

## **Complaints Procedure: ASSAP**

### **A complaint is:**

An expression of dissatisfaction about an aspect of the services provided to the members or users of the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena. Complaints might relate to: procedural errors; failure to fulfil commitments; failure to act on the above within a reasonable period of time; unacceptable behaviour on the part of any member or user. If you have grievance with a particular Executive Member or ASSAP Group in the course of their work with ASSAP, you have the option to attempt to remove them from office or their affiliation with ASSAP respectively.

### **Before you complain**

No complaint can be anonymous. If you have a complaint we expect you to make it, and not someone else. If you name another person in a complaint, they have a right to know what is said about them as soon as possible, and who is making the complaint. Sensitivity will be shown by the person dealing with your complaint and you will not be discriminated against or suffer recrimination as a result of making a complaint.

However, if a complaint is found to be malicious ASSAP may have to consider disciplinary proceedings, or legal proceedings in the case of libelous or slanderous complaints.

You should not expect that a complaint will always produce the outcome you would prefer. Provision of some services may be dependent on resources or policy decisions made by ASSAP. However, each complaint will be carefully considered, and you will be told the reasons for any decision. There are mechanisms for further appeal if you remain dissatisfied.

### **How to complain**

Complaints should be made within three months of the member or user becoming aware of the issue.

#### Resolving complaints informally:

In the first instance users and members are encouraged to sensitively approach the individual with whom the user or member has grievance, in order to attempt to resolve the matter informally to the satisfaction of both parties.

#### Resolving complaints formally:

If the user or member cannot, for any reason, resolve their complaint by informal means they should contact the Chairman of ASSAP.

The complaint shall be acknowledged within three days of receipt.

The aim is to investigate your complaint properly and give you a reply within ten days, setting out how the problem will be dealt with. If this is not possible, an interim response will be made informing you of the action taken to date or being considered.

### How complaints are resolved:

The Chairman shall refer the complaint to another Member of the Executive – known as the Investigating Member – in accordance with internal procedures.

If the Investigating Member cannot mediate between the parties involved with the complaint, the complaint shall be referred to a Complaints Panel within ten days of receipt of the complaint.

The Complaints Panel shall comprise all attending Members of the Executive with the exception of the Chairman (with the exception of the Chairman, who shall act as the Appeals Officer) and be chaired by the Investigating Member. However Executive Members with a prejudicial interest should so declare and should not vote in the proceedings.

The Panel shall consider the written complaint and request written information from the individual or party about whom the complaint arose, and from any other relevant party.

The Panel shall make a resolution and communicate this resolution to all parties within twenty-one days of referral.

Neither the Executive Committee nor any other formal meeting shall discuss the complaint.

In the event that the complaint is against the Chairman, he or she will nominate another Appeals Officer in accordance with internal procedures – who themselves shall not be involved with the Complaints Panel.

### **Appeals**

If you remain dissatisfied you should outline in writing the reasons for your dissatisfaction and send it to the Appeals Officer, usually the ASSAP Chairman. The Chairman, who is not involved with the Complaints Panel, shall be the final arbiter.

### **Other Grievance Procedures**

Should a matter of grievance arise against an ASSAP AAI, Executive Member or an ASSAP Group any member of ASSAP may use their right as member to move a motion, in person or in writing, to the ASSAP Executive.

A motion may call for the Censure of an Executive Member. A motion may be presented to Censure an Executive Member by a simple majority vote of the Executive members present. A Censure is a formal reprimand. Votes of Censure will be reported in the ASSAP annual report. The ASSAP Articles of Association make provision for the removal of an Executive Member from office by an EGM. Please find extracts from the Articles of Association separate to this document.

A motion may call for the removal of affiliation status from an ASSAP Group. A motion requires a simple majority of present Executive Member votes to be

carried. The person moving the motion shall have the right to attend the meeting and should be invited.

Should the mover of the motion be dissatisfied with the Executive's decision, they are within their rights to move a motion at the ASSAP AGM or an ASSAP EGM as the highest decision making body within ASSAP. Such a motion can be made direct to a general meeting without reference to the Executive. Similarly, any person dissatisfied with the resolution of the Executive may appeal to an ASSAP General Meeting; ASSAP General Meetings are the highest decision-making body within ASSAP.

Members can also refer matters of maladministration to the Charities Commission. It should be noted that, at time of writing, the Commission leaves the resolution of individual complaints to the charity involved, and is unlikely to take on such cases.

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