



IATEFL

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IATEFL Complaints Procedure

1. IATEFL's commitment

1.1 IATEFL is committed to delivering a high quality service to its members. Members are provided with procedures to follow where there is cause for concern.

1.2 We aim to handle complaints in a way that:

- encourages informal conciliation
- is fair and efficient
- treats complaints with appropriate seriousness, sympathy and confidentiality
- aims for early resolution.

2. Types of complaint

The following list indicates examples of the type of complaint, covered by this procedure:

- the behaviour of a committee member
- the behaviour of a member of IATEFL
- a failing in an IATEFL service
- discrimination (on the grounds of ethnicity, country of origin, race, first language, religion or belief, age, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disability)
- harassment

The complaints procedure may also be followed where a member's actions are in breach of the association's rules and code of conduct, even if a complaint from another member has not been received.

Complaints made against an IATEFL staff member would follow the staff grievance procedure.

3. Results of complaints

Complaints will not always produce the results preferred by the complainant. For instance, policy decisions or resourcing may affect the level of service provided. However we undertake to inform you of the results of a complaint and the reasons for it.

4. Anonymity

A copy of the written complaint will normally be supplied to the person who is the subject of the grievance. In general, those about whom a complaint is being made have a right to know what is being claimed and who is making a complaint. There are exceptions to this rule, for instance in the early stages of some cases of harassment where the person making the complaint has the right to remain anonymous until the outcome of the investigation has been decided.

5. Confidentiality

It is IATEFL's expectation that the confidentiality of the documentation generated by a complaint will be respected by all parties.

6. The complaints procedure

6.1 **Stage 1**

- Complaints of a minor nature should be raised with the person responsible or with the chair of an appropriate committee with the aim of resolving the problem directly and informally.

6.2 **Stage 2**

- Where it has not been possible to resolve matters to your satisfaction under Stage 1, you should write to the Chief Executive. Your complaint must be specific and comprehensively documented. You should present full details, including your name and address, any relevant documentation, dates, locations and witnesses as appropriate. You should also detail any previous unsuccessful attempts at resolution.
- You will receive an acknowledgement of your complaint. This will normally be within 5 working days. You will be informed if there is likely to be any delay in the process.
- A meeting will be arranged between you and the Chief Executive, or other appropriate delegated person, to discuss the matter. Wherever possible the Chief Executive or delegated person will take a second party to observe the meeting. If there is no appropriate person available within the country of the complainant, then a virtual meeting may be held. You may, if you wish, be accompanied by a fellow member. A written record of the meeting will be made by the Chief Executive or appointed person.
- The Chief Executive or appointed person, and a second party, will hold a separate meeting with the person who is the subject of the complaint, who may be accompanied by a fellow member. The Chief Executive or delegated person may interview any witnesses. A written record of the meeting will be made.
- The Chief Executive may delegate the task to another person in the event that he/she considers that he/she knows the other party too well and that this might compromise the impartiality of the result.
- The Chief Executive will notify you in writing of the decision reached and the reason for it, together with any consequent action.
- The procedure outlined in Stage 2 will normally be completed within a month.

6.3 **Stage 3**

- If the complaint remains unresolved under Stage 2 to your satisfaction, you may write to the President explaining why this is so, and seek an enquiry by a Complaints Committee.
- Complaints made against the Chief Executive or one, several, or all of the Board of Trustees automatically proceed to Stage 3, and should be addressed to the President and Vice President.
- A Complaints Committee will be formed from at least three of the trustees who will investigate further. They may seek further written evidence from you to clarify matters. They may also decide, if in their opinion the evidence justifies it, to uphold (or not to do so) a complaint without proceeding further with investigation.
- Unless the complaint is made against all of the Board of Trustees, the Complaints Committee will not include any trustee implicated in a complaint.
- The Complaints Committee may decide to further interview you and the person who is the subject of the complaint and any witnesses. You may be accompanied by a fellow member. The person who is the subject of the complaint may also be accompanied by a fellow member.
- A written record will be made of the proceedings.
- IATEFL will notify you in writing of the decision reached and the reason for it, together with any consequent action.

6.4 **Stage 4**

- If the complaint remains unresolved to your satisfaction after Stage 3, you may request that the Board of Trustees seek an Independent Review of the case.
- The Board of Trustees may also decide to refer a complaint for Independent Review earlier in the process if they feel that this would expedite the process.
- The Independent Review is undertaken by an independent person appointed for a term of office of three years (renewable) by the Board of Trustees to scrutinise complaints and provide an opinion in each case.
- When a complaint is referred for Independent Review, Head Office will provide a copy of all the relevant documentation from previous stages in the process.
- The person undertaking the Independent Review may request provision of other documents, responses to queries and any other evidence which he/she feels would be helpful in considering the case.
- The Independent Review will consider all cases referred with dispatch and will normally attempt to reach a ruling in not more than 6 weeks from the date of reference of the complaint. The review opinion is conveyed in a reasoned judgement which examines the evidence presented by both sides, any relevant association policies, procedures or rules, and the balance of probabilities in the case.
- Referring a complaint for Independent Review does not affect your right to take other legal action, or to refer the case to the Charity Commission.
- The Board of Trustees will consider the opinion provided in the Independent Review and make a final ruling on the case. This is the end of the association's complaint process and there is no further form of appeal.

7. **Consequences**

- If a complaint is upheld, the subject of the complaint will be notified in writing.
- The Association reserves the right to suspend or exclude a member or non-member from an IATEFL media platform temporarily or permanently, remove a volunteer from their post, or to expel a member should it consider the upheld complaint to be of a sufficiently serious nature.
- IATEFL also reserves the right to inform relevant external bodies or authorities in order to fulfil its legal responsibilities.
- If a second complaint is upheld against the same person, previous complaints, and the findings of these complaints, may be taken into consideration.
- In the case of a complaint being upheld against a member of staff, the disciplinary procedure will be enacted.

Related documents:

- IATEFL Articles of Association (available on website)
- IATEFL Code of Conduct (available on website)
- IATEFL Social Media Policy (available on website)
- IATEFL's Mission, Goals and Practices (available on website)
- SIG Handbook (available on website)
- Executive committee handbook (available on website)