

Tweeddale u3a Complaints Policy and Procedure

It is the policy of Tweeddale u3a that:

Problems and grievances are dealt with quickly, fairly and objectively.

Every effort is made to settle the issue without having to resort to the formal complaints procedure.

Confidentiality is maintained by all concerned.

Our advice is that you should always be able to sort out any problem by talking and resolving it informally and amicably with those concerned. If this fails please refer to the procedures set out below:

Problems within an Interest group

The Facilitator should normally discuss the issue with the members involved and attempt to resolve it informally and amicably. If in doubt, advice should be sought from the Group Coordinator. If all parties are satisfied and agree to abide by the outcome of the discussions no further action is necessary. However if a satisfactory resolution can't be reached the complainant must decide whether to lodge a formal complaint.

The Facilitator must not allow a situation to continue which impacts on other members of the group. If the problem persists and the original complainant does not wish to take it further the Facilitator should discuss it with the group coordinator.

Facilitators are not allowed to exclude a member from a group permanently. That decision should be made by the committee.

Problems with the Facilitator.

Where problems arise between one or more group members and the Facilitator, the members should attempt to resolve the issue by discussing it with the Facilitator. If they feel unable to do so, or their attempt proves unsuccessful, they should refer the matter to the Group Coordinator.

Problems within the u3a as a whole.

If problems unrelated to a group arise between members, the matter should be referred to the Tweeddale u3a Chair. If the problem directly involves the chair, the matter should be addressed to the Secretary or another Officer.

In all the above cases, if the problem remains unresolved but the original complainant does not wish to proceed to a formal complaint, the committee will decide whether the complaint should be put on record anonymously, or, in the case of serious misconduct, should be referred to the formal complaints procedure.

Serious Misconduct

Although the aim should normally be to resolve matters amicably by discussion, some misconduct is sufficiently serious that a formal response is required. This might include:

Sexual or racial abuse

Persistent harassment or bullying

Dangerous or violent behaviour

Theft or malicious damage

Conduct which brings Tweeddale u3a into disrepute or is prejudicial to it.

In such cases a formal complaint should be made in writing to the Chair, providing as much detail as possible, including place and date. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the committee will make a decision as to how best to approach it. All actions from this point will be documented.

Formal Complaint Procedures

When someone wishes to make a formal complaint, they will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the chair who will confirm they have received it. If the complaint directly involves the chair, it should be addressed to the Secretary or other Officer.

The Chair will appoint two Committee members to investigate the complaint.

The complainant and the person(s) against whom the complaint has been made will be informed in writing by the Chair about the basis of the complaint and that it will be investigated in accordance with the complaints procedure. Advice may be sought from the Third Age Trust.

The committee members appointed to investigate the complaint will gather all the relevant information, including the letter of complaint, any supporting documentation or other member statements and will interview those concerned.

The Chair will appoint a sub committee of two or three additional committee members and set a date, within four weeks of receipt of the complaint, to review the matter, which must be kept confidential at this stage, including from other committee members.

The subcommittee will consider the matter in consultation with those investigating the complaint. They will take into account any mitigating circumstances and agree what action to take.

The decision of the subcommittee will be communicated in writing to both parties. Both parties will be informed of any action to be taken and their right of appeal.

Right of Appeal

An appeal can be lodged in writing by the complainant or by the person against whom the complaint has been made. The appeal must be lodged within fourteen days of the communication of the decision.

For the appeal, the Chair will convene a meeting of three trustees (including themselves). This should not include those who were involved in the initial investigation and decision.

The person raising the appeal will be offered a verbal right of reply. The issue will be summarised and the person making the appeal allowed to speak.

The appeal panel will review the decision, based on the facts included in the original hearing and taking into account any mitigating circumstances. Their decision must be communicated in writing to both parties within seven days of the appeal meeting. This decision is final and absolute confidentiality must be maintained.

Disciplinary Action

Level 1.

No Case to answer. No further action necessary.

Level 2.

A verbal warning which makes clear the nature of the unacceptable behaviour and includes a warning about future conduct and the consequences of non compliance. Details of the warning should be recorded, dated and kept on file.

Level 3.

A written warning from the Chair, stating the improvement required with immediate effect and the consequences of continued non compliance which may include being asked to leave tu3a or the committee.

Level 4.

The trustee or member is asked to leave the committee or tu3a.
The decision should be communicated in writing to the member.

Confidentiality

All procedures and documents must be kept confidential at all times. All situations should be dealt with discreetly showing respect for the parties and views involved.

Tu3a August 2022