

Our Policy in Handling Complaints

We understand that from time to time, despite our asserted aims and for one reason or another, you, our client, will not be satisfied with the way we handle matters. We regret that. We want at all times to reverse the direction that a bad situation takes; we want to reach a mutually agreeable settlement of your issue with us. We have instigated the following procedure in order to facilitate reaching that settlement. It is not compulsory but may lead to the swiftest resolution.

We have divided our policy into two parts, Informal and Formal. We believe that an informal settlement of a complaint is the best route to follow – one reached by amicable discussion of the problem between the people most closely involved. Even so, by setting some ground rules and the standards that we hope to meet, a successful conclusion is more likely. Nevertheless, sometimes we will fail in that process and therefore we also have a Formal process for you to follow.

In any event, please rest assured that we want to deal with all issues fairly and honestly.

“We”, “us”, “HGF” and “the firm” mean HGF Limited. “You”, “your” and “our client” mean the person with whom HGF is bound by contract through HGF’s Terms of Business in the provision of services relating to intellectual property.

1. Informal Process

- In the first place you need to tell us about your issue. We believe that the person best suited in HGF to resolve your complaint is the person with whom you normally deal. They should be aware of this policy and follow it.
- Please discuss with them the shortcomings of the service provided by HGF. It is our experience that many problems are caused by ignorance of a situation, with one party being unaware of circumstances which the other party mistakenly assumes is known - a miscommunication and/or misunderstanding.
- Please ask them if they have discussed your issue with their line manager or, in the case of a partner of the firm, with another partner. If they have not, ask them to do so and get back to you.
- When they appreciate that you are making a complaint they are obliged to make a note of your complaint. Moreover, HGF is obliged by its professional regulations (as a firm of patent and trade mark attorneys) to record all complaints against it and how they are handled. Accordingly, it is suggested that to avoid a misunderstanding on our part when you make a complaint orally you make specific mention of this policy to ensure it is followed. It is strongly suggested that you confirm any complaint in writing.
- If personal discussions are not working out to your satisfaction within a period of no more than two or three weeks after first raising the matter in this informal process, there is still no resolution, you should move on to our formal process below.

2. Formal Process

- Please put in writing the fact that you have a complaint and send it to our Professional Standards Partner (PSP), Mark Lunt, at HGF’s Sheffield Office (for address details please see the “Contact” section of our website www.hgf.com/sheffield/). We will endeavour to send you a letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint within three working days of receiving it and

enclose a copy of this procedure. We will fully document the complaint including any efforts to reach settlement under the informal process.

- We will investigate your complaint. This will normally involve the PSP passing your complaint to the office managing partner (OMP) of the HGF office where the person with whom you are at issue is based.
- The OMP will invite you to a meeting with him or her or arrange a telecom (should significant travelling be involved) to discuss and hopefully to resolve your complaint. This should be done within 14 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter in step 1.
- Within three working days of the meeting the OMP will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions that have been agreed with you.
- If you do not want a meeting or it is not possible we will endeavour to send you a detailed written reply to your complaint, including the OMP's suggestions for resolving the matter, within 21 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter in step 1.
- At this stage if you are still not satisfied you should contact the PSP again who will review the decision reached by the OMP and/or the Management Board of the firm. We will endeavour to write to you again within 14 days of receiving your request for a review confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasons.
- If you are still not satisfied we may also offer you the opportunity to involve an independent mediator to assist with resolving the complaint.
- In any event, you always have the right to take your complaint to the appropriate regulatory body (usually the Intellectual Property Regulation Board (IPReg) or the European Patent Institute (epi) for misconduct, or the Legal Ombudsman for poor service). We will assist you in contacting the relevant body and will cooperate fully in their investigation. However, you should have tried to resolve your issues with us first and, if you have not, these bodies may tell you to do so before they will investigate the complaint themselves.
- If your complaint is that you are not satisfied with the quality of service offered by us, The Legal Services Act has set up the Legal Ombudsman to deal with such complaints. Ordinarily, a complainant must refer a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within one year of the complaint to the firm and generally within six months of the firm's final response. We will confirm the relevant deadline in our response to a complaint made to us. Please note that the Legal Ombudsman generally handles complaints only by individuals, very small businesses, charities, trusts and clubs and associations. You can contact the Legal Ombudsman:
 - in writing at PO Box 15870, Birmingham B30 9EB; or
 - by telephone on 0300 555 0333; or
 - via their website www.legalombudsman.org.uk or
 - by email at enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk
- Alternatively, if the complaint concerns a matter of professional misconduct rather than poor service, you can contact the Intellectual Property Regulation Board (IPREG) about your complaint or in some cases the European Patent Institute (epi).
- Any complaint to IPREG must usually be made within 12 months of the date of the professional misconduct alleged, or your discovery of it. Further information is available from IPREG. You can contact IPREG:
 - in writing at 5th Floor, The Outer Temple 222-225 Strand London WC2R 1BA; or
 - by telephone on 020 7353 4373; or
 - via their website www.ipreg.org.uk; or
 - by e-mail to ipreg@ipreg.org.uk.