

# Academy of Historical Arts



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## Complaints Policy

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*Version: 02*  
*Date: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013*

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## Version and Copyright Information

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*Version: 02*

*Date: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013*

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*Version: 01*

*Date: 23rd July 2010*

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## Abbreviations:

The Academy of Historical Arts may be abbreviated to "Academy" or "AHA" throughout this document.

The Academy of Historical Arts asserts its right  
to change this policy at any time.

## **1 Introduction**

This document will set out the policy that the Academy will follow when dealing with formal and informal complaints, and will set out the procedure whereby anyone may make a formal complaint that the Academy will investigate.

## **2 Guarantee**

The senior instructors of the Academy of Historical Arts will take every formal complaint seriously and will not ever dismiss a formal complaint out of hand. A confirmation will always be given that a complaint has been received, and (where physically possible) the person making the complaint will always receive confirmation of the outcome of the complaint.

Every complaint will be treated with due process and investigation, and will be handled in as neutral and unbiased fashion as possible. If it will be impossible for the senior instructors to follow due process in a neutral and unbiased fashion, then other qualified Academy instructors will be asked to step in to deal with the issue. If necessary, the Board of Trustees for Triquetra Services (Scotland) will be asked to deal with the matter, if a suitable set of instructors cannot be found to deal with it.

## **3 Making a formal complaint**

To make a formal complaint, the Academy requires a written message describing the problem and giving as much relevant information as possible. The written complaint should be emailed to [info@historical-arts.co.uk](mailto:info@historical-arts.co.uk) so that all senior instructors and administrators of the organisation can see it and deal with it, and so that it can be referred to whenever the individuals dealing with the complaint need to re-acquaint themselves with the particulars of the issue.

It is recommended that the person making the complaint should provide his or her name and a valid email address for further written communication. If the Academy needs any further information then this will be requested by email.

If the individual submitting the complaint would prefer to do so anonymously (perhaps by using an email account with no identifying name, or by asking a friend or club instructor to submit it in a confidential fashion), then the Academy will be unable to ask

for any further information, and may not be able to respond with a confirmation of the outcome of the complaint.

**Summary:**

- 1) write a formal description of the complaint and all relevant information;
- 2) provide your name and contact email address, so that you can be contacted for further information if necessary;
- 3) email it to [info@historical-academy.co.uk](mailto:info@historical-academy.co.uk) and receive confirmation of receipt;
- 4) receive confirmation of the outcome of the complaint.

#### **4 Confidentiality after a complaint has been made**

After a complaint has been submitted to the Academy, confidentiality is important. The team dealing with the complaint will endeavour to keep the issue confidential and not to discuss it where others not privy to the investigation may hear it; any other Academy officials or administrators not involved in the team, but who see the complaint email, are bound to maintain confidentiality of the issue and not to raise the matter with anyone in discussion.

Furthermore, it is expected that the individual who has submitted the complaint will maintain confidentiality as well. It is not professional nor helpful, and entirely inappropriate, to speak about a complaint currently under investigation to friends, associates and club members. In fact, such breach of confidentiality hinders the ability of the investigating team to make a neutral and unbiased decision about how to handle the complaint. If confidentiality is breached in such a fashion then the Academy cannot guarantee that the outcome of the complaint will be ideal.

#### **5 How the Academy must deal with a formal complaint**

When a formal complaint is emailed to [info@historical-academy.co.uk](mailto:info@historical-academy.co.uk) a formal confirmation of receipt should be sent to the sender, so that that individual can know that the complaint has been received and will be dealt with.

An appropriate team will be put together to deal with the complaint. This should be at least two senior members of the organisation, so that the issue and possible solutions can be discussed, and so that one individual working alone cannot make a poor decision without input to improve matters. The team should not include an individual who is involved directly in the complaint, and if at all possible

should not include an individual who is involved indirectly with the subject of the complaint.

If the complaint is about senior instructors within the organisation, then the Board of Trustees for Triquetra Services (Scotland) should be asked to deal with the problem.

The complaint must be respected as a legitimate problem that merits proper investigation and attention. It must not be dismissed as "simple whining" unless there is good and sufficient reason to do so, and a majority of the team dealing with the complaint believe that it should be dismissed.

Once the complaint has been handled and the issue has been resolved, a confirmation of the outcome should be sent to the personal from whom the complaint originated. If the complaint was anonymous, and it is not possible to send a confirmation of outcome, then this is not a necessary step.

Finally, a formal report of the complaint, the investigation and the outcome should be prepared and kept in the Academy's records. Any instructors or key individuals who may need to know about the issue and the outcome should be informed.

## **6 How the Academy must deal with an informal complaint**

An informal complaint is defined as any kind of complaint that does not follow the procedure described above for submitting a formal written complaint.

If the informal complaint is something that can be dealt with simply and easily, then this should be addressed and dealt with as soon as possible. At the end of the process, a brief report should be prepared and kept in the Academy's records, and any instructors or key individuals who may need to know about the issue and the outcome should be informed.

If the informal complaint is not something that can be dealt with simply and easily, then the individual making the complaint should be advised to write a formal complaint and to follow the procedure described above – if the complaint is not made formally according to the procedure, then the Academy instructors must disregard the complaint and leave it up to the individuals involved to sort the issue between themselves.

The Academy cannot guarantee to deal successfully with any complaint if it is not submitted formally. An informal complaint may be lost in the general chaos of an event, or it may even be forgotten about by overworked instructors if raised at the wrong time. The safest way to ensure that a complaint is dealt with properly and professionally is to make a formal complaint in writing as described above.

## **7 The AHA report of a complaint and its outcome**

The report that should be written at the end of dealing with a complaint should contain this information and should follow this rough structure:

- 1) date of submission
- 2) person who submitted the complaint
- 3) the names of the team who dealt with the complaint
- 4) a description of the complaint (ideally copied and pasted from the complaint itself)
- 5) a description of the salient points of the investigation process
- 6) a description of any disagreements within the team about how to deal with the complaint
- 7) a description of the outcome
- 8) the date on which the confirmation of outcome was sent
- 9) the names of any instructors or key individuals who had to be informed about the issue and its outcome
- 10) the date on which the report was completed and added to the Academy's records

This report should not be available to anyone other than the senior instructors of the organisation, the administrators/Trustees of the Academy and Triquetra Services (Scotland), and anyone with good reason to see the document. It should be treated as confidential information subject to the Data Protection Act 1998.

## **8 Dealing with a serious complaint**

If a complaint is appropriately serious, then the team dealing with the complaint should refer it to the correct authority. This might be a child protection authority, or it might even be the police. Any illegal behaviour will not be tolerated and the Academy will not shield such behaviour from the law.

## **9 Making a complaint, or remaining silent**

It is better to make a formal complaint and to bring an issue to the attention of the senior instructors and administrators of the Academy than to stay quiet and let an issue fester and grow into a bigger problem. If something is genuinely a problem, then please do follow the procedure and make a complaint, so that the issue can be resolved before it gets any worse. If something is not quite so much of a problem, then still please do mention it to the senior instructors of the organisation, even if you don't want to make a formal complaint – then at least the senior instructors and the Academy's administrators will be aware that there is something going wrong, and can be more observant to ensure that it does not flare up into a problem worthy of a formal complaint.

The fact of the matter is that if the senior instructors and administrators of the Academy are unaware of a problem then they cannot resolve it. Therefore it is a good thing to raise issues, to ensure that the correct people know that there is a problem and can be more alert to it thereafter.

No one will ever be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.