

Complaints Policy

The SLSA is committed to maintain the highest standards and to working in an open and accountable way.

If you have concerns that the conduct of a member of the SLSA, a trustee of the SLSA, or the SLSA as an organisation has fallen short of appropriate standards, you may wish to complain. This policy document provides information about how to submit complaints and how complaints are to be dealt with.

The SLSA's complaints policy is based on the following aims:

- To ensure that making a complaint is as easy as possible.
- To deal with complaints promptly, fairly, and sensitively.
- To maintain confidentiality, and where this is not possible or appropriate to communicate with those concerned about this.
- To resolve complaints informally where possible.
- To record complaints and the correspondence related to them in accordance with our data protection policy.
- To understand the cause of all complaints, to learn from them and to use them to improve.

The SLSA recognises that raising concerns can involve power imbalances and will ensure that at all stages it acts impartially and is sensitive to such power dynamics.

Many complaints will be raised informally with the chair of the SLSA and resolved quickly. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

Formal Complaints

There are three types of formal complaint:

1. Complaints against SLSA members, where the complainant is concerned that a member's conduct has fallen below an acceptable standard such that termination of membership is in the best interests of the SLSA (see further the Termination of Membership policy).
2. Complaints against SLSA trustees, where the complainant is concerned that a trustee's conduct has fallen below an acceptable standard, including breaches of the Trustee Code of Conduct and the law relating to charitable trustees, as well as other conduct that brings the organisation into disrepute.
3. Complaints against the SLSA as an organisation.

All formal complaints should be submitted either by email or in writing to the Chair of the SLSA. If the complaint is against the Chair, your complaint email/letter should be sent to the Vice Chair (note, if your complaint relates to the Chair, all references to the Chair in this policy shall be read as the Vice-Chair).

To help the SLSA resolve your complaint quickly and effectively, you should bring the matter to our attention as quickly as possible, normally within eight weeks of the matter arising. Your complaint should provide the following information:

- Your name, organisation (if relevant), address, telephone number and email address.
 - If you do not wish to be contacted in a particular way, please let us know and we will respect this.
 - Anonymous complaints can be made, but the SLSA reserves the right not to consider anonymous complaints.
- Details of the issue(s), including details about locations, dates and times, witnesses and any action taken to date.
- Details of what action you want the SLSA to take to address your concern/s.

Formal complaints will be acknowledged by the Chair as swiftly as possible, and in any event within five working days.

What Will Happen Next?

1. Complaints about SLSA members

- The Chair will nominate a Trustee to consider your complaint.
 - Every effort will be made to ensure that the nominated Trustee has no or limited connections to you or the member/s complained about.
 - In appropriate circumstances, and/or at your request, the chair will consider gender matching in the nomination of the Trustee.
- The nominated Trustee will contact you to confirm that the complaint is under consideration.
 - In relation to the timescale for consideration of your complaint, the nominated Trustee will let you know the date of the next Trustee meeting which might consider your complaint, or if your complaint is received shortly before a meeting of the Trustees, might advise you of the date (or likely date) of the following meeting. You should note that depending on the timing of Trustee meetings, as well as the time taken to consider your complaint, this process could take several months, but we will endeavour to consider your complaint as swiftly as possible.
 - The nominated trustee may request more information or ask for clarification of your complaint. They may also contact the member(s) you have complained about to seek their account, and where appropriate, specialist advice may also be sought.

- Following the investigation, the nominated trustee will make a recommendation to the chair on how to resolve the complaint, and, at this time, will send you details of their recommendation.
 - If you are not content with the recommendation, or are not satisfied with how the nominated trustee has handled your complaint (for example, because contact has been inadequate), you should contact the chair directly within 10 working days of the trustee recommendation.
- If the Chair considers that to resolve the complaint it is in the best interests of the SLSA to terminate the membership of the member complained about, the Chair will bring the issue for consideration of the Board of Trustees at the next Trustee meeting.
 - If the Chair recommends the termination of the member's membership, the member complained about will have an opportunity to respond to the details of the complaint against them.
 - The Chair's decision about whether to bring the matter to Trustees is final. But, please note that you have a separate right under the Termination of Membership policy to write and request that Trustees consider termination. The Chair is entitled in this event to inform Trustees about the outcome of the complaints process.

2. Complaints about SLSA trustees

- Complaints about SLSA Trustees will be considered by the Chair, who will inform you of this when acknowledging your formal complaint (see above).
 - In relation to the timescale for consideration of your complaint, the Chair will let you know the date of the next Trustees meeting which might consider your complaint, or if your complaint is received shortly before a meeting of the Trustees, might advise you of the date (or likely date) of the following meeting. You should note that depending on the timing of Trustee meetings, as well as the time taken to consider your complaint, this process could take several months, but we will endeavour to consider your complaint as swiftly as possible.
 - The Chair may request more information or ask for clarification of your complaint. They may also contact the Trustee(s) you have complained about to seek their account, and, where appropriate, specialist advice may also be sought.
- The Chair will reach a conclusion on your complaint and will notify you of their decision.
 - The Chair could recommend that the Board of Trustees vote to request the Trustee resign (see the Trustee Code of Conduct for further details), and/or could recommend that the Trustee's SLSA membership be terminated. If the Chair recommends the resignation or the termination of membership of the Trustee, that Trustee will have an opportunity to respond to the details of the complaint against them.

- If the Chair considers that there has been no substantial breach of the Trustee Code of Conduct, they will not refer the matter to the Board of Trustees. If you are not content with this decision, you may wish to consider whether it is appropriate to notify the Charity Commission (see further, 'complaints about the SLSA' below).
- In relation to termination of a Trustee's SLSA membership, the Chair's decision about whether to bring the matter to Trustees is final, but you should note that you have a separate right under the Termination of Membership policy to write and request Trustees consider termination. The Chair is entitled in this event to inform Trustees about the outcome of the complaints process.

3. Complaints about the SLSA as an organisation

- Complaints about SLSA as an organisation will be considered by the Chair, or, where appropriate, the Chair might nominate another Trustee to consider your complaint. You will be informed about this either in the acknowledgment of your complaint or following the nomination of the Trustee.
- A response to your complaint will be made within 31 working days of receipt of the complaint. Whilst we will endeavour to have completed the investigations and to have made our substantive response by that date, if this is not been possible an update will be provided with an expected final response date.
- This response will set out actions to be taken in response to your complaint, or an explanation of our reasons for not taking action in response to your concerns (if, for example, your complaint relates to decisions which the SLSA is not responsible for).
- The Socio-Legal Studies Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered in England and Wales, number 1186333, and if you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may wish to consider a complaint to the Charity Commission. Details of their approach to complaints can be found [here](#) (website last accessed August 2020).

Change Record

Date of change	Changed by	Comments
24/01/2025	-	Approved by the Board