

Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

1.1

The Microbiology 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. The Society's [Code of Conduct](#) applies to all staff, Trustees, Advisory Council members, members, attendees, sponsors, volunteers and third-parties.

The Society's Code of Conduct sets out the standard of behaviour and conduct expected by the Society generally and in various scenarios, including but not limited to attendance and/or participation in all Society-led activities, and those representing the Microbiology Society at any external events, any meetings and/or activities.

The Trustee Code of Conduct also applies to trustees of the Microbiology Society in respect of their role on the Trustee Board.

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 or the Trustee Code of Conduct. It should be read alongside those Codes of Conduct and used to report and investigate incidents, and/or breaches.

1.3

This policy may be updated from time to time.

2. Procedure

2.1

Incidents should be reported by contacting the Society's Chief Operations Officer, either in person or by email at coo@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 concern or complaint has been raised about:

the Society's staff: this will be dealt with pursuant to the Society's staff Disciplinary Procedure, as appropriate;

Society volunteers, Trustees, Advisory Council members, or other Society members, event attendees or activity participants (who may not be members) in relation to breaches of the

Society Code of Conduct: the Society will investigate the complaint or reported incident in accordance with this procedure;

Breaches of the Trustee Code of Conduct by Trustees: the Society will investigate the complaint or reported incident in accordance with this procedure;

The Society itself, for example its policies and/or procedures: this should be reported by contacting the Society's Chief Operations Officer, by email at coo@microbiologysociety.org. The complaint or concern raised will be responded to within a reasonable amount of time and depending on the nature of the complaint, or issue may need to be discussed with the trustees at a board meeting. The Society will not investigate anonymous complaints.

If a complaint or concern is received more than three months after an event or activity in question took place, the Society may ask the complainant to explain why they were unable to complain sooner and may decline to investigate the complaint.

3.2

Before any decision is made to proceed with formal action under section five below, the complaint and/or incident 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 providing a reasonable opportunity for the person(s) who are the subject of the complaint to respond, which may include a formal meeting under section four below.

The person(s) 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.

3.3

In some circumstances, the Executive Officers via the Chief Executive may instruct the subject of a complaint not to attend an event, join a meeting or activity or contact Society members or other event attendees, volunteers, sponsors or staff, unless authorised to do so, while an investigation is being carried out or while a formal process is underway (or both). Any such instruction should not be considered a sanction.

4. Informal Meeting

4.1

Following an investigation, and where the complaint appears to be substantiated, an informal meeting with the person(s) in respect of which concerns have been raised will be scheduled within a reasonable period.

4.2

The person(s) should make every effort to attend either in person or remotely, to agree to an alternative time, or provide representations in writing. The Society will provide written notice of the meeting, including a summary of the complaint being as specific as is appropriate, and the possible consequences. Should the person(s) fail to respond the Society can, in its absolute discretion, decide to continue with the process in the person(s) absence.

4.3

The person(s) can invite another person to attend any meetings relating to the complaint with them as a supporter. This person should not be a legal representative as this is an internal process.

4.4

The person(s) will be notified in writing of the Society's conclusions and whether it intends to take any further action to resolve the complaint or matter.

5. Formal Action

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

- Warning

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

- Final Warning

In case of further misconduct where there is already a warning on record, the person(s) 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](#).

- Formal recommendation to the Board of Trustees to terminate membership or other sanction.

In cases of further misconduct where there is a Final Warning on record, or for any matters of gross misconduct in breach of our [Code of Conduct](#), a formal recommendation may be made to the Board of Trustees to terminate the member's Society membership¹ and/or other sanction such as permanent exclusion from future events and/or being asked to step down from any position within the governance structure, or any other position, if appropriate².

The following is a non-exhaustive list that indicates the type of actions that may constitute gross misconduct:

- Theft, fraud, deliberate falsification of company documents

¹ In accordance with the procedures set out in 25.2.5 of our [Articles of Association](#), the member may be subsequently removed from the membership at the discretion of the Microbiology Society's Trustee Board. 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.

² If this matter relates to a Trustee Board of Advisory Council member then the procedures set out in 20.6 of our [Articles of Association](#) and 5.1.6 of the Society's [Bye-Laws](#) apply.

- Violent behaviour, fighting, assault on another person
- Deliberate damage to Society property
- Harassment
- Being unfit for your role through alcohol or illegal drugs
- Gross negligence

Depending on the nature of the complaint and the outcome, the Society reserves the right to keep the information on file in line with our [Privacy Policy](#).

6. Appeals

6.1

The person(s) concerned may appeal a sanction in writing within five working days of the notification of the sanction. The appeal should clearly set out why an appeal is being sought. Appeals should be submitted by email to the Chief Executive, Peter Cotgreave at: p.cotgreave@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 Trustee Board members provided that they have not previously been involved in the investigation or original decision. Other senior members of governance structure may be invited to join an Appeal Panel if there are conflicts of interests.

The person(s) can invite another person to attend any appeal meetings relating to the complaint with them as a supporter. This person should not be a legal representative as this is an internal process.

6.3

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