

# Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1

The Society is committed to creating an inclusive culture that supports equality and diversity and fully reflects both its membership and the global microbiology community across all protected characteristics. In this regard, the Society's Code of Conduct applies to all staff, attendees, sponsors and volunteers and those representing the Microbiology Society at external events and meetings.

### 1.2

This complaints procedure is intended to help maintain high standards of conduct and to ensure fairness and consistency when dealing with any complaints and alleged breaches of the Society's Code of Conduct. It should be read alongside the Society's Code of Conduct and used to report and investigate incidents where someone has been harassed, discriminated against or bullied or seen someone else be harassed, discriminated against or bullied. The outcome of any investigation carried out under this procedure may result in formal action such as a warning, exclusion from an event or events and /or the termination of Society membership.

### 1.3

This procedure may be updated from time to time.

## 2. Procedure

### 2.1

Incidents should be reported and /or complaints can be made by contacting Joanne Manning, our Chief Operations Officer, either in person or by email at [j.manning@microbiologysociety.org](mailto:j.manning@microbiologysociety.org). Contact details should be provided so that the Society can get in touch, should further information be required to conduct an investigation.

## 3. Investigation

### 3.1

Where a complaint has been made or there are concerns with:

- a. the Society's staff: this will be dealt with pursuant to our staff Disciplinary Procedure, as appropriate;
- b. Society members or event attendees: the Society will investigate the complaint or reported incident in accordance with this procedure.

## 3.2

Before any decision is made to proceed with formal action, the complaint or incident report will be investigated. Any meetings and discussions as part of an investigation are solely for the purpose of fact-finding and no formal action will be taken, nor sanctions imposed, without a formal meeting.

The investigation will be led by a senior Society staff member who will determine if there is a case to answer.

At a preliminary stage, consideration will be given to whether a member or event attendee should be temporarily instructed not to attend events or contact Society members or other event attendees, volunteers, sponsors or staff, unless authorised to do so, while the investigation is being carried out or while a formal process is underway (or both). Any such instruction should not be considered a sanction.

## 3.3

The member or event attendee who has reported the incident or made the complaint should inform the Society as early as possible if there are any relevant witnesses that they believe should be interviewed as part of the process, or if there is any other evidence that may need to be considered.

## 3.4

Following the investigation, the investigator will conclude the formal investigation by submitting a written report to a nominated Executive Officer. The report will include recommendations as to what action(s), if any, the Society should take to resolve the matter, to uphold its Code of Conduct and the Society's standards.

# 4. Formal Meeting

## 4.1

Following an investigation, and where the complaint appears to be substantiated, a formal meeting between the investigator, the nominated Executive Officer and the member or event attendee in respect of which concerns have been raised, will be scheduled within a reasonable period.

## 4.2

The member or event attendee should make every effort to attend or to agree to an alternative time. The Society will provide written notice of the meeting, including sufficient information about the complaint and the possible consequences.

## 4.3

After the formal meeting, the Executive Officer may find that formal action is required. The member or event attendee will be notified in writing of the Society's conclusions and whether it intends to take any further formal action to resolve the complaint or matter.

# 5. Formal Action

The usual penalties for misconduct in breach of our [Code of Conduct](#) are:

a. Warning

Such a warning will usually remain live for a period of 12 months.

b. Final Warning

In case of further misconduct where there is already a warning on record, the member or event attendee will usually receive a Final Warning. This may also be used without a (first) warning for serious cases of misconduct in breach of the [Code of Conduct](#).

c. Formal recommendation to the Council to terminate membership or other sanction

In case of further misconduct where there is a Final Warning on record, or for any sufficiently serious act of misconduct in breach of our [Code of Conduct](#), a formal recommendation may be made to the Council to terminate the member's Society membership\* or other sanction such as permanent exclusion from future events if appropriate.

\*In accordance with the procedures set out in 2.4 of our [Articles of Association](#), the member may be subsequently removed from the membership at the discretion of the Microbiology Society's Council. The member will not be entitled to any membership subscription refund, a refund of any associated costs or to reclaim expenses for past or future events.

## 6. Appeals

### 6.1

Members or event attendees may appeal in writing within 5 working days of a recommendation to terminate their membership. Appeals should be submitted by email to the Chief Executive, Peter Cotgreave, at: [p.cotgreave@microbiologysociety.org](mailto:p.cotgreave@microbiologysociety.org) and copied to the Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer, at: [s.buckman@microbiologysociety.org](mailto:s.buckman@microbiologysociety.org).

### 6.2

The Society will hold an Appeal Panel Meeting (in person or remote) within a reasonable period thereafter. The Appeal Panel Meeting will, where possible, be held by the Society's Chief Executive and up to two Elected Council members provided that they have not previously been involved in the investigation or original decision.

The Appeal Panel will confirm its final decision in writing, within 5 days of the Appeal Panel Meeting. There is no further right of appeal.

*Procedure last updated February 2023*