



ULSTER  
FARMERS'  
UNION

Ethics and Standards Committee Policy and  
Procedures



## Contents

Introduction and Scope of the Policy .....	3
Making a Complaint .....	3
How to Complain .....	3
Information to Include .....	3
Initial Assessment and Acknowledgement .....	4
Receipt and Logging .....	4
Acknowledgement .....	4
Panel Selection and Conflict of Interest .....	4
Investigation .....	5
Investigation Process .....	5
Right to Be Heard .....	5
Confidentiality .....	5
Decision and Outcome .....	6
Determination and Outcomes .....	6
Reasons .....	6
Actions and Remedies .....	6
Communication of Outcome .....	7
Written Response .....	7
Appeal Process .....	7
Right to Appeal .....	7
Grounds for Appeal .....	7
Appeal Investigation .....	7
Appeal Outcome .....	8
Vexatious, Malicious and Repeated Complaints .....	8
Data Protection and Confidentiality .....	8
Monitoring and Reporting .....	8
Record Keeping .....	8
Reporting .....	8
Transparency .....	8
Training and Awareness .....	9
Policy Review .....	9



## Introduction and Scope of the Policy

The Ethics and Standards Committee Policy and Procedures set out how complaints should be handled within the committee. The policy aims to ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly, transparently and within set timescales, providing a clear route to resolution.

This policy applies to complaints about:

- The conduct of members of the Ulster Farmers' Union in relation to breaches of the Constitution and Rules.

Complaints may only be made by:

- UFU members
- UFU staff

Complaints must be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive.

Complaints may be referred by:

- The Chief Executive

Only the Chief Executive may refer a complaint to the Ethics and Standards Committee for consideration under this Policy.

## Making a Complaint

### How to Complain

Complaints should be made in writing to the Chief Executive. A complaint must be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive within 30 days of the date of the incident. The Committee has the discretion to extend this limitation period where it is satisfied that it was not reasonably practicable for the complaint to have been brought within that timeframe.

### Information to Include

When making a complaint, the complainant should be asked to provide:

- Clear details of what happened
- When the incident(s) occurred
- Who was involved



- What the impact has been
- What outcome is being sought
- Any supporting evidence or witnesses

## Initial Assessment and Acknowledgement

### Receipt and Logging

All complaints will be:

- Logged on receipt
- Assigned a reference number
- Assessed for scope and jurisdiction within a reasonable timeframe.

### Acknowledgement

The Chief Executive will receive an acknowledgement setting out:

- Confirmation that the complaint has been received
- An outline of the next steps
- The expected timescale for resolution

### Panel Selection and Conflict of Interest

The full Committee will meet to make an initial assessment of the complaint. At this stage, members will declare any conflicts of interest and confirm their availability. If the Chairperson has a conflict of interest, responsibility for handling the complaint will transfer to the Vice-Chairperson. If both the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson have a conflict of interest, the Committee members will elect a Chair from among the remaining members for the purposes of considering that complaint. Any member with a conflict of interest will take no part in the consideration or decision of the complaint.

Following declaration of conflicts, a panel will be agreed comprising the Chair (as determined above), two Committee members who do not have a conflict of interest, and the Secretary. All panel members, including the Chair, shall have a vote in any decision made by the panel. The panel reserves the right to engage legal counsel at any stage of the process as it considers appropriate.



## Investigation

### Investigation Process

The investigation will be conducted fairly and impartially by the panel (as detailed in the Panel Selection and Conflict of Interest paragraph above). The investigator will:

- Gather all relevant information
- Speak to the complainant and respondent (the person complained about)
- Interview witnesses where necessary
- Review any relevant documentation
- Keep detailed records

### Right to Be Heard

Both the complainant and the respondent have the right to:

- Provide their account of events
- Submit supporting evidence
- Know the nature of the complaint
- Respond to allegations

Respondents will be notified of the complaint and given the opportunity to respond before a decision is made.

Parties are not entitled to bring legal representation to any part of the complaints or appeal process. However, parties may seek independent legal advice outside of the process prior to submitting their representations.

### Confidentiality

Information will be kept confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, particularly where serious misconduct is identified or where disclosure is required by law or by the fair conduct of the investigation. Similarly, the anonymity of parties involved cannot be guaranteed, as the proper handling of a complaint may require the disclosure of relevant information to other parties.



## Decision and Outcome

### Determination and Outcomes

After investigation, determination and outcome will be made as to whether the complaint is:

- **Upheld** – the complaint is substantiated
- **Partially upheld** – some aspects are substantiated, others are not
- **Not upheld** – the complaint is not substantiated

Sanctions, determined at the discretion of the Committee and in proportion to the seriousness of the breach, may range from no further action through to permanent expulsion from the organisation. Determinations will be made on the balance of probabilities.

### Reasons

The decision will be communicated in writing with clear reasons explaining:

- What was investigated
- Key facts found
- How the decision was reached
- Any actions or recommendations

### Actions and Remedies

Where a complaint is upheld, the organisation may:

- Issue an apology
- Take disciplinary action against the person complained about
- Recommend changes to procedures or practices
- Recommend training or support



## Communication of Outcome

### Written Response

All relevant parties will receive a written response from the Secretary within a timescale agreed by the panel.

The response may include:

- The outcome (upheld/partially upheld/not upheld)
- Clear reasons for the decision
- Details of any actions being taken
- Information about the right to appeal

## Appeal Process

### Right to Appeal

If the individual is dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the right to appeal within a specified timescale (normally 14 days of receiving the outcome). Appeals can be made in writing only to the committee Secretary and/or the Executive Committee (Rule 8 – Constitution and Rules). Note that an appeal will not be a rehearing of the complaint.

### Grounds for Appeal

An appeal can be made on the grounds that:

- The investigation was not conducted fairly or impartially
- Relevant evidence was not considered
- The decision is unreasonable or disproportionate
- New evidence has come to light

An appeal is not a rehearing of the complaint. It will be considered only on the grounds set out above.

### Appeal Investigation

The appeal will be investigated by a different panel (not involved in the original investigation). The same principles of fairness, impartiality and confidentiality apply.



## Appeal Outcome

The appeal outcome will be communicated in writing to all relevant parties, with reasons. This will normally be the final stage of the process.

## Vexatious, Malicious and Repeated Complaints

The organisation reserves the right to:

- Decline to proceed with complaints that are vexatious, frivolous or malicious
- Limit contact if a complainant is making repeated complaints with no new evidence

## Data Protection and Confidentiality

All personal data will be handled in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the organisation's Data Protection Policy.

Individuals have the right to request copies of data held about them (Subject Access Request) under GDPR.

Records will be kept securely and destroyed in accordance with the organisation's records retention policy.

# Monitoring and Reporting

## Record Keeping

All complaints will be recorded, including:

- The nature of the complaint
- Actions taken
- Outcomes reached
- Timescales met or reasons for delay

## Reporting

Complaint statistics and themes will be reported to the Executive Committee periodically, and additionally as and when deemed necessary.

## Transparency

Serious complaints and their outcomes may be reported to external regulators where required by law or good practice.



## Training and Awareness

All staff and members involved in handling complaints will receive appropriate training to ensure:

- Consistent application of the policy
- Fair and impartial investigation
- Confidentiality and sensitivity
- Compliance with legal and regulatory requirements

## Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as and when required.

*Approved by the Ethics and Standards Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026*