

Our Policy in Handling Complaints

Introduction

This policy applies to HGF Business Services Limited (UK), HGF Limited (UK), HGF Law LLP (UK), HGF BV (Holland), HGF GmbH (Switzerland), HGF Europe LLP (Germany, Austria and UK), HGF IP Limited (Ireland) and HGF SAS (France) together herein referred to as HGF.

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. When something goes wrong, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to sort out any mistakes or misunderstandings and to improve our standards. We want to deal with all issues fairly and honestly.

We have divided our policy into two parts, Informal and Formal. We believe that an informal settlement of a complaint reached by amicable discussion of the problem between the people most closely involved is the best route to follow. Nevertheless, sometimes we will fail in that process and therefore we also have a Formal process for you to follow.

“We”, “us”, “our” and “the firm” mean or refer to HGF. “You”, “your” and “our client” mean or refer to 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. 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.

If personal discussions are not working out to your satisfaction within a period of no more than two weeks after first raising the matter in this informal process, and 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 Head of Legal Practice, Jason Lumber, at HGF’s Leeds Office. We will endeavour to send you a letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint within three working days of receiving it and to enclose a copy of this policy. 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 HOLP 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 to discuss your complaint in person and hopefully to resolve it. If you do not want a meeting or it is not possible, our OMP may instead offer you a chance to discuss the matter by telephone or video conference. 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 HOLP again who will review the decision reached by the OMP with the Management Board of HGF. 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 (the Intellectual Property Regulation Board ([IPReg](#)), the Solicitors Regulation Authority ([SRA](#)), the European Patent Institute ([epi](#)), or the [Patentanwaltskammer](#) (Arbitration Board of the German Chamber of Patent Attorneys), where your complaint relates to matters of professional conduct). 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 relates to the quality of service offered by us, you may be able to contact the Legal Ombudsman in the United Kingdom. Ordinarily, a complainant must refer a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within one year of the complaint being made 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 based in the United Kingdom, or in respect of service provided in the United Kingdom. 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

Owner: Professional Standards Director

Point of contact for amendments: Professional Standards Director

Date: Dec 2020

Next review: Dec 2021