

# SPA

STUDENT  
PUBLICATION  
ASSOCIATION



# Code of Conduct

## Code of Conduct

This code of conduct applies to SPA volunteers, members and attendees at SPA events.

### Why do we have a code of conduct?

1. To make sure all Student Publication Association (SPA) activities and events are safe and inclusive for all attendees, delegates, members, external speakers, staff members, contractors and volunteers who may be there.
2. So it is clear how we expect you to behave, and how you can expect other people to behave towards you at SPA events and activities.

### Summary

This policy covers all SPA event attendees, delegates, members, external speakers, staff members, contractors and volunteers. It includes what is expected of anyone attending our events, as well as the process and potential penalties if someone is deemed to have broken the code of conduct.

Any attendee at an SPA event automatically agrees to this code of conduct, which is available on our website. The SPA reserves the right to amend the policy at any time.

The SPA is committed to creating a safe environment where everyone is treated with respect. We have a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of bullying and harassment

Everyone has a responsibility to show respect towards others and to behave kindly and ethically.

Everyone is expected to:

- Treat everyone in a respectful and professional manner;
- Not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship status, or any other protected characteristic, and
- Uphold an inclusive environment that is free from any intimidation, harassment, or hostility.

Harassment is unlawful. The aim of this policy is to help prevent the occurrence of bullying, harassment and/or victimisation at SPA events.

This will also provide guidance on how to report any suspected misconduct, both informally and formally, and outline the procedures that the SPA will put into place to resolve any complaints.

Any formal complaints should always be made in writing to [chair@spajournalism.com](mailto:chair@spajournalism.com) and [trustees@spajournalism.com](mailto:trustees@spajournalism.com)

## **1. Defining bullying and harassment**

### **Bullying**

While there is no statutory definition of bullying, the Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as “the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power”. This can take many forms - verbal, non-verbal, face-to-face, behind the victim’s back, by telephone, email, text, social media, display or sharing of images or any other form of communication. Power does not always mean a position of authority; it can also mean personal strength or coercion.

Examples of bullying include:

- physical, emotional or psychological threats;
- inappropriate remarks about someone’s appearance/performance/character;
- abuse of power by those in authority;
- deliberately excluding someone from communications without good reason.

## Harassment

Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, and this behaviour has the purpose of violating dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, leading to unfavourable treatment towards the victim. This also includes behaviour of a sexual nature.

This can take place verbally, non-verbally, face-to-face, behind the victim's back, by telephone, email, text, social media, display or sharing of images or any other form of communication.

Examples of harassment include:

- unwanted physical contact, including touching, invading personal space, and assault;
- unwelcome sexual advances or suggestions that sexual favours may further a person's career or that refusal may hinder it;
- mocking, mimicking or belittling another;
- offensive, intimidating or insensitive comments;
- racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist, derogatory or stereotypical jokes, or
- sending or displaying offensive material.

Bullying and harassment are not always obvious or apparent to others, and others may be unaware of it. It can be between two individuals or a group of people. It may not be obvious.

It may be persistent, there may be a pattern, or it may be an isolated bullying incident. If you are unsure, please get in contact with [chair@spajournalism.com](mailto:chair@spajournalism.com) and [trustees@spajournalism.com](mailto:trustees@spajournalism.com).

## 2. Tackling bullying and harassment is everyone's responsibility

All event attendees, delegates, members, external speakers, staff members, contractors and volunteers must comply with this policy.

Everyone is expected to:

- treat everyone with respect in a professional manner;

- not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship status, or any other protected characteristic, and
- uphold an inclusive environment that is free from any intimidation, harassment, or hostility.

Where possible, you should actively discourage harassment, bullying or victimisation by making it clear you find such behaviour unacceptable. You should support others who suffer any such treatment and who are considering making a formal complaint.

You should alert a SPA Executive Officer or Trustee to any incident of harassment, bullying or victimisation to enable the SPA to deal with the matter.

### **3. How to raise a concern**

Concerns should be raised to an SPA Executive Officer or Trustee. Preferably this should be done in writing.

A discussion will then take place to decide on the most appropriate course of action.

#### **3a. The process**

##### **ai. Informal process**

Where possible and appropriate, we encourage you to try to resolve problems informally, before using the formal process. Informal resolution can often help resolve matters more swiftly and help reduce the emotional impact on those involved.

Talk to the person you feel aggrieved with to explain the situation and how it made you feel (where you feel comfortable to do this). A member of SPA's executive team or trustee board will be happy to support you with this, if appropriate. It can be helpful to describe the day, place, meeting or event that took place so the other person is clear about your concerns.

You should use the opportunity to ask the person to change or stop their behaviour. It is important to remember that the other person may be unaware of the effect of their behaviour and impact it has on you.

If after exploring the informal process, the informal routes have not been satisfactory, you may wish to raise a formal complaint.

## **bi. Formal process**

### **Step 1: Making your formal complaint**

Your complaint should be put in writing, which you should send to [chair@spajournalism.com](mailto:chair@spajournalism.com) and [trustees@spajournalism.com](mailto:trustees@spajournalism.com) as soon as possible after the incident occurred.

Please ensure you set out as much information as you can of your complaint including details of the day, place, meeting or event where the incident took place, along with a full description of the incident. You may have supporting documentation, which can be attached to the complaint. You should also state how you would like the matter resolved.

There may be a delay in dealing with your complaint while further information is sought from the SPA executive and trustee board if the allegations are not sufficiently clear.

If the allegations are against a member of the SPA's trustee board or executive committee, it may be that a separate process is needed, such as the creation of an independent panel. It is likely that the SPA executive committee or trustee board member will be suspended from their duties while the process is decided and takes place.

Further information in this instance can be found in Bye Law 6 of our Governing Documents, which is available at [spajournalism.com](http://spajournalism.com)

### **Step 2: Formal complaint review**

Once you have submitted your complaint and any supporting documentation, you will receive a written acknowledgement. If it is considered appropriate to deal with your complaint under this policy, the SPA will appoint an external trustee to investigate.

There may be instances, either because the complaint is a legal matter, or because there is an organisation better placed to investigate (such as a students' union), that the complaint is not taken forward. We will explain why, if this is the case.

We aim to deal with your complaint within a reasonable timescale. You will be contacted shortly after you submit your complaint to confirm the process.

We will likely need to inform the person(s) involved in your complaint during our process. While we will not share any personal details with them, the process itself could lead them to being able to identify the person who has complained. This is to ensure we have the full facts and that the person(s) involved know there is an open complaint into them. We will attempt to inform you as the complainant before this happens.

### **Step 3: The complaint hearing**

You will be invited to a hearing to discuss your complaint with a panel of SPA trustees and executive officers. We aim to offer you a date for the formal hearing at the earliest opportunity.

You have the right to be accompanied by a trusted friend or colleague to support you through the process (not anyone directly involved in your case, e.g. a witness) at any formal hearing. You should inform us in advance of the hearing of the name of the person accompanying you, so we can check there is no conflict of interest. Where there is a conflict of interest, we reserve the right to require you to find a different supporter. When you have agreed a meeting time and do not attend without prior notice, we may make a decision in your absence.

At the hearing, we will give you full opportunity to explain your complaint and may seek clarification on the documentation you submitted.

After your complaint has been fully investigated and a conclusion has been reached, an SPA trustee will communicate their decision to you in writing. The other person(s) involved will also be informed of the outcome in writing.

## **Step 4: Resolving complaints**

We will aim to ensure that the outcome is satisfactory for all parties involved. This will naturally not always be the case.

As a charity organisation we have limited powers of penalty, but some of these may include:

1. Formal warning
2. Temporary bans from any and all SPA events
3. Permanent bans from any and all SPA events
4. Removal of SPA membership
5. No further action

This list is non-exhaustive and the investigations team may decide alternative forms of resolution if necessary.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the formal investigation, you have the right to appeal.

Should you wish to appeal, you should write to the Chair of the SPA setting out what aspects of the decision you are unhappy with and the reasons why. Appeals should be submitted without unreasonable delay and usually no longer than five working days after we inform you of the decision.

Another external trustee will arrange a meeting with you to discuss your appeal in full and to try and reach a satisfactory solution. You must take all reasonable steps to attend this meeting and you may be accompanied by a colleague or trusted friend.

A member of the SPA's trustee board will write to you to confirm the outcome of the appeal, which will be final. Appeals are more likely to be successful in instances where new or different information that wasn't previously considered has now come to light.

## **4. Confidentiality and data disclosure**

Confidentiality is an important part of the application of this policy and we will respect and maintain your confidentiality where possible.



There may be instances where information you have submitted and/or which we have collated in relation to your complaint under this policy may need to be disclosed:

- to other parties as part of any further stage that we consider appropriate to undertake;
- if we believe that you are in any immediate danger
- a statutory duty or court order requires information to be shared; or
- if we think a serious crime may have been committed or is about to be committed.

By submitting information during any step of the processes outlined in this policy, you agree to the disclosure of such information for the above purposes.

## **5. Criminal investigations**

Where the allegations in your complaint involve a potential criminal matter, the police will need to be contacted and they will dictate when any SPA internal processes can commence.

## **6. Data protection regulation**

We will abide by our requirements under the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and any other relevant laws when dealing with your personal data.

In particular, data collected in relation to the investigation of bullying or harassment complaints is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of responding to the complaints and conducting an investigation.

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