



INCOSE UK – Grievance & Disciplinary Process

1 Introduction

This document outlines a policy and procedure for handling grievances and complaints brought to the INCOSE UK Council. Ultimately this may involve disciplinary procedures however, as a volunteer organisation there are only limited sanctions that may be applied. The policy includes an appeals mechanism to provide a 'right of reply' to anyone against whom disciplinary action is contemplated.

2 Context

INCOSE UK has been established as the UK Chapter of INCOSE since 1994. It is run by a Council comprised of members of INCOSE UK who operate in an entirely voluntary capacity – they are not permitted by the Memorandum & Articles of Association to profit financially from the operations of INCOSE UK Ltd.

The duties of the Council are laid out in the Memorandum & Articles of Association, and the terms of reference for the Council in general and specific roles within the Council structure are formulated to be compliant with these.

Anyone may become an individual member of INCOSE by paying the membership fees as currently advertised. There are currently no terms and conditions that apply to individual membership.

There is also a corporate membership, the UK Advisory Board, which is open to any UK company that has an interest in Systems Engineering. Membership requires a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be signed by both parties, which sets out the basis for the relationship. There are also a set of TORs that govern the operation of the UKAB.

The INCOSE UK Council may receive complaints about its activities or any of the classes of members. These complaints may emanate from within INCOSE UK or externally. This is the procedure for handling any complaints received.

3 Raising Complaints

Complaints must first be raised with the Council. Any of the Council members may be used as the conduit for the complaint. The Council member receiving the complaint shall in the first instance notify the other Council members of the complaint so that an initial view can be taken as to whether the complaint is within the jurisdiction of the Council and what procedure should apply.

Complaints must be raised in writing (e-mail is permissible) and must be attributable. Anonymous complaints may be noted but will not be formally addressed.

4 Consideration of the Complaint

4.1 Initial Assessment

The Council will initially consider each complaint to decide whether it is:-

- Within the jurisdiction of the Council
- Sufficiently serious to warrant investigation

This consideration will usually take place via e-mail since Council meetings are held relatively infrequently. If the complaint is not appropriate for the Council to handle it will be passed on to the appropriate body with the agreement of the complainant.

4.2 Full Assessment

If the initial assessment indicates that the complaint is worthy of further attention, views of all the Council members will be sought – again by e-mail. If a consensus cannot be achieved in this way, then the complaint will be included on the agenda of the next full Council meeting. The outcome discussions during a Council meeting will be recorded in the meeting minutes.

4.3 Feedback

Whichever method is applied, the complainant will be informed of the result either in writing (includes e-mail communication) or verbally as appropriate. If disciplinary action is contemplated this may only be an interim notification of the ongoing process.

4.4 Complaints About Council Members

If the complaint is regarding a specific Council Member, he / she will not be involved in the consideration of the complaint but may be asked to comment on the complaint.

5 Scope of Council Adjudication

The Council has limited scope to adjudicate on complaints. Typical areas might include:-

- Bringing INCOSE UK into disrepute
- Governance of INCOSE UK
- Inter member disputes relating to INCOSE activities

It is difficult to envisage all the possible situations that might occur so the above list is not exhaustive. The questions to be asked are:-

- Does the complaint relate to INCOSE UK activities?
- Was the subject of the complaint a member of INCOSE UK or working under direct instructions from INCOSE UK at the time of the incident that triggered the complaint?
- Was the subject of the complaint operating, or claiming to be operating, on behalf of INCOSE UK?



If the answer to one or more of the above questions is “yes”, then the Council should consider the complaint.

6 Disciplinary Action

The Council has only limited scope for disciplinary action. It is extremely unlikely to be required and should only be applied in the most extreme circumstances. As a minimum this could take the form of a warning to desist from a particular activity or risk further action such as:-

- A Council member could be asked to step down from the Council
- Individual members could be barred from membership of the UK Chapter¹
- UKAB members could be expelled (subject to the terms of the MOU)
- Contractors could have their work with INCOSE terminated (subject to contract terms)

In the event that disciplinary action is contemplated, the member concerned will be informed of the complaint and invited to attend a meeting to discuss the complaint. The meeting will involve at least 3 Council members, the member who is subject to the complaint and / or his / her representative / supporter. Other INCOSE members may be co-opted if this would help to resolve the issue.

If the member subject to the complaint does not wish to attend or be represented, then the meeting can take place without them.

7 Appeals

There is no higher authority with which to lodge an appeal if the subject of disciplinary action feels they have been treated wrongly. INCOSE Central could be approached, but there does not appear to be a complaints process or logical channel for the complaint.

The suggested option is to appoint an independent assessor to review the case. This could be a senior member of INCOSE UK (perhaps an ex-president) who is not currently a member of the Council.

¹ We could not prevent direct membership through INCOSE Central, so this would be of limited impact.