



HHD Policy Guide 15 Complaints & Conciliation Procedure

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1. Purpose

This document describes the steps to be taken when a member makes a complaint about another member. All such complaints will be taken seriously. In the first instance they may be dealt with informally (Stage 1), but if unresolved then the procedures described as Stages 2 and 3 will be pursued by the EC.

According to the HHD u3a constitution a member may be expelled from the u3a, for a breach of any membership condition such as non-payment of fees, or for any deliberate or continual breach of a policy or procedure of the charity e.g. Code of Conduct, Health and Safety or Equality and Diversity.

Principles

- 2.1** It is important that every member has access to a copy of the Code of Conduct, Health and Safety Policy and Equality and Diversity Policy so that they are clear of what is expected of u3a members. (All Policies and Procedures are available on the HHD u3a website hhd.u3asite.uk. Then click on documents, then click onto HHD u3a Policies. Copies will be made available on request for members not having Internet access.)
- 2.2** Should an issue arise as to whether a member is in breach of the procedures, it is essential that this should be brought to the attention of the member concerned and that all attempts are made to resolve the issue through discussion and informal support.
- 2.3** In the event that a breach has occurred, the member concerned must be informed of the potential consequences under the procedures and the potential outcome of **expulsion**.
- 2.4** Trustees must abide by the u3a's Trustee Code of Conduct.

2. Procedure

Stage 1 (Informal)

Breaches of HHD policies and procedures may arise through complaints by members about the way they are treated by another member **(for instance at a group or monthly meeting)** or a group leader, concerns that group leaders or EC members are not acting according to u3a guidelines or any other inappropriate conduct that may come to the notice of the EC.

In the first instance efforts should be made by the Group leader , Monthly Meeting organiser or Groups Co-ordinator to deal with the matter informally, offering training or support if needed.

It is important for the person dealing with the breach to notify the Executive Committee (EC) if the breach appears to be serious.

Stage 2 (Investigation)

If the matter is not resolved informally, it should be referred to the EC for formal investigation. In addition the National u3a Office should be informed of the complaint and any guidance offered should be followed.

The EC should appoint two members to undertake an investigation using the following steps

- a) Write a letter to the individual setting out the allegations and the attempts that were made to resolve the situation informally
- b) Interview the person who referred the breach in order to fully understand the issue and speak to any other individuals involved who may have information regarding the allegations.
- c) Inform the individual of the progress of the investigations so far carried out under 2b. Give the individual the opportunity to accept or refute each allegation. Interview the individual who should be invited to bring a friend or support person. Give the individual the opportunity to make further representations before a decision is made.

Stage 3

The investigators should compile a report for the full EC outlining their findings and making a recommendation as to whether they feel the issue could be resolved with further support or training or whether the individual should be expelled. Before the EC make a final decision the individual should be offered an opportunity to discuss the matter further with the Chair and the EC member with up to date u3a complaints training. The EC will make the final decision and the Chair will notify the member in writing. This will normally conclude the procedure.

Stage 4

In exceptional circumstances where the complaint is about a Trustee and cannot be resolved within the organisation, the EC members dealing with the case will seek advice from the u3a's advisors at Regional level.

Good Practice

While this procedure is very unlikely to be needed, it would be good practice for at least one member of the EC to have relevant training. The u3a's website has numerous references to assist with the cases, but at all times the guidance of the u3a's appointed referee must be followed.