

Discipline and Complaints Policy

Introduction

1. CSSC is a members' organisation, and we aim to provide a consistent, high-quality service to our members. It is important to CSSC that anyone dealing with the organisation, whether a member, a volunteer or a member of staff, has a positive experience and feels valued and supported. But we recognise that from time to time people may have cause for complaint, either about the standard of service they have received, or about the conduct of others.

2. Rule 7 of CSSC's Rules deals with conduct. It requires all members to abide by our Rules and regulations, policies and guidance; establishes the Discipline and Complaints Committee (DCC) for the purpose of considering any conduct which may fall short and thus be "detrimental to the interests of CSSC in any respect"; provides for sanctions to be imposed by the DCC, including suspension and expulsion; and provides for a right of appeal. The full text of Rule 7 is at Appendix 1. We also have Codes of Conduct, for Sport and for Leisure and Social, which set out our expectations about the behaviour of members, volunteers and staff so that everyone enjoys CSSC events and all our other activities, and everyone is treated with respect and courtesy. Because complaints alleging breaches of the Rules or Codes can lead to penalties or sanctions such as suspension from activities or even expulsion from CSSC, there has to be a formal process ensuring fair treatment in those cases which are serious enough to require such treatment. This is described in more detail in "Guidance on the handling of complaints and disciplinary matters" (the Guidance") which can be [found here](#).

3. Complaints about the standard of service will in the vast majority of cases not require so formal an approach. We expect that these will be resolved informally and at the local level. We recognise, however, that there may be the wholly exceptional case where the provision of a very poor service may amount to misconduct, and require consideration as such.

4. This Policy sets out the principles on which we base our approach to dealing with these matters, whether they involve a member, an associate member, a volunteer (that is, a member acting in his or her capacity as a volunteer), a guest, or a member of CSSC's staff; and establishes the context for the detailed processes set out in the Guidance. If the complaint is about a CSSC staff member, they may also be subject to a separate Disciplinary and Grievance procedure.

Purpose

5. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that
- vi. there is a consistent and fair approach to dealing with complaints and allegations of misconduct which reinforces our commitment to and expectations of members and volunteers (as set out in the Volunteer Handbook);
 - vii. people feel supported and comfortable in dealing with matters that arise;

- viii. members and volunteers feel that there is a process which allows them to be heard;
- ix. problems are dealt with swiftly, and informally where possible;
- x. members, volunteers and staff are protected from inappropriate behaviour;
- xi. good relations are maintained with and between members, volunteers and staff;
- xii. disruption to staff, members and volunteers is kept to a minimum; and
- xiii. CSSC's reputation is protected.

Principles

6. There are two fundamental principles that underlie this policy: first, fairness; and second, that matters should be dealt with wherever possible at the local level, by the affiliated body concerned rather than at Head Office or by the DCC, except where the matter is of such a serious nature that it may fall to be dealt with by the DCC itself; those matters are set out in Appendix 2 and are described also in the Guidance.

Fairness

7. This means fairness to all those who may be involved, but above all to any person(s) whose conduct has been called into question, since they may suffer some form of penalty or sanction as a result. We seek to achieve fairness through respect for “natural justice”, which means, in cases where the complaint is about misconduct,

- that people have an absolute right to know what they are accused of, and to be heard in their own defence, and
- that the investigation and determination of the matter must be free from bias and prejudice.

Consequently we expect that in such cases a person will be given a full statement, in writing, of any allegation, and will be given a reasonable opportunity to respond. We also expect that those who investigate and judge the matter will be impartial, with no close links to either party, and will reach their decision after a careful and objective appraisal of such facts as they are able to establish, rather than speculation or gossip. We also think it safer, to reduce the risk of actual or perceived bias, that there should be two or three people appointed to consider and determine any case requiring formal investigation.

Local handling

8. We expect complaints about standard of service to be resolved in almost all cases at the local level. Say, the wrong tickets were issued, so that the benefit could not be enjoyed; or a venue was unsuitable or dirty; or the event was not as advertised, or was felt to offer poor value for money. But an allegation of misconduct, for instance during an event run by an SRB, or on a trip organised by an AA or Region, or as noted above, the very rare case where the provision of very poor service may be tantamount to misconduct, may also be open to such treatment at the local level by the affiliated body concerned. It will be for the affiliated body to decide which of the following three possible routes should be taken:

- ix. informal resolution: the matter, even where misconduct is alleged, may arise from a misunderstanding, difference of opinion or minor mistake, which can be resolved by bringing the parties together to clear the air; in cases of poor service, where appropriate, an apology should be offered, and where money has been lost, reimbursement;

- x. local investigation and decision, by members of the affiliated body;
- xi. reference for advice to Head Office, when for one reason or another the affiliated body does not feel that it is the right place for the matter to be determined, especially if it is the sort of serious case of alleged misconduct which might be appropriate to the DCC, or to avoid the possibility of bias in selecting a panel to look into the matter.

These are covered in more detail in the Guidance.

Process

9. Because a member may not know to whom to direct a complaint or how to raise a concern about possible misconduct, it could come first to almost anyone: an event organiser, a committee member, a member of CSSC's staff. Every affiliated body should have a person (or more than one, say one in each region if it is a large body with a regional structure) to whom it is known that such matters should be referred and who will be familiar with the process for dealing with them. There is a Complaints Form on the CSSC website and where one is received in Head Office it will be referred to the affiliated body concerned.

10. If the matter cannot be resolved informally in the way described in para 8(i) above, it must be referred to the proper authority for consideration under para 8(ii) (and if necessary under para 8(iii) above. In the first instance, this should be:-

- where the matter concerns the conduct of a member, to an officer (chair or secretary) of the committee of the body responsible for the event at which or the premises on which the alleged misconduct occurred;
 - where the matter concerns the conduct of a member in carrying out their duties as a volunteer, to the Volunteer Support Manager, who will ensure that the handling of the complaint is overseen by the relevant member of the Volunteer Support Team;
 - where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of CSSC's Executive Team, to the Chief Executive Officer; and of a more junior member of staff, to the HR Director, who will also inform the other relevant Directors and the CEO;
 - where the complaint concerns the conduct of a member of CSSC's Management Board, to the CEO, who will also inform the chairman.
- Thereafter the process will follow, with such minor modifications as may be necessary, as described in the Guidance.

11. It is our policy to collect statistics regularly in order to monitor and to seek continuous improvement in the handling of complaints and allegations of misconduct. Details of how this is to be achieved can be found in the Guidance.

Appendix 1: Rule 7 of CSSC's Rules

Conduct

7.1 All members shall abide by these Rules and by the regulations, and by any policies of the Society and guidance of the Society from time to time in force.

7.2 The Board shall establish a Discipline and Complaints Committee, comprising at least two members of the Board and one member of the Society who is not a member of the Board, for the purpose of considering any conduct of a member or members which may be contrary to the provisions, policies and guidance mentioned in rule 7.1 above and thus detrimental to the interests of the Society in any respect. The members of the Committee shall be appointed by the Board in accordance with any regulations.

7.3 The Committee may expel from the Society or, for such period as it may decide, suspend from the privileges of membership, or impose sanctions against, any member who has been judged by the Committee to have acted in a manner detrimental to the interests of the Society in any respect.

7.4 Any member who has been so judged shall have a right of appeal against the decision of the Committee, and that appeal shall be decided by the Board. No member of the Board who has taken part in the decision appealed against shall take part in the appeal.

Appendix 2: Matters to be referred to Head Office for advice as to whether they should be dealt with by the Discipline and Complaints Committee

In general, these are what might be called the more serious types of misconduct:

- theft, fraud, misappropriation of funds, including falsification of accounts, expense claims and the like;
- violent, dangerous or threatening behaviour, in a particular any which cause injury to persons or damage to property;
- disclosure of confidential information acquired while acting on behalf of CSSC or an affiliated body;
- serious breaches of CSSC's Rules or Policies, for example the Diversity and equality policy.

Note: that allegations falling in the first two categories above may be appropriate for reference also to the police; and that how serious an incident is, will be a matter of judgment, and that reference to Head Office is for advice; so it should not be assumed that all cases referred will be taken on by the DCC.