

Complaints Handling Procedure

Final Draft Version - Printed version is not valid. Latest version can be found in Z drive.

Procedure owner: Nikolaos Koufos

| Version | Date | Description of Version | Author |
|---------|---------------|--|---|
| 1 | October 2006 | Implementation | QA Officer |
| 2 | October 2007 | Follow-up internal audit | Advisor to the Directors |
| 3 | October 2009 | Follow-up internal audit; change of complaint definition | QA Officer – Dusica Naumovska |
| 4 | November 2010 | Follow-up internal audit; possibility to transfer a complaint to Crisis Communication procedure | QA Officer – Karen Blanken |
| 5 | November 2012 | Implementation of independent committee | QA Officer – Karen Blanken |
| 6 | July 2014 | Implementation of Whistle-blower Policy | QA Officer – Karen Blanken |
| 7 | December 2015 | Changing recipient for emails sent to the complaints mailbox | Advisor to the Directors – Kaan Ozdurak |
| 8 | May 2019 | Incorporation of flowchart, separation between complaints handling procedure and whistle-blower policy, new tools and guidelines on how to respond to complaints | Nikolaos Koufos |
| 9 | November 2019 | Clarification about overlapping with Whistle-blower procedure | Nikolaos Koufos |

Abbreviations

- SIS** Student Information System
- PO** Programme/project Officer
- CO** Communications Officer
- PM** Programme/project Manager
- CM** Country Manager
- CC** Communications Coordinator
- QC** Quality Coordinator

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that SPARK continuously improves the services it provides to its beneficiaries and maintains a good reputation among its stakeholders.

Definitions

A SPARK stakeholder is defined as a person that has been actively in contact with SPARK (i.e. beneficiary, donor staff member, local partner organisation staff member, etc.).

A complaint is defined as the dissatisfaction expressed by the stakeholder relevant to SPARK's programmes, services, staff, or other general issue relevant to the organisation's operations.

However, for the purpose of this procedure, a complaint does not refer to misconduct by a SPARK staff (i.e. inappropriate behaviour, fraud, corruption, etc.).

Scope

This procedure is applicable for the handling of complaints as defined above. Given this, complaints that refer to misconduct by a SPARK staff are not received and handled through this procedure, but through SPARK's the Whistleblower Procedure.

Furthermore, this procedure is applicable to SPARK staff members responsible to handle complaints received by SPARK's stakeholders. Local partner organisations' staff members and external contractors of SPARK are expected to cooperate in the implementation of this procedure, as per their relevant contracts (including memorandums of understanding) established with SPARK.

Complaints Submission Channel

A complaint is handled through this procedure, when submitted to SPARK through the Complaint Form in SPARK's website.

Complaints that are expressed to SPARK staff members in person, through phone calls, through emails sent to SPARK country-offices' inboxes, through emails sent to SPARK staff members inboxes, through student cases in SPARK's SIS, through SPARK's social media accounts, through a letter, etc. the relevant SPARK staff member who receive these complaints has to fill out the Complaint Form in SPARK's website with information relevant to the complaint, on behalf of the stakeholder.

Possibility for Appeal

In case a stakeholder is unsatisfied with the way that his/her complaint has been handled, then he/she can submit a written appeal to SPARK by sending an email to the organisation's Director of Operations Esther Bosgra at e.bosgra@spark-online.org.

Risks in Handling Complaints

In receiving and addressing complaints, the following risks have been identified:

- Complaints do not reach SPARK, due to insufficient awareness of the procedure among SPARK's stakeholders;
- Damaged reputation and/or financial loss for SPARK, due to ineffective handling of complaints;
- No improvement for SPARK, due to not learning from received complaints.

Exceptions to the Procedure

In case a complaint is submitted through the mentioned above channels that refer to cases of suspected or observed misconduct conducted by SPARK staff will not be handled according to this Complaints Handlings Procedure, but through the Whistleblower Procedure.

Procedure

