

SYDNEY MECHANICS' SCHOOL OF ARTS (SMSA)

COMPLAINTS POLICY

PURPOSE

This policy sets out how the SMSA ensures that matters of concern or complaints raised by members, staff, clients or contractors are handled objectively, expertly and promptly.

The SMSA will adopt the following set of guiding principles¹ for the management of complaints:



SCOPE

This policy applies to all Board members, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and staff of the SMSA who receive or manage complaints from members, clients and contractors, made to or about the SMSA, regarding its services and staff, or about the complaints handling process.

POLICY STATEMENT

3.3.1 The SMSA will *facilitate* complaints

- 1.1. People making complaints will be:
 - a. provided with information about processes and how to use them
 - b. listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved where appropriate in the complaints process
 - c. provided with reasons for decisions and any options for redress or review.
- 1.2. The SMSA will take reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them.
- 1.3. The SMSA will accept anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.
- 1.4. The SMSA will consider requests from a complainant wishing to involve a support person in the complaints process.
- 1.5. The SMSA will publish this complaints policy on its website.

¹ Volunteering Australia (www.volunteeringaustralia.org) Resource Hub, Fact sheet: *Complaint handling by charities and not-for-profits*, January 2021 (accessed 20 March 2024)

2. The SMSA will **respond** to complaints

- 2.1 Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact. Where appropriate, the SMSA representative may offer an explanation or apology to the person making a complaint.
- 2.2 All other complaints should be referred to the CEO, who will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any SMSA representative whose conduct or service is being complained about.
- 2.3 Any complaint made against or involving a Board member must be brought promptly to the attention of all Board members.
- 2.4 Any complaint concerning the CEO should be referred to the President, or a Vice President, of the Board.
- 2.5 It is preferable that complaints are made in writing to ensure the circumstances are recorded accurately. However, the CEO may make a written record of a verbal complaint and endeavour to have the complainant sign as to its accuracy.
- 2.6 Receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged promptly.
- 2.7 Complaints will be assessed and prioritised in accordance with urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised.
- 2.8 Those making a complaint will be advised of the steps in the complaints process; the expected time frame for action; the progress of the matter and any reason for delay; their likely involvement in the process; and, the possible or likely outcome of the complaint.
- 2.9 Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly.
- 2.10 Confidentiality will be maintained, as far as practical and appropriate.
- 2.11 The CEO must advise the Board of any complaint of a very serious nature or likely to involve a possible breach of the law, so that Board may consider referring it to an appropriate external expert party or agency.

3. The SMSA will **manage** and **resolve** complaints

- 3.1 The preferred outcome for any complaint is agreement between the parties that the matter is resolved to their mutual satisfaction.
- 3.2 The SMSA will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct by a complainant that negatively and unreasonably affects a staff or Board member(s).
- 3.3 The CEO will conduct analysis, evaluation and reporting on complaints for the Board (at least annually) for the purpose of continuous improvement of the complaints management system and other SMSA systems.

PROCEDURES

The key stages in the SMSA complaint management system are set out below.

Step	Action	Responsible officer
Receive	Document: 1. Contact information 2. Date of complaint 3. Issues raised 4. Outcome sought by complainant 5. Any other relevant information 6. Support required by complainant	CEO or delegate President or Vice President, if complaint in relation to CEO or Board member
Acknowledge	1. Acknowledge receipt in writing/by email within 5 working days	CEO or delegate President or Vice President
Initial assessment	Determine: 1. Seriousness/complexity/urgency 2. Concern for health and safety 3. Effect of complaint on all parties 4. Risk if resolution delayed 5. Need for outside referral for help	CEO President or Vice President
Investigation	1. Gather further information regarding issue, person or area of complaint 2. Investigate claims made	CEO President or Vice President
Determine outcome	Contact complainant regarding: 1. Outcome 2. Reasons for decision 3. Remedy or resolution 4. Any options for review or appeal	CEO President or Vice President
Document outcome	Keep records: 1. All relevant files / correspondence 2. Outcome and any recommendations	CEO or delegate
Analyse data	1. Prepare annual report to Board	CEO

DEFINITIONS

None

REFERENCES

The following sources were used in the 2024 review of this document:

Volunteering Australia (www.volunteeringaustralia.org) Resource Hub, Fact sheet: *Complaint handling by charities and not-for-profits, January 2021* (accessed 20 March 2024)