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# DISCIPLINARY & COMPLAINTS POLICY

**HORSHAM CANOE CLUB**

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# Disciplinary and Complaints Policy

## Introduction

Horsham Canoe Club (HCC) is committed to maintaining a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all members, volunteers, and employees. All members are expected to adhere to the club's rules, values, and relevant Paddle UK policies to ensure the integrity and reputation of the club.

This policy outlines the steps for handling complaints and disciplinary matters that arise within the club, including on-water and off-water activities. While the club strives to follow these procedures closely, it acknowledges that the club's operations rely on the time and efforts of volunteers. As such, strict adherence to every detail of this policy is not guaranteed, but the club will work to ensure fair and proportionate resolution of all matters.

If an incident involves potential criminal activity, the club may refer the matter to the police. Any safeguarding concerns will be handled in accordance with Paddle UK's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures, including referring the matter to Paddle UK if necessary.

## Scope and Definitions

This policy applies to all individuals involved in club activities. The following key terms are used throughout this document:

- Club: Horsham Canoe Club (HCC).
- Complaint: A formal report of misconduct submitted under this policy.
- Complainant: The person(s) submitting the complaint.
- Individual: Any club member, volunteer, parent, guardian or person involved in club activities who is subject to a complaint.
- Misconduct: Any action or behaviour that violates the club's rules, policies, or codes of conduct, or that may bring the club into disrepute. Examples include harassment, dishonesty, and failure to follow club rules.
- Policy: This disciplinary and complaints policy.
- Writing: Any formal written communication, including email.

## Disciplinary Process

### Step 1: Submitting a Complaint

Any person wishing to raise a complaint should report it in writing to the Club Secretary. If the complaint involves the Club Secretary, it should be submitted to the Club Welfare Officer or Club Chair. The complaint must include specific details and evidence related to the alleged misconduct.

Examples of misconduct may include:

- Discriminatory, abusive, or threatening behaviour.
- Acts of dishonesty, including misrepresentation of qualifications.

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- Violations of club policies or rules, both in person or online.

The club may also initiate its own investigation into any misconduct it becomes aware of.

### **Step 2: Communicating the Complaint**

Upon receiving a complaint, the Club Secretary will notify the individual(s) involved in writing, inviting them to respond to the allegations within fourteen days. The Club Secretary may conduct an initial investigation or seek advice as necessary to review the complaint.

### **Step 3: Reviewing the Complaint**

Once responses and evidence have been collected, the Club Secretary will determine if the complaint has merit. Frivolous or vexatious complaints may be dismissed at this stage.

For less serious matters, the Club Secretary may address the issue informally, such as issuing an informal warning. If the complaint warrants further action, the Club Secretary will convene a disciplinary panel made up of three unbiased members of the Club Committee. If necessary, external individuals may be appointed to the panel.

The Club Secretary has the authority to temporarily suspend the individual(s) involved pending the outcome of the investigation. This suspension is not punitive but is intended to protect all parties and facilitate the investigation.

### **Step 4: Disciplinary Hearing**

The disciplinary panel will review the evidence gathered and may request further information from those involved. The panel may hold a formal meeting to discuss the complaint, ensuring all parties have the opportunity to present their case. The meeting, if held, should take place within 14 days of the panel's formation.

The panel will ensure that the hearing is fair and objective. The individual(s) accused of misconduct are entitled to be represented or assisted by a person of their choice.

### **Step 5: Outcome and Sanctions**

After reviewing the case, the panel may:

- Dismiss the complaint or partially uphold it.
- Issue a formal warning.
- Suspend or disqualify the individual from club activities for up to 12 months.
- Cancel the individual's club membership without refund.
- Impose any other sanctions deemed appropriate.

The panel will provide a written explanation of its decision to all parties involved.

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## Appeals Process

If the individual(s) or the complainant wishes to appeal the panel's decision, the following steps must be followed:

### Step 1: Submitting an Appeal

A Notice of Appeal must be submitted to the Club Secretary within seven days of receiving the disciplinary panel's decision. The appeal must clearly state the grounds for appeal, which may include:

- Error of fact in the original decision.
- Procedural irregularities in the disciplinary process.
- New, relevant evidence that was unavailable during the original hearing.

The appeal is not an opportunity to reargue the case but must focus on one of these grounds.

### Step 2: Forming the Appeal Panel

The Club Secretary will appoint an Appeal Panel consisting of either the Club Chair or three unbiased committee members. If the complainant or individual objects to the composition of the Appeal Panel, they must raise their concerns within five days, and the Club Secretary will consider whether changes are necessary.

### Step 3: Appeal Decision

The Appeal Panel will review the case and may invite further statements or hold a new meeting. The panel has the authority to:

- Uphold the original decision and sanctions.
- Overturn the original decision or modify the sanctions.
- Impose new sanctions if necessary.

The Appeal Panel's decision is final, and there is no further right of appeal.

## Records and Reporting

All records of disciplinary hearings and appeals will be retained for six years. The Club Secretary may inform Paddle UK of the outcome if necessary, particularly in cases involving suspensions or safeguarding concerns.

## Cooperation and Legal Advice

This policy assumes cooperation from all parties involved. If cooperation is withheld, the club reserves the right to proceed based on the available evidence. The Club Secretary may seek legal advice if necessary.

This policy ensures that complaints and disciplinary matters are handled fairly, transparently, and in the best interests of Horsham Canoe Club and its members.

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## Horsham Canoe Club

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