



Guide to complaints against ABPCO members

Introduction

ABPCO encourages the highest professional standards in association conference and event organisation. In order to maintain the integrity of ABPCO accreditation, membership applications are scrutinized by a peer review panel and references are taken up from a client and a supplier contact.

Individuals or organisations considering making a complaint against an ABPCO member should use this guide, which explains how to make a complaint and the procedures in place for investigating complaints.

Background

The processes described in this document apply to [Full PCO](#) and [Associate PCO](#) members of ABPCO, who have agreed, prior to membership and with each membership renewal, to comply with the [ABPCO code of practice](#).

Examples of misconduct are:

- Breaching the ABPCO code of practice
- Bringing the reputation of ABPCO into disrepute
- Continuing to use membership designators when membership has lapsed

As ABPCO is committed to professionalism, misconduct is viewed very seriously because it reflects badly on the Association and its membership. Sanctions handed down by the Disciplinary Committee may include:

- Written warning
- Expulsion or suspension from the association membership

ABPCO considers each complaint on its own merits before deciding whether to investigate further. If we decide we cannot pursue a complaint it will be because it is not practical or justified. ABPCO's is unlikely to investigate complaints where 12 months have passed since the events complained of took place or since the Complainant became (or should reasonably have been) made aware that the events complained of took place.

Other examples of complaints which are unlikely to be taken forward are:

- Where members cannot be identified
- Where complaints are made with the primary intention of causing annoyance, or embarrassment or are of a vexatious or frivolous nature
- Where sufficient evidence is not available
- Where the scope of the complaint falls within the remit of a legal process in the courts

If we cannot investigate a complaint we will write to you explaining why and, where possible, advise of an alternative route of complaint.

How to make a complaint

Use the attached form to make a complaint and email it to heatherlishman@abpc.org

Your form can also be posted to: Heather Lishman, Association Director, ABPCO, Barn Down, 2 Pool Row, Main Street, Willersey, Gloucestershire, WR12 7PJ

Important notes for Complainants:

Please note that:

ABPCO has no authority to impose an order for financial award (including compensation) to the complainant in any circumstances. If you require financial redress you will need to submit your complaint to the relevant legal process.

Making a complaint against an ABPCO member is not a substitute for taking legal action where appropriate. If a complaint is currently or likely to be before the courts then the complaint will be stayed pending the determination of the courts. Please note that if there are no findings that the member has acted inappropriately, we will not be able to progress your complaint.

If the complaint is being investigated by any other professional body or other tribunal, then ABPCO will stay the complaint pending the determination of the other proceedings.

Not all errors made by a member will necessarily imply a breach of the Code of Practice or lead to suspension of membership. Suspension of membership may be appropriate, however, where errors are of a significant volume to indicate a possible lack of professional competence.

If a member has given advice which, in hindsight, turns out to have been flawed, as a result of which you have suffered loss, this is a matter for their or their firm's professional indemnity insurers and you may need to seek legal advice on this.

Before ABPCO can consider your complaint, the member should have been given an opportunity to resolve the matter through their internal complaints procedures. If you have not given the member the opportunity to rectify the issues, please provide details as to why you have not done so at the time of submission of your complaint.

Process for investigation of complaints

An acknowledgement will be despatched to you within 10 business days of ABPCO receiving a complaint.

All complaints made in good faith are considered, in the first instance, by the ABPCO Association Director and a Board member (who chairs the Accreditation Committee) who will make any further enquiries deemed appropriate before submitting the complaint to the ABPCO Board. The Accreditation Committee is drawn from members of the Association Board and the wider membership. Members of the Accreditation Committee and the Association Board will be asked to declare any conflict of interest in the case and in such instance they will be asked to stand down from the process.

If a decision is taken that a complaint should be investigated, the Complainant and the Respondent (the member who is the subject of a complaint) will be notified in writing. Copies of all documents, statements and other evidence submitted by the Complainant will also be sent to the Respondent.

The Respondent will be invited to submit any evidence to support their position in response to the complaint. The Board will consider the evidence and take any further steps as necessary to verify the facts on both sides.

The decision of the Board will be notified in writing to the Complainant and the Respondent.

Due to the different nature and complexity of the complaints received by ABPCO, it is not possible to provide a timescale for the completion of complaints. It is of paramount importance that any complaint is thoroughly investigated and all relevant lines of enquiry are followed up to ensure that the process is fair to both the Complainant, Respondent and ABPCO's stakeholders.

Process for appeals

The Respondent has a right to appeal within 30 days of receipt of the decision.

If the Respondent does not agree with the decision of the Board to uphold the complaint, they will be granted a further 30 days to provide in writing new evidence to refute the complaint. The Appeal must detail why the new evidence was not submitted in response to the complaint.

The Board will reconsider the evidence within 30 days of receipt of the Appeal. The final decision of the Board will be notified in writing to the Complainant and the Respondent.

A Respondent can appeal against the decision of the Board if they are of the opinion that the decision was:

1. Based on an error of fact or an unreasonable interpretation of evidence;
2. Unjust because new evidence has become available;
3. The disciplinary measure imposed is too severe.

FORM TO REGISTER A COMPLAINT AGAINST AN ABPCO MEMBER

(Please complete all sections)

Section A – Your details

Name	
Organisation	
Address	
E-mail address	
Telephone Number	

Section B – Details of the ABPCO member about whom you wish to complain

Name	
Organisation	
Address	
E-mail address	
Telephone Number	

Section C – The Complaint

Please briefly categorise the complaint e.g. improper handling of client funds (note a full explanation is required later in the form)	
Date range of the incident	
Why do you believe the member has contravened the ABPCO Code of Practice?	
Have you lodged a complaint about this member with ABPCO before? If so, please give date of the complaint	

<p>If the date is over one year ago, please explain why you have not complained to ABPCO within one year of the complaint.</p>			
<p>Have you taken the complaint up with anyone else before? Such as the member, the member's employer, or a court of law. If so, please give details of the person to whom you made the complaint and details of the outcome. If you have not taken up the complaint with the member, please advise why you have not done so.</p>			
<p>Please give the date the complaint was made</p>			
<p>Please explain the outcome of the complaint</p>			
<p>Please list the evidence that you are sending in support of this complaint and put a number by each item. Please write the number you have allocated to each piece of evidence on the top right hand corner of the evidence provided.</p>			
<p>Item No</p>	<p>Evidence Produced by</p>	<p>What the evidence is</p>	<p>Date of the evidence</p>
<p>Please give full details of the complaint below. Where the evidence you are submitting supports your complaint, please put the evidence number which you have allocated against the correct sentence.</p>			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 200px;"></div>			

Section E - Declarations

I believe that the facts stated in this form are true and that the documents provided are accurate and are not intended to mislead ABPCO.

I understand that a copy of this form, enclosures and future correspondence will be copied to the Respondent(s) and, if necessary, to other third parties implicated.

If you do not wish your name to be disclosed to the Respondent(s) please tick the box as it may be possible to black out any details that identify you in the correspondence.

Signed:

Date:

Please return a scanned copy of a completed form with the attached evidence to heatherlishman@abpc.org or send it to:

Heather Lishman, Association Director, ABPCO, Barn Down, 2 Pool Row, Main Street, Willersey, Gloucestershire, WR12 7PJ