

[GB] BBC Introduces New Complaints Procedure

IRIS 2005-3:1/23

*Tony Prosser
University of Bristol Law School*

The BBC is currently aiming to increase its transparency and accountability as a response to the process of reviewing its Royal Charter. As part of the resulting reforms, a new Code of Practice for handling complaints (see IRIS 1997-9: 13) has been published; the website on which it appears will also report on the volume and range of complaints received together with the BBC response and details of clarifications, corrections and remedial action taken.

The Code of Practice gives details of how to make a complaint via the website, by telephone or post. The BBC aims to provide a response within ten working days of receipt. It undertakes to listen to the concerns expressed and to learn from all complaints in order to improve programmes and services. If a mistake has been made, an apology will be issued and action will be taken to stop the mistake being made again; there will also be a public report on all complaints received. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, if a specific and serious programme complaint has been made, he or she can write to the Editorial Complaints Unit within twelve weeks of receiving the response. The Unit will undertake an independent investigation of the complaint and, if it considers the complaint justified, will instruct the programme or division to take action to correct any errors and to prevent the same mistake from being made again. If the complainant is still not satisfied, there is an appeal to the Governors' Programme Complaints Committee, which is responsible for ensuring that complaints are properly handled by the BBC, and if the appeal is upheld management is expected to take account of the findings. The Committee also receives quarterly reports on complaints and ensures that the BBC's complaints handling processes reflect best practice and opportunities for learning from them.

BBC, "Code of Practice on Complaints", effective from 1 February 2005

http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/complaints_process.shtml#code

