

# Vexatious Complaints Policy

## Document Control

<b>Document Title:</b>	<b>Vexatious complaints Policy</b>		
<b>Document Purpose:</b>	This policy outlines how the club will identify and deal with Vexatious Complaints		
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<b>Related Documents:</b>	Grievance And Disciplinary Policy Complaints Policy (To be approved at a later date)		

## Table of Contents

<b>VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS POLICY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>DOCUMENT CONTROL.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. POLICY STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. SCOPE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. OBJECTIVES .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4. DEFINITION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5. EXAMPLES OF UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT/VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>6. PROCESS FOR DECLARING A COMPLAINT TO BE VEXATIOUS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>7. DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT DECLARED AS VEXATIOUS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>VERSION CONTROL.....</b>	<b>3</b>

### 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Exeter Rowing Club is committed to ensuring all complaints are dealt with in a fair, effective, and timely manner, and in accordance with the Club's Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.
- 1.2. Occasionally complainants may focus on their own concerns to the extent that persistent and vexatious complaints can place a strain on time and resources of staff or volunteers who have to deal with them.
- 1.3. All members are expected to deal with individuals respectfully and in a professional manner, however there are times when nothing more can reasonably be done to address a real or perceived concern.

### 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all members

### 3. Objectives

- 3.1. Exeter Rowing Club expects its members to be always treated with courtesy and respect and will protect them from unacceptable behaviour by complainants. Unacceptable behaviour may include:
  - abusive, threatening, or inappropriate language, either verbally or in writing.

- sending multiple emails, especially over a short timescale.
  - making multiple calls / leaving multiple voicemails.
  - or otherwise unreasonably pursuing a complaint.
- 3.2. Where an individual is raising a legitimate query or criticism of a complaints procedure as it progresses, such as time scales not being met, this would not normally, on its own, be regarded as vexatious or unreasonable.

#### 4. Definition

- 4.1. Any individual who is raising a complaint contentiously, without reasonable grounds or with little merit or substance, and with the purpose of causing annoyance or disruption; or
- 4.2. is pursuing a complaint to an unreasonable degree or after appropriate procedures have been followed and exhausted.

#### 5. Examples of unreasonably persistent/vexatious complaints

- 5.1. is pursuing a complaint to an unreasonable degree or after appropriate procedures have been followed and exhausted.
- 5.2. refusing to co-operate with the grievance, disciplinary or complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- 5.3. refusing to follow the correct procedure at the correct level, for example not exhausting the club's processes before escalating.
- 5.4. refusing to accept that issues do not come within the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure, despite having been provided with information about the scope of the policy and procedure.
- 5.5. refusing to accept that issues are not within the power of Exeter Rowing Club to investigate, change or influence.
- 5.6. insistence on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with Exeter Rowing Club or British Rowing's Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure or with good practice (e.g., insisting that Exeter Rowing Club does not make any written record of the complaint).
- 5.7. making what appear to be groundless complaints about the person dealing with the complaint(s) and seeking to have them dismissed or replaced.
- 5.8. making an unreasonable number of contacts by any means in relation to a specific complaint or complaints.
- 5.9. making persistent and unreasonable demands or expectations of members/officers and/or the grievance and disciplinary or complaints process after the unreasonableness has been explained to the complainant (an example of this could be a complainant who insists on immediate responses to numerous, frequent and/or complex letters, faxes, telephone calls or emails).
- 5.10. raising numerous subsidiary or new issues whilst a complaint is being addressed that were not part of the complaint at the start of the complaint process.
- 5.11. adopting a 'scattergun approach' such as pursuing a complaint or complaints not only with Exeter Rowing Club but at the same time with British Rowing, with

Sport England, the Government, a Member of Parliament, their local council, elected councillors, the police, solicitors and/or any other body.

- 5.12. refusing to accept the outcome of the complaint process after its conclusion and attempting to escalate it.

## 6. Process for declaring a complaint to be vexatious

- 6.1. If a member of Exeter Rowing Club is concerned about a complaint potentially being vexatious, the matter should be referred, up to the Club Directors
- 6.2. The referral should include an explanation of their concerns and attaching any relevant emails/documents.
- 6.3. Where the complaint concerned relates to the Directors, the matter should be referred to British Rowing's Regional Chair, who shall appoint an independent person to deal with it.
- 6.4. The appointed person should consider the matter including all the documents and decide whether the complaint comes within the above definition of vexatious.

## 7. Dealing with a complaint declared as vexatious

- 7.1. The appointed person will record the decision in writing giving brief reasons.
- 7.2. The appointed person will ensure that any outstanding steps under the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure are completed.
- 7.3. The appointed person will contact the complainant in writing to inform them that a decision has been taken that this procedure will apply to their complaint henceforth and enclosing a copy of this policy. The letter will set out the preferred method of communication for all parties involved and the way the matter will be dealt with going forward.
- 7.4. Once the letter has been sent, contact with the complainant will be restricted to specific individuals and by specific method/s, usually in writing, subject to paragraph 7.5 below
- 7.5. Where the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure has been exhausted and the concern cannot be taken any further, the complainant will be notified in writing their concern has been fully responded to, there is nothing further to add, and continuing contact will serve no useful purpose. Further correspondence will be acknowledged but not answered.
- 7.6. In extreme circumstances it may be necessary to instruct external lawyers to deter the individual from further contact.
- 7.7. Exeter Rowing Club reserve the right to refuse admission or renewal of membership to any member who has been declared to be vexatious under section 19.1(b)

## Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Amendments
1	1/9/2021	S Gibson	Adapted from British Rowing Model Policy for consideration and adoption. - <a href="https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Vexatious-Complaints-Model-Policy-for-Clubs-and-Events.pdf">https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Vexatious-Complaints-Model-Policy-for-Clubs-and-Events.pdf</a>