



UACES is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Registered in England & Wales. Registration no:
1163773. Registered Address: Idea Space, 83
Lavender Hill, London, SW11 5QL, UK.

UACES COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

UACES views complaints as an opportunity to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint, as well as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future to prevent such issues occurring again. This complaints policy maps out how UACES employees and trustees should deal with complaints with regards to breaches of the UACES code of conduct.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To make sure staff and trustees of UACES know what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are resolved and that relationships, wherever possible, are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do and to learn for the future to prevent the issue from occurring again
- To avoid escalating disputes when seeking to resolve alleged breaches of the code of conduct. The procedures for addressing grievances (detailed below) aims to resolve allegations through consultation and mediation, whenever possible. At the same time, UACES recognises that punitive measures may be required to address some violations.

1. Definition of a Complaint

- 1.1. A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, about any aspect of UACES but particularly the conduct of its staff, its members, its trustees and attendees at UACES-run events (both virtual and in-person) in relation to the Code of Conduct.
- 1.2. This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should refer to UACES's internal grievance policy.

2. Who can make a complaint?

- 2.1. Complaints may come from any individual, volunteer or organisation who has a legitimate interest in UACES, including the general public if something is perceived to be improper in line with the UACES Code of Conduct. This includes those both directly affected by the issue complained about as well as those who may bear witness.
- 2.2. If it is not possible or appropriate for the two parties in question to resolve the issue themselves, then a complaint should be raised with UACES.

3. How can a complaint be made?

- 3.1. A complaint can be made verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.
- 3.2. A complaint can be made to any Officer of UACES or the Executive Director.

- 3.3 When a complaint has been made, it will usually be recorded by the person who receives the complaint. If the person who receives the complaint is implicated in the complaint, it must be recorded by another person.

4. Confidentiality

- 4.1 All complaint information will be handled confidentially and sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

5. Responsibility

- 5.1 Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the board of trustees of UACES. The Executive Director has oversight of the recording of complaints and must ensure that this is done in a timely and fair manner.

6. Review

- 6.1 This policy is reviewed regularly by the UACES EDI working group and updated as required.

7. Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

- 7.1 Written complaints may be sent to UACES, Idea Space, 83 Lavender Hill, London, SW11 5QL, UK or by e-mail at elinnemann@uaces.org. This email address is monitored by the Executive Director. If the complaint is about the Executive Director, please make it directly to the UACES EDI Officer, Professor Roberta Guerrina: Roberta.guerrina@bristol.ac.uk.
- 7.2 Verbal complaints may be made by phone to +44 (0) 204 5244294 or in person to any of UACES's staff or trustees at the same address as above or at any of our events.

8. Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details. Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded in writing. The person who receives a phone or in-person complaint should:

- If the person who receives the complaint is implicated in the complaint, they must identify another person to record the complaint.
- Complete a complaint form with all relevant details
- Ask the complainant whether they want redress and what kind of redress they are seeking
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to UACES, e.g. member, trustee, event attendee
- Inform the complainant of UACES complaints procedure
- Inform the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take

- Send a record of the complaint to the complainant so they can confirm that the recorded account is accurate.

9. Resolving Complaints

9.1 Initial Assessment of the Complaint

- 9.1.1 Details of how to make a complaint can be found in sections 3-8 of this policy.
- 9.1.2 On receiving the complaint, the Executive Director ensures it has been recorded in the complaints Logbook.
- 9.1.3 Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Executive Director will take a decision about whether it can be dealt with internally or whether it needs to be referred to an external body (eg the police if the matter involves a breach of the law).
 - 9.1.3.1 If the complaint is referred to an external body, UACES's investigation will pause pending consultation with that external body. All subsequent deadlines for communication and reporting will also be paused.
 - 9.1.3.2 Once the complaint has been investigated by the external body or the external body has agreed, UACES will continue its investigation.
- 9.1.4 If the complaint is to be dealt with internally, a complaint handler is appointed. Normally, this is the Executive Director unless they are implicated in the complaint, in which case it must be dealt with by another member of UACES staff.
- 9.1.5 Complaints should be acknowledged in writing to the complainant by the person handling the complaint within five working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

9.2 Informing the Respondent

- 9.2.1 If the complaint relates to a specific person (the respondent), they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.
- 9.2.2 If the Complainant expresses concerns that the sharing of a full complaint may lead to retaliation from the Respondent, the complaint handler should opt to instead summarize the complaint, and, if needed, keeping the identity of the Complainant confidential.
- 9.2.3 The default position is to share the complaint with the Respondent.

9.3 Informal Resolution

- 9.3.1 UACES should attempt, in the first instance, to resolve the complaint in an informal way if this is appropriate and the complainant accepts this course of action.
- 9.3.2 If the complainant agrees, the complaint handler, can offer to hold an informal mediation meeting at which the complainant and the respondent are able to discuss the complaint and find a suitable resolution. If the complaint relates to UACES as an

organisation such a meeting will be held between the complainant and the Chair and Executive Director of UACES.

- 9.3.3 If it is not possible or appropriate to find a resolution to the complaint through informal routes or via mediation, then the complaint will move onto the formal investigation stage.

9.4 Formal Investigation

9.4.1 The complaint handler will now investigate the complaint. This will involve gathering evidence and possibly speaking to witnesses. An investigator will be appointed.

9.4.2 The investigator may ask the parties and any witnesses (whether or not identified by either party) to present evidence within a reasonable period of time. All evidence will be given in writing (including e-mail). Individuals may also be called to present an oral statement which will be transcribed as evidence or to provide documentation. Those who provide evidence should be reminded at the outset that it will be used in order to resolve the matter.

9.4.3 The investigator will evaluate the evidence using the following criteria:

- Do the allegations involve inappropriate conduct as defined in the UACES Code of Conduct?
- Does the evidence suggest the alleged behaviour did indeed violate professional norms of dignity and respect?
- Does the alleged behaviour appear to constitute an isolated incident or a pattern of behaviour that has consequences for the ability of the UACES to maintain and promote a professional environment in which all members and participants treat one another with dignity and respect?

9.4.4 The investigator will prepare a report for the complaint handler. This report will summarize the investigation, provide a judgement regarding the occurrence of Code of Conduct violations, and recommend a resolution of the matter.

9.4.5 The complaints handler and the Investigator will then discuss the report and confirm the judgement and the best resolution.

9.4.6 At all stages of the investigation, confidentiality and the privacy of both the complainant and respondent will be respected as far as reasonably possible.

9.4.7 Complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an overview of actions taken to investigate the complaint and an indication of when a full reply will be given.

9.4.8 Complainants should receive a progress report once every month thereafter until a final decision has been reached.

9.4.9 Whether or not the complaint is upheld, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

9.5 Suggested Resolutions

Following an investigation, the investigator can recommend the following courses of action:

- 9.5.1 Recommend that on the basis of the evidence that the complaint be dismissed;
- 9.5.2 Make recommendations for informally resolving the matter (without necessarily attributing blame or responsibility). The objective will be to (re-) establish a professional and respectful working relationship between the parties.
- 9.5.3 Decide that there is a prima facie case and make recommendations to the UACES board of trustees for resolution of the matter.
- 9.5.4 Resolutions suggested may include, but are not limited to:
 - A private letter of reprimand;
 - A demand for a private apology.
 - A demand for a public apology.
 - A public letter of censure. This letter will be made public after the time frame for appeal has passed.
 - A suspension of membership of the Respondent for a specified period of time. Such a suspension would suspend access to UACES-related funding, and to participation in UACES meetings.
 - A ban from the right to publish in UACES-administered journals.
 - If related the respondent is a member of UACES staff – a disciplinary hearing may be convened

UACES reserves the right to change the outcome of a complaint if required should there be an unforeseen circumstance preventing the suggested resolution from being enacted – but only in exceptional circumstances and under the consideration of the board of trustees.

9.6 Appeals Stage

An appeal may be made regarding the outcome of the investigation, either by the complainant or by the Respondent, using the following procedures:

- 9.6.1 Any appeal should be made in writing to the Chair and Secretary of UACES, or alternatively the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer and Treasurer of UACES (unless any of these are involved in the complaint),
- 9.6.2 An appeal can be made only on grounds of procedural irregularity or where the outcome of the investigation is seen to be manifestly unreasonable.
- 9.6.3 The appeal must be made within three months of the communication of the decision.
- 9.6.4 Whether the appeal is received from complainant or respondent, the process will now move into stage two.

9.7 Formal Investigation - Stage Two

- 9.7.1 The complaint will now be reviewed at board level.

- 9.7.2 At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Board of Trustees – specifically the EDI working group.
- 9.7.3 The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.
- 9.7.4 The Board of Trustees will investigate the facts of the case themselves using the same procedure detailed in section 9.4 of this policy.
- 9.7.5 This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.
- 9.7.6 If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.
- 9.7.7 Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
- 9.7.8 Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.
- 9.7.9 Upon resolution of the complaint all involved parties should receive a final report – including those who worked on it.
- 9.7.10 The report will include recommendations to be taken by those who were involved (eg staff training).
- 9.7.11 The decision taken at this stage is final, but the board of trustees reserves the right to refer this matter to an external body (eg the Charity Commission) if they decide it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

9.8 External Stage

As UACES is a registered charity in England and Wales, the complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Charity Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>.

10. *Variation of the Complaints Procedure*

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about a Chair or trustee should not also have the Chair and/or trustee involved as a person leading a Stage Two review. Whether or not the complaint is upheld, any decision to change the procedure should be justified and the resulting actions outlined in the final response to the complaint describing the action taken to investigate the complaint

11. *Monitoring and Learning from Complaints*

- 11.1 Complaints are reviewed annually by the EDI working group to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.



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- 11.2 The EDI Officer should write a report of any complaints received and any lessons that need to be learned.
- 11.3 Confidentiality will be maintained at all times and information on complaints will only be shared with those who have a genuine need to receive it.
- 11.4 This report will be presented to the EDI working group and the board of trustees if necessary.

This policy was last reviewed on 31 March 2022.