

# Complaints Policy



The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) is fully committed to providing the highest quality of service and support possible to all members. ASCL is also eager to ensure that members' needs are met appropriately and ASCL's services are always improving.

This document sets out ASCL's policy that ensures that:

- members are fully aware of their right to make a complaint where appropriate and necessary
- members are aware of the procedures to be followed when furthering a complaint
- all complaints are addressed and resolved in a fair, prompt and efficient manner

#### **Section A: Time limit for making a complaint**

- 1 ASCL urges members who have a concern or wish to make a complaint to contact ASCL as soon as possible.
- 2 Formal complaints (see Section C) must be made within three months of the:
  - incident giving rise to the complaint or
  - member becoming aware of the incident
- 3 ASCL shall be unable to consider any complaint made outside of this period unless there are exceptionally compelling grounds as to why the complaint could not have been made within the specified time period e.g. illness, mental capacity. This is a matter for ASCL's sole discretion.

#### **Section B: Informal concerns**

- 4 In order to seek to resolve any complaint at the earliest stage possible, members are asked to raise their concerns locally in the first instance.
- 5 Informal concerns should be raised directly with the staff member involved at a local level.
- 6 Informal concerns should be raised either verbally or in writing and it should be made clear by members that an informal complaint is being raised at the time.

#### **Section C: Formal complaints**

- 7 If the outcome in response to any concern is not acceptable, members should lodge a formal complaint.

- 8 A formal complaint must be made in writing by completing the 'ASCL Complaint Form'; a copy of which is available **here**. Complaints are to be sent to:

- **complaints@ascl.org.uk** or

- The Director of People and Partnerships, The Association of School and College Leaders, 2nd Floor, Peat House, 1 Waterloo Way, Leicester LE1 6LP

- 9 Members should provide as much information as possible when setting out their complaint, in addition to supporting evidence. This enables ASCL to adopt a focused approach when addressing concerns which are raised.
- 10 Upon receipt of a completed complaint form submitted within the time limit specified in Section A, ASCL shall appoint an appropriate senior member of staff to investigate the complaint.
- 11 ASCL shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days of receipt.
- 12 ASCL shall then consider and investigate the complaint. During this period, the investigating officer may contact the complainant to discuss the complaint further.
- 13 Subject to Sections E and F, within 20 working days from the date of the acknowledgment ASCL shall provide a written response to the complainant setting out:
  - a the outcome of the investigation and
  - b any solutions proposed, if appropriate
- 14 ASCL reserves the right to extend the period of investigation referred to in paragraph 13 depending on the complexity of issues being considered. This is a matter for ASCL's sole discretion. ASCL shall keep complainants notified duly of any delay to a response if anticipated.

#### **Section D: Right of Appeal**

- 15 Complainants have a right to appeal the outcome of the formal complaint.
- 16 Any appeal request should be made within five working days of receipt of the outcome.
- 17 Subject to Section E, the appeal should be made in writing and should be marked for the attention of the

General Secretary of ASCL. The General Secretary will appoint a person of appropriate seniority to conduct the appeal process.

- 18 Complainants shall receive the outcome of any appeal review within ten working days of ASCL's receipt. The appeal outcome shall be final.

### **Section E: Complaints against the General Secretary**

- 19 Complaints about the General Secretary shall be referred on to the Presidential Trio for resolution.
- 20 The complaint shall be reviewed by two members of the Presidential Trio who will respond directly to the complainant.
- 21 The acknowledgement and response to a formal complaint directed against the General Secretary shall be in accordance with the deadlines referred to in Section C.
- 22 Any appeal against the outcome of a formal complaint against the General Secretary shall be reviewed by the third member of the Presidential Trio and either ASCL's honorary treasurer or honorary secretary.
- 23 A written response to the appeal shall be sent within 20 working days.
- 24 Complaints arising from the General Secretary's decision in connection with an Appeal hearing under Section D of this document shall not be deemed a valid ground to lodge a complaint under this section.
- 25 Given professional commitments of the Presidential Trio, ASCL reserves the right to extend the periods within which a response to either a complaint or an appeal is provided. ASCL shall keep complainants notified duly of any delay to a response if anticipated.

### **Section F: Complaints against a solicitor**

- 26 If the original complaint is about one of ASCL's in-house solicitors, the procedures to be followed are set out in Sections C and D.
- 27 Once procedures in Section C and D have been exhausted, members have recourse to further pursue their complaint through the Legal Ombudsman within six months of receiving the outcome of their formal complaint.

### **Section G: Unreasonable behaviour when making complaints**

- 28 ASCL staff have a right to be respected and to feel safe at work. ASCL will not tolerate aggressive, abusive, or unreasonable behaviour towards its staff. ASCL require that members refrain from unreasonable behaviour when making complaints.
- 29 ASCL retains the right, where it considers the actions of members to be unreasonable or unacceptable, to withdraw, restrict or change access to ASCL's services.

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Latest date for review: September 2027

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