

# From *The Cambridge Student* Constitution

## H. Procedure for Handling Complaints

H1. Complaints will generally be allowed on the following grounds:

1. TCS has misrepresented an individual or organisation
2. TCS has unduly caused offence to its readership
3. TCS personnel have acted unprofessionally, immorally, or illegally in the pursuit of a story
4. TCS has violated the standards of journalism, especially those standards enshrined in the IPSO Code of Practice

H2. Complaints shall be handled using the following procedure:

1. All complaints should be directed to the Editor-in-Chief or to the Board of Directors, or both, and not to individual section editors, writers and reporters, or other members of the team. A notice to this effect must be included in each issue of the Paper (ideally on the page where letters and apologies are usually published) and on the website.
2. Reporters, Sub-Editors, and the Editor-in-Chief should retain all notes related to TCS' stories for a period of at least three months or, if related to a complaint, for the duration of a complaint until it is fully resolved, whichever is the longer. It shall be the responsibility of the Editor-in-Chief to inform members of the team as to this requirement.
3. The Editor-in-Chief should keep a log of all contacts made to the Paper that could be considered complaints.
4. Any contact that the Editor-in-Chief thinks may constitute or develop into a complaint should receive an individual reply.
5. Any complaints or contact which the Editor-in-Chief thinks could develop into a complaint should be forwarded immediately to the Chair of the Board of Directors.
6. To make a formal complaint, a named complainant should submit to the Editor-in-Chief a text in any reasonable format noting:
  1. their desire to make a complaint
  2. the specific story or TCS operative with which the complaint is concerned
  3. the details of any offensive material, misleading statements, or unprofessional behaviour that constitute the grounds for the complaint
  4. the details of any specific harms caused by the actions of TCS that constitute the grounds for the complaint
  5. a method by which the complainant can be reached for correspondence

TCS should have a Complaints Form for this purpose that is easily accessible.

7. The first reply to any complainant or potential complainant should include a copy of, or link to, the TCS Complaints Procedure and a copy of, or link to, the IPSO Code of Practice, physical copies of those documents, or written references to where they can be found.
8. The Editor-in-Chief should investigate complaints to see if they can be informally resolved.
9. If the informal resolution includes the printing of an apology, the exact wording of this must be confirmed with both the Complainant and the Board before publication. The same process should apply to the printing of any letters; it should be clearly established whether a letter (or email) to the editor is intended for publication, or merely for personal reference.

10. Any article which is edited or changed following online publication, with the exception of very minor changes to correct spelling and grammar, must include a disclaimer to explain the reasons behind the changes.
11. Informal resolutions should be summarised and reported in writing to each Board meeting.
12. If the Editor-in-Chief and a complainant cannot agree on an informal resolution, or if the resolution would involve a serious admission of civil or criminal liability, the complaint should automatically be passed to the Board. The complainant should be notified that their complaint is sitting with the Board and of when they should expect to receive a reply.
13. The Board (with the Editor-in-Chief lacking a vote) shall have seven days from receiving a complaint to investigate the complaint and either render judgment or seek additional time. The Board may take up to 20 additional days on the grounds that:
  1. Professional legal advice must be sought on the matter
  2. The Board is unable to meet for reasonable logistical reasons (i.e., it is mid-summer and several members are abroad) and must work more slowly.
  3. Additional evidence related to the complaint must be gathered and cannot be found within the fourteen-day limit for a specified reason.

When taking additional time under H2.13 1-3 above, the Board should advise the complainant on the reasons for delay and when they should expect a reply. Any delay beyond five working days for reasons not specified in H.2.13 1-3 above or beyond twenty-seven days for reasons including H.2.13 1-3 above must be agreed with the complainant.

14. Complainants should be advised of all of their avenues for appeal of the Board's formal judgment at the time when that judgment is rendered.

H3. The following are to be considered by the Editor-in-Chief and Board of Directors in the handling of complaints

1. TCS should consider their judgments on complaints on the basis of fairness and not simply on the minimum action required to avoid liability or public embarrassment.
2. TCS should not harass, threaten, or otherwise unduly dissuade a complainant from proceeding with a complaint and should volunteer procedural information helpful to making a complaint.
3. TCS should be transparent in its operational practices and in how it handles complaints. It should, at the same time, protect confidential sources and methods of information-gathering.
4. TCS should maintain accurate records of complaints and judgments and use these to educate its editors and reporters in order to avoid the repetition of harmful mistakes.
5. At every stage in the editorial process, contributors to TCS (including writers, section editors, and sub-editors) should be made aware of the possible bases for complaint and asked to take due care; any concerns should be raised directly with the Editor-in-Chief or the Chair of the Board as early in the process as possible, and certainly before publishing.

H4. The decision of the CUSU Board of Trustees shall, in the event of a complaint appeal, have the power to reject the Board's decision by resolution of a two thirds majority. In such an eventuality, the Trustees would be able, by subsequent resolution of a two thirds majority, to:

1. Censure the Board of Directors
2. Remove the Editor-in-Chief
3. Remove particular members of the Board, in accordance with C.5