

CFA Society Australia – Grievance Policy

1. Purpose

CFA Society Australia (“the Society”) is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and fair environment for all individuals working for, on behalf of, or in collaboration with the Society. This policy outlines how concerns, complaints, or problems (“grievances”) may be raised and resolved promptly, constructively, and without fear of retaliation.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working for, on behalf of, or in collaboration with CFA Society Australia – including employees, volunteers, contractors and consultants, members, and any third parties associated with the Society.

Issues involving alleged unlawful conduct, serious misconduct, or improper use of organisational funds or assets may also be dealt with under other relevant policies (e.g., Code of Conduct, Whistleblower Policy, or Work Health and Safety).

3. Definition of a Grievance

A *grievance* is any concern, problem, or complaint raised by an individual relating to their work, treatment at work, the conduct of others, or any decision affecting them.

Grievances can include, but are not limited to:

- perceived unfair treatment or unreasonable management actions
- interpersonal conflict or inappropriate behaviour
- concerns about workload, duties, or treatment by others
- discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation
- perceived breaches of organisational policies
- health and safety concerns or unsafe work practices.

4. Principles

The Society’s grievance process is guided by these principles:

- **Accessible:** The grievance mechanism is open to all individuals covered by this policy. The Society will take reasonable steps to ensure the process is easy to understand, available in accessible formats where needed, and free from unnecessary barriers to participation.
- **Early Resolution:** Issues should be raised as early as possible to facilitate prompt resolution. Failure to do so could impede the investigation and resolution of the grievance.
- **Respect and Fairness:** All grievances will be handled with impartiality, courtesy, and procedural fairness for all parties. This includes ensuring that any individual against whom a grievance is raised is informed of the matter, given a reasonable opportunity to respond, and treated with dignity throughout the process. The Society is committed to meaningful engagement and dialogue throughout the process.
- **Confidentiality:** Information will be handled sensitively and shared only where necessary to manage the grievance.

- **Transparency:** The Society will be clear about how grievances are handled, what individuals can expect at each stage of the process, and how outcomes are determined.
- **No Retaliation:** Employees, volunteers, and all other individuals covered by this policy will not be penalised, disadvantaged, or treated differently for raising a genuine grievance in good faith or participating in a grievance process.
- **Right to Support:** Anyone involved in a grievance process may have a person present to provide emotional and practical support. The support person does not act as an advocate or representative.
- **Good Faith Reporting:** Grievances must be made honestly and with reasonable grounds. Deliberately false or malicious reports may be treated as misconduct.

5. Anonymous Grievances

The Society recognises that individuals may wish to raise concerns anonymously. Anonymous grievances will be considered where possible; however, the Society's ability to investigate and resolve the matter may be limited where the individual cannot be contacted for further information. Anonymous grievances will be handled with the same confidentiality and care as all other grievances.

6. Grievance Resolution Process

Step 1 – Raise with Immediate Line Manager (Informal Discussion)

Individuals are encouraged to first discuss concerns informally with their immediate line manager, volunteer leader or key contact at the Society.

The manager/leader/contact will:

- listen to the concern.
- explore possible informal solutions.
- take reasonable steps to resolve the matter promptly.
- keep a brief record of the discussion.

Step 2 – If the Grievance Involves the Line Manager: Raise with a Two-Away Manager

If the grievance involves the individual's direct line manager, volunteer leader or key contact, or raising it with them is not appropriate, the individual may escalate it to the next management level ("two-away manager").

The two-away manager will seek to:

- understand the issue independently.
- resolve the matter informally or begin a more formal assessment.

Step 3 – Formal Grievance (Written)

If the grievance cannot be resolved informally or is serious in nature, the individual may submit a formal, written grievance to their line manager, volunteer leader or key contact. Where the grievance involves the individual's direct manager, it should be submitted to the two-away manager or external HR Advisor.

The written grievance should include:

- a summary of the issue, including any harm experienced or adverse impacts arising from the matter.

- steps already taken to resolve it.
- the outcome sought.

Upon receiving the written grievance, the relevant manager will:

- acknowledge receipt within three business days
- conduct a fair assessment or investigation.
- meet with the individual to discuss the matter.
- seek input from all relevant parties.
- where a grievance is made against another individual, inform that individual of the grievance, provide them with sufficient detail to understand the nature of the concern, and give them a reasonable opportunity to respond before any outcome is determined.
- provide a written summary within 20 business days, subject to the complexity of the matter and the availability of relevant parties. Where additional time is required, the individual will be notified of the delay and provided with an updated timeframe.

Step 4 – Escalation to External HR Advisor

If the individual is not satisfied with the formal response, or if the grievance involves senior leadership, the grievance may be referred to the Society's external HR Advisor. The HR Advisor is the designated Grievance Officer.

The external HR Advisor may:

- undertake an independent review.
- conduct mediation.
- make recommendations to management or the Board Chair, a Board Committee Chair, or the Board (where appropriate).

The HR Advisor will provide a written summary of the outcome within 20 business days, subject to the complexity of the matter and the availability of relevant parties. Where additional time is required, the individual will be notified of the delay and provided with an updated timeframe.

Where an individual remains unsatisfied following the outcome of Step 4, they may have the right to escalate the matter to an external body, including but not limited to the Fair Work Commission, the Australian Human Rights Commission, or other relevant regulatory authorities, depending on the nature of the grievance.

7. Record Keeping

The Society will maintain confidential records of:

- complaints raised.
- steps taken.
- decisions or outcomes.

Records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with legal and organisational requirements.

Any grievances raised will be noted in the CEO Report to the Board.

8. Interaction with Other Policies

Depending on the nature of the complaint, related policies may apply, including:

- Code of Conduct.
- Whistleblower Policy.
- Work Health and Safety procedures.

The Society will ensure matters are referred to the appropriate policy or legal framework as required.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

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