

## **SAHCA Complaints Procedure**

### **1. ABOUT THIS PROCEDURE**

- 1.1 It is the Association's policy to ensure that all Members have access to a procedure to help deal with any complaints relating to their membership fairly and without unreasonable delay. The Committee aims to consider any formal complaint that a Member may raise, undertake any investigation which we consider necessary and proportionate and inform the Member in writing of the outcome, within a reasonable period of time. We will also give the Member a right of appeal if they are not satisfied with our decision.
- 1.2 This procedure applies to all Full and Associate Members as defined in the Association's constitution regardless of length of membership.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of the Association's constitution and the Committee may amend it at any time.

### **2. USING THIS PROCEDURE**

- 2.1 Issues that could be the subject of a complaint may include:
- (a) health and safety;
  - (b) bullying and harassment;
  - (c) organisational change; or
  - (d) discrimination.
- 2.2 This Complaints Procedure should only be used to raise issues pertaining to the Member's membership of the Association. It should not be used to raise concerns about the treatment of a Member by any third party, or as a forum for the determination of disputes between Members. If a Member is dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint which they have raised, they should submit an appeal under the procedure detailed below.
- 2.3 If a Member has difficulty at any stage of the Complaints Procedure because of a disability or because English is not their first language, they should bring this to the attention of the Officer dealing with the complaint as soon as possible.

### **3. RAISING COMPLAINTS INFORMALLY**

Most complaints can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with one of the Officers. If you feel unable to speak to a particular Officer, for example, because the complaint concerns him or her, then you should speak informally to a more senior Officer or [the President of the Association]. If this does not resolve the issue, you should follow the formal procedure below.

### **4. FORMAL WRITTEN COMPLAINT**

4.1 If your complaint cannot be resolved informally you should put it in writing and submit it to the Association's Secretary, indicating that it is a formal complaint. If the complaint concerns the Secretary, you may submit it to the Association's Administrator instead.

4.2 The complaint should, wherever possible, be raised within 30 days of the incident to which it relates. The Committee reserve the right to decline to deal with any complaint raised outside of that time limit without good reason. The deadline may also be extended by up to three months where the Committee is satisfied that it was not practicable to make a complaint within the original 30 day time limit.

4.3 The written complaint should include:

- (a) Details of when and where the occurrence took place, and what occurred;
- (b) Any supporting statements of facts from third parties;
- (c) Details of any other Members who have been treated in a similar way;
- (d) Information about any previous complaints made about the incident; and
- (e) The Member's preference for a resolution to the complaint.

### **5. DEALING WITH THE COMPLAINT**

5.1 Within 14 days of the receipt of a formal complaint, the Secretary or Treasurer will send a copy of the complaint to each affected party. This may, at their discretion, include circulating the complaint to all or part of the Committee.

5.2 If the complaint relates to an individual or group, they will be given an opportunity to respond to the complaint within 14 days of being provided with a copy of it, or such shorter period as the Secretary or Treasurer in their absolute discretion consider appropriate in all the circumstances.

- 5.3 The Secretary or Treasurer will consider the complaint and any response received and carry out whatever investigation which they in their absolute discretion consider to be appropriate in all the circumstances.
- 5.4 The Member must co-operate fully and promptly in any investigation. This may include informing the Committee of the names of any relevant witnesses, disclosing any relevant documents to us and attending an interview, as part of that investigation.
- 5.5 The Committee will have the power to:
- (a) Take no further action;
  - (b) Warn as to future conduct; or
  - (c) Take some other action to rectify the situation.
- 5.6 The Secretary or Treasurer will seek to respond within 28 days of receipt of the complaint but this period may be extended where necessary.

## **6. APPEALS**

- 6.1 If the complaint has not been resolved to the Member's satisfaction they may appeal in writing to the Vice-Chair or Chair of the Association. The written notice of appeal must state the Member's full grounds of appeal, within one week of the date on which the decision was sent or given to the affected Member.
- 6.2 Where an appeal is made then, unless there are exceptional circumstances, the decision which is the subject of the appeal will be suspended until the appeal process has been completed. The Secretary or Treasurer will determine whether the circumstances are exceptional for the purposes of this paragraph.
- 6.3 The Chair or Vice-Chair will confirm their final decision in writing, usually within one week of receipt of the appeal. This is the end of the procedure and there is no further appeal.

