

Complaints Policy & Procedure

1. Introduction

It is our policy to ensure that all members of the Political Studies Association (PSA) and those non-members who engage with us have access to a procedure to help deal with any complaints fairly and without unreasonable delay.

Responsibility for this policy lies with the PSA's Honorary Secretary.

We encourage people to seek to resolve matters informally as this can often provide the quickest, and most satisfactory, path to resolution for all parties. However, in exceptional cases if the individual feels that this is not workable in their situation, this procedure may be used.

2. Scope

The policy applies to:

- i. Complaints relating to the PSA as an organisation.
- ii. Complaints related to the PSA's Code of Conduct
- iii. Anyone acting in an organising or leadership capacity for the PSA (including, for example, Trustees, conveners/committee members of Specialist Groups, and conveners/committee members of PSA Networks);
- iv. Those leading activities on behalf of the PSA (including, for example, chairs of panels), when acting in that capacity.
- v. The Policy excludes employees of the PSA who are covered by internal policies.
- vi. Any complaint that relates to a member of PSA can only be considered within the scope of this policy, if it relates to the work of the PSA. Actions by PSA members outside the remit of the PSA cannot be considered.
- vii. Complaints relating to allegations of unlawful activities will not be considered by the PSA and should be raised with the appropriate bodies. The PSA may, however, take steps it considers appropriate to safeguard its members, staff, and reputation, including referring matters to the relevant authorities where necessary.

- viii. The PSA may not consider complaints that it judges to be vexatious, persistent, or abusive. The PSA may also reject any complaint that is considered incoherent or illegible.

3. Complaint procedure

A formal complaint should be made in writing to the PSA's Honorary Secretary at complaints@psa.ac.uk.

A written complaint should include the following information:

- a. What went wrong
- b. When and where it happened
- c. Who was involved
- d. The name and contact details of the person submitting the complaint.

The PSA will try and resolve all complaints in an efficient and timely manner. The Honorary Secretary will determine the appropriate level of investigation that is required to determine the facts of the case. This may include:

- a. Appointing one or more trustees or others appropriate external individuals to undertake an investigation.
- b. Arranging meetings with the complainant and others to gather relevant information and clarify points of fact.
- c. Making recommendations to the PSA Executive Committee.

The PSA will make every effort to protect complainants from retaliation. The information of all parties will be treated with strict confidentiality and under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation. If anonymity becomes difficult to maintain in particular cases, the PSA will defer to the preferences of the complainant.

4. Possible Sanctions

Once the appropriate level of investigation has been concluded and the investigating committee will determine the appropriate level of sanction to recommend to PSA Executive Committee. This may include, but not limited to:

- i. suspension from attending future events/activities for a period of time;
- ii. a ban on attending future events/activities; or
- iii. suspension or termination of membership of the PSA.

5. General

- i. The PSA expects all those who act on its behalf to uphold the [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-seven-principles-of-public-life) known as the 'Nolan Principles'.
- ii. PSA expects all individuals involved in the PSA community to always comply with the PSA code of conduct
- iii. All judgements made will be on the basis of a balance of probability.
- iv. The PSA will conduct all processes in adherence to the principles of natural justice.
- v. As a result of a complaint, any action taken by the PSA Executive Committee must be within the Articles of Association and Bye-Laws of the Association.
- vi. Where the complaint relates to the Honorary Secretary, the roles of that office, as outlined in this policy, will be undertaken by a different trustee appointed by the PSA Chair.

6. Guidelines on the right to appeal

Either party – either the complainant or respondent – may appeal the outcome of the investigation. The appeal must be made within one month of the decision being made and should be made in writing to the PSA Chair. The appeal will be reviewed by an Appeals Committee, consisting of the PSA Chair, PSA Honorary Secretary, CEO and the chair of the original investigating committee (as appropriate). An appeal is not a re-hearing of the original complaint and can only be made on grounds of procedural error or where the outcome of the complaint is seen to be unreasonable on the basis of the evidence and information obtained.

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Policy Owner: PSA Honorary Secretary