



## **SLSA Complaints Policy**

This policy sets out procedures for (1) complaints about member or members of the SLSA, (2) complaints about a Trustee of the SLSA, and (3) complaints about the SLSA as an organisation.

### **Complaints about a member of the SLSA**

The SLSA Trustees have the power to terminate membership if the charity trustees decide that it is in the best interests of the CIO that the member in question should be removed from membership. More details about the termination of membership process are set out in the Termination of Membership policy.

Our termination policy states that allegations regarding the following may provide a justification for commencing the termination process:

- A serious criminal offence
- Conduct in the course of the member's academic employment which, in the considered view of the trustees, amounts to misconduct (for example, bullying, sexual harassment).
- Academic misconduct (for example, plagiarism, unethical research practice)
- Dishonesty in relation to the member's interactions with the SLSA

This list is non-exhaustive.

If you believe that a member of the SLSA has behaved in a way which merits termination of their membership, you are encouraged to submit a complaint to the Chair of the SLSA. If your complaint relates to a Trustee or the Chair, please refer to the following section ('Complaints about a Trustee of the SLSA').

The Chair will nominate a Trustee to consider your complaint, and will seek as far as possible to nominate a Trustee who has no/limited connections to yourself or the member(s) complained about. In appropriate circumstances and/or on your request, the Chair will consider gender matching in the nomination of this Trustee. The Chair will acknowledge your complaint as swiftly as possible, and in any event within five working days.

The nominated Trustee will contact you to confirm they are considering your complaint. In relation to the timescale for consideration of your complaint, the nominated Trustee will let

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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 nominated Trustee may request more information or ask for clarification of your complaint. Where appropriate, they may also contact the member(s) you have complained about to seek their account.

When they have considered your complaint, the nominated Trustee will make a recommendation to the Chair on whether or not to revoke the membership of the individual(s) you have complained about. At the same time as contacting the Chair, the Trustee will send you details of their decision.

If you are not content with the recommendation, or you have not had an adequate response from the nominated Trustee (including a lack of contact), you should contact the Chair directly.

If the Chair considers that it is in the best interests of the SLSA to terminate membership(s), the Chair will bring the issue for consideration of the Trustees at the next Trustee meeting. The Chair's decision about whether to bring the matter to Trustees as a complaint is final, but you should note you do 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.

In some circumstances we might encourage an informal resolution of any concerns, but will not adopt this approach in the first instance in relation to all complaints. This is because the decision to terminate membership is a question of the impact on the SLSA as a whole, rather than a method to resolve issues between members. As such, an informal resolution will only be suggested when the complaint has been considered and the Chair does not consider that it ought to be referred to Trustees.

Furthermore, we recognise that raising concerns might highlight significant power imbalances, and in particular recognise the potential difficulties faced by a junior scholar who wishes to raise concerns about a more senior member, as well as the potential for a more influential individual to use a complaint to exclude or silence a member with fewer resources. As an organisation and as individuals, we will endeavour to be sensitive to these

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potential dynamics, and to be fair to all involved. Therefore an informal resolution will only be suggested where a complaint is received about a member where we do not have any reason to be concerned about potentially significant imbalances of power.

Please note that your original complaint and any additional information provided will be held in accordance with our data protection policy.

### **Complaints about a Trustee of the SLSA**

All Trustees of the SLSA have signed a Trustee Code of Conduct and are required to abide with the law relating to charitable trustees. If you consider that a Trustee has breached the Code or any regulations, or you wish to complain about the actions of an individual Trustee which fall outside those provisions but which you consider might bring the organisation into disrepute, you are encouraged to complain to the Chair of the SLSA.

The Chair will acknowledge your complaint as swiftly as possible, and in any event within five working days.

Upon receipt of your complaint, the Chair will consider the complaint, and might request more information or ask for clarification of your complaint. Where appropriate, they may also contact the Trustee you have complained about to seek their account.

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 membership of the SLSA be terminated.

If the Chair recommends that the Board should request the resignation 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 about 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 membership of a Trustee, the Chair's decision about whether to bring the matter to Trustees as a complaint is final, but you should note you do 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.

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If your complaint relates to the Chair, all references to the Chair in this policy shall be read as the Vice-Chair.

Please note that your original complaint and any additional information provided will be held in accordance with our data protection policy.

### **Complaints about the SLSA**

The SLSA aims to maintain the highest standards in all our work. If you are concerned about any aspect of our activities, please write to the Chair to set out your concerns. Where appropriate, the Chair might nominate another Trustee to consider your complaint.

All written complaints will be logged. You will receive a written acknowledgement within five working days.

The timescale for substantive responses will vary depending on the details of your complaint, but we will endeavour to respond as swiftly as we can. 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:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-charities/complaints-about-charities> (website last accessed August 2020).



### Change Record

Date of Change:	Changed By:	Comments:
17/09/20	EKD	Policy approved by the Trustees