

Noosa Bridge Club Complaint Management Procedure

Noosa Bridge Club wishes to foster a welcoming, respectful, inclusive, safe and welcoming environment for all members, visitors, guests directors volunteers and staff. With this goal in mind, the Club should promote fair play and sportsmanship among players. From time to time, incidents may arise where the ideals of the Club are not met and a player's experience at the Club may not meet expectations. The purpose of this document is to describe the procedure for the management of complaints with the objective of reaching positive outcomes that are timely, equitable, ethical, fair and unbiased.

1. Self Management

If the complaint is regarding a dispute between members, the first step is to attempt to resolve the problem directly by talking with the other person/s involved. Often, a dispute can be resolved by finding a common ground rather than focusing on differences. Sometimes, it may require some negotiation to come to an agreement or partially conceding to the other party. The dispute may have arisen due to a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the other party's words or actions. By discussing the matter directly, intentions may become more clear and it may dissipate or diffuse the situation. Agreement may not always be possible, but it may be possible for parties to "agree to disagree".

2. Management by Director (if applicable)

If the complaint is regarding behaviour at the table, or regarding contravenes of the rules and regulations regarding bridge play, the issue should be brought to the attention of the Director currently on duty. It is the responsibility of the Director to adjudicate on these matters. Players are to respect the decision made by the Director at the time and should not question or dispute the decision during play. Players may appeal the decision or report the conduct of a Director by making a formal complaint at the end of play through the Complaint Management Procedure.

3. Initiate the Complaint Management Procedure

If a complaint is unable to be resolved using Self Management or Management by Director, the complainant may lodge a complaint within 14 days of the incident to be managed by the Complaint Management Procedure.

The complaint must be made in written form and sent by email to noosabridge@gmail.com or a member of the Management Committee with the word "Complaint" in the subject line.

The Complaint Management Procedure will be activated upon the receipt of email.

4. Triage of the Complaint

The officer receiving the complaint by email (usually the Administration Officer) will categorise the type of complaint and to where it should be forwarded.

Complaints fall into the following categories and are forwarded to the following entities for processing:

1. Appeal / dispute of decision by Director – Director's forum
2. Appeal / dispute of results – Director's forum
3. Complaint / feedback regarding Club policies and procedures – Management Committee
4. General dispute between members – Management Committee
5. Breach of Code of Conduct (including unlawful practices) – Management Committee

5. Consideration of complaint

After triage, the complaint is sent to the appropriate entity for initial consideration.

In this step the following are considered:

1. Is this a complaint?

If the answer is no, it may be rejected from the Complaint Management Procedure and the initiator will be notified of the result. It may be a message that should have been submitted as a suggestion and if so, will be handled accordingly.

2. Is the complaint valid?

The complaint will be considered on its merits. If the complaint appears to be frivolous, nonsensical or clearly false or misleading, it may be rejected from the Procedure and the initiator will be notified of the result.

3. Is the complaint sufficient to proceed for processing?

Complaints may not be accepted if the information contained is incomplete, non-specific, highly emotive or lacking verifiable facts.

6. Investigation

Once consideration of the complaint is complete, an investigation may be initiated to determine substance of the case and to verify the facts. This involves gathering information from the complainant, respondent(s) and any witnesses involved. Members who are under investigation are required to cooperate with the subcommittee and be open and honest when information is requested. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

In the event of suspected breach of the Code of Conduct, the Management Committee may refer the matter to the Conduct & Ethics Subcommittee for detailed investigation.

The purpose of the Conduct & Ethics Subcommittee is to act as an advisory body to the Management Committee regarding cases involving suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct. If a matter is referred to the Subcommittee, the Subcommittee is authorised to conduct an investigation and produce a summarised report of findings, including a recommendation, to the Management Committee. Further information regarding the purpose, constituency, scope and operation of the Conduct & Ethics Subcommittee may be found in the Conduct & Ethics Subcommittee Terms of Reference document.

The final outcome of a complaint referred to the Conduct & Ethics Subcommittee is determined by decision of the Management Committee. Only members of the Management Committee not involved in the investigation may participate in the decision of the outcome. Members of the Management Committee may request further information from the Subcommittee to assist in making their decision.

7. Post Investigation Review

Upon completion of the investigation, the Conduct & Ethics Subcommittee will convene to review proceedings and identify opportunities for improvement. Any inefficiencies or deficiencies in the procedure identified are analysed and actions are planned to resolve them. The review is assisted by feedback received by the Management Committee and members involved in the investigation.

8. Mediation / counselling / education (as required)

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the need for mediation and/or counseling may be identified and offered to involved members, particularly in instances that are distressing. In some instances, education may be an appropriate outcome where a lack of awareness may have been a root cause.

9. Disciplinary Action

If disciplinary action has been decided by the Management Committee, such action shall be taken promptly after the decision has been made. The member will be notified of the decision by the Management Committee by mail and/or email. Where there is urgency in the disciplinary action, the member will also be verbally informed by the President, or in the event that the President was unable to participate in the decision, a representative member of the Management Committee.

10. Notification of Outcome

Once the complaint has been processed, the complainant shall be informed of the outcome. Information shall include the decision that was made, action that was taken and any changes or improvements to systems, policies, procedures, bylaws that are planned to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

11. Appeals Process

The Appeals Process provides a fair and structured opportunity for members to challenge the outcome of a decision made under the Complaints Management Procedure.

Any member who is directly affected by a decision under the Complaints Management Procedure may initiate an appeal. Claims of procedural error(s), misapplication(s) of the Club's Code of Conduct or By-laws or improper decision by the Management Committee are managed through this process.

An appeal must be submitted within 14 days of the decision being communicated to the member. Appeals submitted after this period may be considered on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the Appeals Committee.

Appeals should be addressed to the Management Committee and be sent by email to noosabridge@gmail.com or to a member of the Management Committee.

To be accepted, appeals must:

- State the grounds for the appeal
- Include a clear explanation regarding the impact on the outcome
- Provide a set of actions requested to reach the desired result.

New or additional evidence cannot be admitted within the Appeals Process. Evidence is gathered during the Investigation phase.

The Management Committee will issue a written decision to the originator within 14 days of receiving the appeal. The decision may:

- Uphold the original decision;
- Amend the original decision; or
- Reverse the original decision.

The decision of the Management Committee is final, unless the member chooses to escalate the matter to a higher authority, such as an external dispute resolution service.

APPENDIX A.

Guidelines for Submitting a Good Quality Complaint

1. Be Clear and Concise

- State your complaint clearly and directly. Avoid unnecessary details or vague statements.
- Make sure your complaint is easy to understand and focused on the issue at hand.

2. State the Facts

- Provide all relevant facts and evidence to support your complaint. This includes dates, names, and any supporting documents (e.g., emails, scores, or records).
- Be objective and stick to the facts. Avoid emotional language unless it is necessary to explain the impact of the issue.

3. Identify the Issue

- Clearly state what the problem is and how it affects you or the Bridge Club.
- Specify whether the issue relates to conduct, policy, procedure, or any other relevant aspect of the Bridge Club.

4. Include the Impact

- Explain how the issue has affected you or the Bridge Club. This helps the committee understand the significance of the complaint.

5. Be Respectful

- Maintain a respectful tone throughout your complaint. Even if you are upset, avoid aggressive or personal language.
- This helps to keep the process constructive and professional.

6. Provide Contact Information

- Include your full name, preferred means of communication and any other relevant information to help the committee reach you if needed.

7. Be Specific and Detailed

- Provide enough detail so that the committee can fully understand your complaint and investigate it thoroughly.
- If you are unsure about the procedure, ask for clarification before submitting.

8. Keep a Record

- Keep a copy of your complaint and any supporting documents for your records. This will help you track the progress of your complaint and provide evidence if needed.

9. Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

- By submitting your complaint, you agree to cooperate with the operation of the Complaints Management Procedure and provide open and honest information when requested.
- You have the right to appeal if the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction.