

Problem solving 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 agreeing to help with IPEM business
- This procedure is different 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 further action will be dealt with fairly. The aim of this procedure is to encourage improvement in individual conduct and performance and to minimise disagreements.

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.
- 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 end their involvement in their role.

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- Problem solving meetings may be held online, and communication may be carried out solely via electronic means.
- At any time of the process the volunteer can decide to end their volunteer role.

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

The National Office manager will make every effort to resolve the matter by informal discussions, where appropriate. They should meet with the volunteer as soon as possible to ask what their view on the situation is. This is to establish the facts surrounding the issue. This discussion may include:

- a. making the volunteer aware of the particular behaviour causing concern, and the consequences of their behaviour.
- b. agreeing with the volunteer what they are expected to do in order to address this
- c. the timeframe for improvements and for any follow-up meetings.

These informal discussions will not be recorded.

If, after the agreed time, informal procedures do not bring a positive change, the volunteer manager should initiate the formal process

4. Formal problem solving procedure

If, despite informal discussions, the conduct or performance still does not meet acceptable standards, a further recorded discussion can follow and the volunteer may be told in writing:

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- a. The change expected by explaining what they need to do and agreeing on some measurable goal or target.
- b. A timescale to give the volunteer the opportunity to practice the correct behaviour and make a change
- c. If appropriate an offer of training or support or possibly a change of role if that would be an appropriate solution to the issue
- d. What will happen if the failure to improve continues

5. Final stage

If the conduct or performance remains unsatisfactory, a further meeting (where a Trustee, CEO or President will be present) can be called with the volunteer. This meeting will be an opportunity for the volunteer to answer the issues raised and talk to a senior member. At this meeting the decision can be made to:

- a. either allow another period of time to improve and to state clearly that any recurrence of the offence, lack of improvement or other serious misconduct within the stipulated period will result in ending their involvement as a volunteer or
- b. to end their involvement of the volunteer at this point

The Volunteer will be told of their right of appeal and route to making an appeal.

A record shall be kept of the meeting.

6. Ending the volunteer's activities

If the Volunteer's conduct or performance fails to improve after the time agreed in the final stage meeting the decision will be made to end the involvement of the Volunteer.

- a. The decision to end the involvement will be taken by the President and Chief Executive.
- b. The Subject Volunteer will be informed of the decision, and the reasons for the decision, as soon as possible. This will be effective as soon as the Volunteer has been informed.

7. Gross Misconduct

- a. Where a Volunteer is found guilty of gross misconduct, their involvement will normally end immediately and the above procedures 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 not continue in their volunteer activities
- d. If, after the investigation it is deemed that the volunteer has committed an offence of gross misconduct, the normal consequence will be ending their involvement without notice. The volunteer will be notified of the decision to end their involvement and appeal process as soon as possible.

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- 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
 - Being unfit to carry out their role through alcohol or illegal drugs
 - Gross negligence

8. Appeals

- a. Subject Volunteers may appeal a decision to end their involvement 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.
- c. They 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 will 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.