

Code of conduct (Grievances, Complaints, Problems)

Rationale

The objective of the Cleckheaton U3A (CU3A) is to encourage an active interest in further education for persons over 50 years of age. The U3A organises activities and events for the benefit of all its members.

In any organisation, there will be problems, grievances and complaints from time to time and it is important for members to know where to turn for help, support and advice, so that whatever the issue, it can be dealt with quickly, objectively and appropriately.

It is in everyone's interest that:-

- Problems, grievances and complaints are dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Every effort is made to settle the issue without having to resort to formal action.
- Confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

It is our aim to try to sort out any problems by talking and resolving it informally and amicably with the person/people concerned but if this fails then we will follow a formal procedure. Where an individual may feel that an issue has not been dealt with appropriately it is important, for all involved, that there is a clear and transparent process for a complaint to be looked into and followed up.

Procedures

Stage 1: Meet with, write or speak to the person involved or the tutor of your class in an attempt to resolve the issue. The Tutor liaison person from the committee will help with this. If the complaint is about a committee member then the Chair or the Vice chair will deal with the complaint.

Stage 2: If you are not satisfied after Stage 1, write to or contact the secretary of the CU3A committee. He/she will investigate the complaint and aim to respond in writing within ten (10) working days.

Stage 3: If you are not satisfied after stage 2, write to the Chair of the CU3A who will convene a Complaints Panel of at least three (3) people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and they will aim to hear the complaint within fifteen (15) working days. You will be entitled to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied* if you so wish. The panel will give a decision in writing within 5 working days of the hearing to you. A copy of the decision will be forwarded to any persons who are the subject of your complaint.

Stage 4: You will have the right to appeal about the process to an appeals panel but this will not affect the decision unless the process you have gone through is deemed to be unfair.

* You can be accompanied by another person who can provide support but has no right to address the Complaint Panel

Making and investigating a complaint:

- A form is available to help you structure the content of the complaint.

- The secretary will co-ordinate the response to complaints which go past Stage 1 by requesting notes and further information from the individuals involved, as well as by communicating with the complainant. A written record of all complaints and documentation relating to their handling of this procedure will be kept confidential.

Procedures when a complaint is received:

Informal stages (stages1 &2)

- Establish the facts quickly, consulting as many people as possible.
- Have an informal discussion with all concerned to summarise the problem, hear everybody's views and clear the air.
- If it is felt there is a case to answer but it is of a relatively minor issue, it will be make clear to all present that there must be no repeat of the sort of actions/behaviour that led to the problem.
- If it is felt that the situation needs a more formal approach then the complaint will be moved to stage 3

Formal stage (stage 3)

- A Complaints Panel of at least three (3) people who were not directly involved in the matter from the committee will be directed to consider the issue.
- The panel will hold a meeting where everyone involved will be invited and they will be able to state their case.
- The panel will meet afterwards to agree upon a course of action, having taken into account any mitigating circumstances.

Possible forms of action

- A verbal warning given by the Chair with another committee member present. Which will be confirmed in writing
- A written warning which states clearly what will happen if the situation is repeated.
- Exclusion from the class/event where the incident has occurred.
- Termination of their CU3A membership

Any member who is excluded from a class or the CU3A after a hearing has the right of appeal providing it is lodged within a 7 day period and the whole committee will consider the persons appeal.

Documentation

Any documentation from any complaint will be kept securely by the U3A secretary. The documentation will be used:

- To ensure any complaints are dealt with in a similar manner – to ensure a consistent approach.
- To provide information should a member make another complaint or should another complaint be brought against the same person. This is to ensure fairness to all.