint and action taken, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld or not. A written report of the findings, along with any recommendations will be made available to the complainant and, where appropriate, the person who has been complained about.

## *Stage 4*

Should the decision of the complaints panel at stage 3 fail to settle the grievance, the complainant has the right to pursue the grievance through the courts.

## **Complaints against Host Families**

Where a student wishes to complain against a host family, they need to follow these steps:

### *Step 1 – area manager*

The student should speak to a SEE staff member. It is expected that they can solve the problem. If not, they can assist with documenting the problem, for example where it becomes necessary to visit the host family and inspect the home. SEE will keep a record of all correspondence and notes about actions and outcomes.

### *Step 2 – national manager or director*

The student should address himself to the national manager or the director. A record will be kept of all correspondence, actions and outcomes.

### *Step 3 – partner organisation abroad*

Only where steps 1 and 2 do not lead to a solution, can the student speak to the partner. The partner will try to resolve the problem with SEE as set out in the "complaints against SEE" procedure above. It is desirable that the partner keeps records of any complaints correspondence.

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## Record Keeping

All records of complaints are kept in the appropriate digital file (student file / host family file / general complaints file) on the company's virtual drive and deleted after 10 years or earlier if requested by all parties.