



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

## Southwell U3A

### Problems, grievance and complaints policy

Problems and grievances will occur from time to time and it is important that members know where to turn for help, advice and support, so that whatever the issue, it can be dealt with quickly, objectively and appropriately. Southwell U3A will address problems, grievances and complaints in accordance with this policy and in doing so will

- maintain confidentiality in all circumstances,
- ensure all actions taken are documented,
- deal with problems, grievances and complaints quickly and fairly, and
- do all it can to settle the issue without having to resort to formal disciplinary action.

#### 1. Problems etc for a group leader within an interest group

Problems that can arise within a group include

- disruptive and/or unsocial behaviour,
- poor attendance/timekeeping,
- unsuitability,
- failure to pay fees,
- disagreement between members.

The group leader should first try to resolve the situation informally and amicably by just having a quiet word with the member/members in question.

If it requires more or this fails and the problem persists, the group leader should refer the matter to the Groups' Co-ordinator on the committee. The group leader should not allow a situation to continue which impacts on the enjoyment of other members of the group.

A group leader does not have the authority to exclude a member from the group permanently. That decision must be made by the committee and should a group leader refuse to have a member in the group, it will not be possible for that group to continue with that member running it. Similarly if a leader refuses to have a particular member in his/her house, then it will not be possible for the group to continue to be hosted there.

#### 2. Problems etc with the group leader

Initially, the member/members should try to resolve the problem by discussing it with the group leader. However, if this is unsuccessful or if the member/members involved feel unable to do so, the matter should be referred to the Group's Co-ordinator.

#### 3. Problems etc within the U3A as a whole

Problems that can arise within the U3A may be

- member to member,
- member and the committee,

- member and an individual trustee,
- a member who brings the U3A into disrepute or acts in a way which is prejudicial to the U3A,
- a member who causes damage to property and/or equipment through misuse/negligence etc.

Any such instance should initially be referred to the Vice-Chairman, unless that person is personally involved, in which case the Chairman will decide who should take over.

#### **4. Initial procedure when a problem etc is referred**

The following steps will be taken when a problem etc is first referred

- the facts will be established quickly, consulting as many people as is necessary,
- an informal discussion will be held with all concerned to summarise the problem, hear everybody's views and clear the air,
- if there is a case to answer but nevertheless a minor issue, make it clear to all present that there must be no repeat of the sort of actions/behaviour which led to this problem,
- if, however, the situation warrants a more formal approach or a particular course of action e.g. exclusion from an interest group, the matter must be referred to the committee to agree a course of action.

#### **5. Committee procedure**

Where a problem etc is referred to the committee, the committee will

- invite the relevant people to a committee meeting; those invited may be accompanied by a friend if he/she so chooses,
- allow the individuals concerned to state their case and discuss the matter with them,
- keep detailed written records of the proceedings,
- consider the matter, take into account any mitigating circumstances and make its decision.

The committee will convey its decision to those concerned in writing after the meeting.

#### **6. Possible forms of disciplinary action**

- Level 1 - a verbal warning about future conduct by an elected officer with another officer present, which should be confirmed in writing,
- Level 2 - a written warning which clearly states what will happen if the situation is repeated,
- Level 3 - a final written warning,
- Level 4 - exclusion from an interest group,
- Level 5 - termination of U3A membership.

Most problems should be resolved through an informal chat or at level 1 or 2. However, in the case of an extremely serious proven misdemeanour, for example,

- sexual/racial abuse, discrimination, harassment, bullying,
- dangerous or violent behaviour,
- falsification of expense claims,
- theft,
- malicious damage,
- conduct which brings the U3A movement into disrepute or is prejudicial to Southwell U3A or the running of Southwell U3A,

the committee has the right to move immediately to Levels 3, 4 or 5.

## **7. Right of Appeal**

Before a member is excluded from an interest group or has his/her membership terminated, a right of appeal should be offered and in the case of expulsion from the U3A, must be offered. An appeal, providing it is lodged within a 7 day period, can take the form of written representation for the committee to consider or a request for a right of reply.

If it is the latter, a meeting of the whole committee should be called and the member in question should be asked to attend and can be accompanied by a friend who may also speak in a personal capacity. The whole issue should be summarised and then the member given the opportunity to speak, along with the supporter if so desired. In both cases, the committee will review its decision, taking into account any mitigating circumstances, and then make a final decision, which must be communicated in writing.

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