

Cardiff U3A

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

- In the first instance, a complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of Cardiff U3A. This may include a complaint from a member, an external organisation or individual.
- The Chair will appoint a Trustee who will act as the Investigating Officer and provide all written documentation.
- The Chair will write to the Complainant within 7 days of receipt of the letter of complaint and advise the name and contact details of the Investigating Officer. The Complainant will be sent copies of two relevant Cardiff U3A documents: the two-part Policy which gives the Member Code of Conduct and the Policy relating to Complaints and Disciplinary Matters plus this Procedure.
- The Code of Conduct will serve as the reference point in terms of standards of expected standards of behaviour.

In most cases, it is hoped that complaints can be dealt with informally as detailed below. However, if the complaint is considered to be of a serious nature, the Formal Procedure will be undertaken at the outset.

Informal Procedure

- The Investigating Officer will meet with the Complainant to ascertain the full nature of the complaint. Contact may be made via telephone or e-mail if agreed by both parties.
- If the Investigating Officer feels it is possible to resolve the complaint at this meeting, the Investigating Officer will outline a course of action and obtain the agreement of the Complainant.
- The agreed course of action will be put in writing to the Complainant and obtain the Complainant's written agreement that the matter has been finalised to his/her satisfaction.
- The Investigating Officer will advise the Chair that the matter has been agreed and is closed.

If the Investigating Officer or Complainant decides that an informal meeting does not resolve the matter, then the following procedure will be implemented:

Formal Procedure

- The Investigating Officer will meet with the Complainant to ascertain the full nature of the complaint.
- The Investigating Officer will gather information relating to the complaint. This will include the letter of complaint and any supporting documentation or other member statements. The details of the investigation must not be disclosed to any other Trustees at this stage, in order not to bias any Appeal.

- The Investigating Officer may also contact the Third Age Trust and request support from the Regional Trustee, a Trust volunteer and/or National Office staff. The Investigating Officer will inform the Complainant that additional support has been requested and the reasons.
- The Investigating Officer may need to interview other parties involved in the complaint.
- The Investigating Officer will advise the Chair when the investigations are complete.
- The Chair will appoint a Sub-committee of three Trustees to hear the complaint. If there are insufficient Trustees to provide a Sub-Committee, or certain Trustees feel that they cannot be objective, then the Chair may co-opt Trustees from a neighbouring U3A, or seek advice or request attendance from Third Age Trust staff or Trustees.
- The Sub-committee will appoint a Chair.
- The Chair will advise the Complainant of the time and location of the hearing in writing. The Complainant may be accompanied.
- The Investigating Officer will present the case and suggest a course of action. The Complainant will have an opportunity to present his/her case.
- The Sub-committee will adjourn to consider the matter, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and agree the action to be taken. The Chair of the Sub-committee will inform the Complainant orally at the meeting of the decision which will be confirmed in writing within 7 days.

Right of Appeal

A right of Appeal will be available.

- The Appeal should be lodged, in writing to the Chair of the Sub-committee, within 7 days from the date of the Sub-committee Chair's letter. The Chair of the Sub-committee will inform the Chair of Cardiff U3A.
- The Chair of U3A will convene an Appeal Panel of three Trustees (including him/herself). This should not include those who were involved in the initial hearing. If there are insufficient Trustees to provide an Appeal Panel, or certain Trustees feel that they cannot be objective, then the Chair may co-opt Trustees from a neighbouring U3A, or seek advice or request attendance from Third Age Trust staff or Trustees.
- The Chair will advise the Appellant of the time and location of the hearing in writing. The Appellant will be offered the chance to make an oral appeal to the Panel and may be accompanied. The Appellant may present his/her case partly in writing if appropriate.
- The Appeal Panel will review the decision based only on the facts included in the original hearing taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision. This will be communicated in writing to the Appellant within a further 7 days.
- The Appeal Panel's decision is final.

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