

Disciplinary procedure for volunteers

Introduction

IPEM recognises the essential contribution made by its volunteers. The Volunteer policy sets out an expectation for volunteers to treat other member volunteers and National Office staff with respect, consideration, and appreciation. They are expected to act in a way that does not discriminate against or exclude anyone, and their behaviour should not be seen by others as inappropriate or harassing.

Scope

- *This procedure applies to all volunteers whilst they are engaged in IPEM business*
- *This procedure is in addition to the disciplinary procedure linked to the Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct*
- *For Trustees this procedure is in addition to the Trustee Code of Conduct and Articles of Association.*

This procedure sets out the action that will be taken when problems occur and to ensure that matters that may require disciplinary action will be dealt with fairly. The aim of this procedure is to encourage improvement in individual conduct and performance and to minimise disagreements about disciplinary matters.

The term National Office Manager will be used throughout to denote the manager in the National Office who supports the committee the volunteer participates in. In the case of senior volunteers or Trustees this person will always be the Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive.

Aims:

- To deal fairly and consistently with complaints.
- To investigate where necessary but to otherwise establish the facts around any complaint quickly.
- To advise the volunteer and the complainant at every stage of this procedure.
- To resolve complaints informally, where possible and to the satisfaction of the complainant and the volunteer.

Principles:

- Volunteers will have the opportunity to respond to any complaints about their conduct before any decision is taken on whether to impose a warning or other sanction.
- Volunteers can be represented or accompanied at any meeting required by this procedure
- Volunteers have the right to appeal to the independent panel of the Board, against any decision to dismiss them from their role.
- Disciplinary meetings may be held online, and communication may be carried out solely via electronic means.

The procedure

1. Making a complaint

- a. Complaints about a volunteer, for the purposes of this procedure, must relate their conduct in their volunteer role. Complaints about their professional conduct should be forwarded to the Secretary of the Professional Conduct Committee.
- b. Complaints about the conduct of a volunteer should be sent, firstly, to the manager in the National Office responsible for the committee or group the volunteer is connected to

2. Handling Complaints

- a. The relevant manager shall contact the Complainant and Subject Volunteer and quickly establish the facts of the complaint.
- b. Where facts are disputed, further investigation may be required.

3. Informal Discussions

- a. The National Office manager will make every effort to resolve the matter by informal discussions, where appropriate, which may include mediation, additional training, or support for the Subject Volunteer applied with the expectation that the behaviour will improve.
- b. Informal Discussions will not be recorded as disciplinary action. If the Subject Volunteer fails to demonstrate the required improvement, the formal disciplinary procedure be implemented

4. Formal Verbal Warning

- a. If, despite informal discussions, the conduct or performance still does not meet acceptable standards, the volunteer may be given a formal verbal warning.
- b. The Subject Volunteer will be told:
 - The reason for the warning
 - What the Subject Volunteer needs to do to improve the situation
 - A timeframe within which the conduct or performance needs to be improved
 - Any support or training that might be provided to support the Subject Volunteer.
 - That the verbal warning is the first stage of the disciplinary procedure
- c. A brief note of the warning will be kept but it will lapse after 6 months, subject to satisfactory conduct and/or performance.

5. Disciplinary Meeting and Written Warning

- a. If there is no improvement in standards within the prescribed time, or if a further offence occurs, the Subject Volunteer will receive a letter from the Chief Executive to contain:
 - The reason why the current behaviour or performance is unacceptable
 - An invitation to attend a disciplinary meeting with both the National Office manager and CEO or Deputy CEO at which the problems can be discussed
 - Information about the right to be accompanied at the disciplinary meeting
 - Copies of any documents that will be referred to at the disciplinary meeting
- b. If the nature of the complaint involved the Chief Executive then the Deputy CEO or the Honorary Secretary will be involved instead.
- c. The disciplinary meeting should take place as soon as is reasonably possible. The meeting will be an opportunity to talk about the allegations being made, review the information with a view to establishing whether to progress the disciplinary action.
- d. A record shall be kept of the meeting.
- e. If it is decided that no further action is required, the Volunteer will be informed in writing.

- f. If it is decided that further action is required, the Subject Volunteer will receive a letter with a written warning. This will set out:
- The performance and/or behaviour problem
 - The improvement that is required
 - The timescale and date for achieving the improvement
 - Any support that will be provided to assist the volunteer
 - A statement that failure to improve could lead to a final written warning and ultimately dismissal
 - The record of the disciplinary meeting
 - A review date
- g. A copy of the written warning will be kept on file but the warning will lapse after 12 months subject to satisfactory conduct and/or performance.
- h. Where a written warning is given, the Board of Trustees will be advised.

6. Final Written Warning

- a. If the conduct or performance remains unsatisfactory, a further disciplinary meeting (where a Trustee will be present) will be called with the volunteer. The disciplinary meeting will be an opportunity for the volunteer to answer the issues raised.
- b. A record shall be kept of the meeting.
- c. Where this meeting establishes that there has been a failure to improve or change behaviour, then a final written warning will be given to the Subject Volunteer. The final warning will:
- Give details of and the grounds for the complaint
 - Set out the improvement that is required and a time frame.
 - Include the record of the disciplinary meeting.
 - Make it clear that any recurrence of the offence, lack of improvement or other serious misconduct within the stipulated period will result in dismissal.
 - Refer to the Subject Volunteer's right of appeal and route to making an appeal.
- d. A copy of the final written warning will be kept on file but the warning will lapse after 12 months subject to satisfactory conduct and/or performance.

7. Terminating the volunteer's activities or appointment

- a. If the Subject Volunteer's conduct or performance fails to improve the final stage in the disciplinary process may be instituted and the Subject Volunteer dismissed.
- b. If a further incident of misconduct occurs, the CEO and President shall decide whether a new investigation is required or if the final stage in the disciplinary procedure may be instituted and the subject volunteer dismissed.
- c. The decision to dismiss will be taken by the President and Chief Executive.
- d. The Subject Volunteer will be informed of the decision to dismiss, and the reasons for the decision, as soon as possible. Dismissal will be effective as soon as the Subject Volunteer has been informed.

8. Gross Misconduct

- a. Where a Subject Volunteer is found guilty of gross misconduct, they will normally be subject to summary dismissal and the above procedures regarding progression of warnings will not apply.
- b. Where there is an allegation of gross misconduct, the Chief Executive will carry out an immediate investigation. The Subject Volunteer will have an opportunity to participate in that investigation and put their case and answer the allegations of gross misconduct.

- c. While the alleged gross misconduct is being investigated, the volunteer may be suspended. Suspension in these circumstances is not to be regarded as a form of disciplinary action and will be for as short a period as possible. Any decision to dismiss will be taken only after an investigation and a disciplinary hearing.
- d. If, after investigation and disciplinary hearing, it is deemed that the volunteer has committed an offence of gross misconduct, the normal consequence will be dismissal without notice. The volunteer will be notified of the dismissal and appeal process as soon as possible.
- e. The following list is a non-exhaustive list that indicates the type of actions that may constitute gross misconduct:
 - Theft, fraud, deliberate falsification of company documents
 - Violent behaviour, fighting, assault on another person
 - Deliberate damage to IPEM property_or other property damaged in the course of volunteering for IPEM
 - Use of abusive or offensive language or behaviour
 - Bullying or harassment
 - Sexual harassment
 - Consistently poor attendance, without appropriate notification
 - Failure to abide by policies and procedures
 - Failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties
 - Being unfit to carry out their role through alcohol or illegal drugs
 - Gross negligence

9. Appeals

- a. Subject Volunteers may appeal a decision to dismiss them from their role
- b. Appeals should be made in writing within five working days of the decision being communicated to them, to the Deputy Chief Executive, Honorary Secretary or other specified member of the board (to advised at the point of dismissal).
- c. The Hon. Secretary (or other member of the Board) will convene an Appeals Panel of not fewer than three Trustees (none of whom shall have had any connection to the case prior to the appeal) to hear the appeal.
- d. The volunteer will be invited to a meeting with the Appeals Panel. The volunteer will have the right to be accompanied to the appeal meeting.
- e. The Appeals Panel shall be Chaired by the Hon Secretary (or other Trustee as specified).
- f. The Appeals Panel will determine the conduct of the meeting.
- g. The Appeals Panel will meet in private to determine the outcome of the appeal.
- h. The Subject Volunteer shall be advised of the outcome as soon as practicable.
- i. The decision of the Appeals Panel will be final.