

Professional Conduct Procedure

Complaint categories and timescales

About this document

The Institution's member conduct and disciplinary procedures are governed by its Royal Charter, By-laws and Regulations. As a supplement to these the Institution publishes a series of information documents, of which this is one. The relationship between these different types of document is shown below.

1	Royal Charter	The Royal Charter is an instrument of incorporation granted by the UK monarch. It confers independent legal personality on the Institution and defines its objectives, constitution and powers to govern its own affairs including the power to make By-laws.
2	By-laws	The By-laws are approved by the Privy Council. They set out the rules that govern the actions of the Institution. They set out the general standards of conduct required of Institution members and require the Trustee Board to make Code of Conduct Regulations. They also define improper conduct, require the Trustee Board to make Disciplinary Regulations and set out members' liability to be penalised if found guilty of improper conduct.
3	Regulations	The Regulations set out the directives made by the Institution Trustees in defined subject areas, including the Code of Conduct Regulations and the Disciplinary Regulations.
4	Information	Information documents supplement the Regulations and are intended to help people who engage with the Disciplinary Procedures.

All of the documents listed above are available on the Institution's website.

Complaint timescales

Introduction

1. We aim to investigate complaints as quickly as possible while also being fair and thorough to all parties. However, it can take up to six months for a relatively straightforward complaint or over a year, depending on, for example, how complex the complaint is and how many people are involved.
2. Sometimes there are factors outside of our control; for example, when we need to wait for a court to provide documents, or when we need to seek an expert opinion or additional witness statements. In some cases, these factors can add several months to the time it takes to handle the complaint. We try to collect evidence from different sources at the same time to avoid delays, but sometimes this is not possible.
3. It is, therefore, rarely possible to provide an accurate estimate of how long it will take to investigate any particular complaint. However, in the interests of fairness and transparency and for the information of all involved, we provide guidelines on timings. These guidelines, set out below, apply to the Triage and Investigation stages of complaint handling. If a complaint is referred for a hearing, the Disciplinary Board will work to timescales that are appropriate to the particular complaint.

Our timescales

4. When we receive a complaint, we will:
 - acknowledge it immediately in writing;
 - write to you within five days of receipt of the complaint to tell you whether the complaint is relevant to us.
5. If the complaint is relevant to us, we will tell you what category we have assigned to the complaint. We assign one of the following three categories to the complaint:

Category 1

These are fairly straightforward cases; they usually involve only one Institution member, do not involve third parties and there are no known related actions being taken elsewhere with regard to the circumstances of the complaint.

Category 2

These complaints are more complex or are complicated by the involvement of several Institution members or other third parties or by related actions being taken elsewhere with regard to the circumstances of the complaint.

Category 3

These cases are particularly complex or are complicated by the involvement of a significant number of other Institution members or of other third parties or particularly serious or complex related actions being taken elsewhere with regard to the circumstances of the complaint.

6. Once we have accepted a complaint and assigned it a category, the following timescales will apply unless we tell you otherwise.

Category	Triage process	Investigation process
1	10 working days	Up to 6 months
2	15 working days	6 to 12 months
3	20 working days	12 to 18 months

7. If we need to change the category of the complaint, we will write to you to tell you how it has changed and why. This may be necessary when, for example, new facts are revealed about the circumstances of the complaint, additional allegations need to be taken into account, or a related criminal, civil or other proceeding starts while our process is underway.