



Dartford Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society

President: The Worshipful The Mayor of Dartford

Complaints and Disciplinary Policy

Introduction

Dartford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society (DAODS) exists to bring people together through a shared love for theatre. We are a volunteer led group committed to creating quality productions and supporting one another. When challenges arise, we aim to handle them fairly and quickly, with a high degree of respect and collaboration.

This policy outlines how concerns or complaints can be raised and how we deal with them. It also sets out our approach to behaviour and discipline where needed.

We aim to:

- Resolve things informally wherever possible
- Support open, respectful communication
- Ensure that any process is fair, confidential and proportionate

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Executive Committee, or sooner if necessitated by changes in law, regulation, best practice, or the Society's operations. Any amendments will be approved by the Executive Committee.

Informal Resolution

We believe most issues can and should be resolved through honest, respectful conversation. If you have a concern, whether about a person, behaviour, or situation, you are encouraged to speak informally with a Committee member, Director, Stage Manager or another trusted person within the Society.

Where needed, the Committee may support a more structured approach to conflict resolution, such as mediation between parties.

Raising a formal complaint

If informal steps have not worked or do not feel appropriate, you can raise a formal complaint to the Executive Committee in writing by emailing daodscom@gmail.com. This will ensure appropriate privacy, proper tracking, and fair handling of all complaints, please do not send formal concerns via WhatsApp or other messaging platforms. Access to this inbox is restricted to the Chair and Vice-Chair to maintain confidentiality and effective management of complaints.

In your email, please include:

- A description of the issue (with relevant dates or context)
- Any steps already taken through attempts to resolve informally

- What resolution you are seeking
- Your contact details.

Once we receive your complaint we will:

- Acknowledge it within 1 week
- Refer the matter to the Committee for initial review*
- Let you know within 4 weeks how we intend to handle it
- If an investigation is required, we will complete this and respond with a proposed outcome within 8 weeks.

In the event we are unable to respond within the timelines outlined above, we will tell you the reason why with an updated timeframe.

While the Committee is not made up of trained investigators, where necessary we will conduct a fair and impartial investigation in good faith. During an investigation, the Committee will gather all relevant information by speaking to all parties.

If during our investigation the Committee believes that the complaint raised involves misconduct, they may decide to investigate this as a disciplinary matter (see section 4). In this case, the information already gathered will inform the disciplinary decision.

***Conflicts of Interest**

Any Committee member with a relationship to individuals involved in a complaint or disciplinary matter must declare this. Given the voluntary nature of the society, such connections are expected and do not in themselves preclude involvement, disclosure simply ensures transparency and allows conflicts of interest to be assessed.

Where a relationship could reasonably be seen to affect a member's impartiality, such as direct involvement with the parties or prior knowledge of the matter, that member will not participate in the investigation panel for that case. The Committee as a whole will retain responsibility for the final decision, ensuring a fair and unbiased outcome.

Disciplinary matters

In some cases, a formal complaint may involve behaviour that constitutes misconduct and needs to be considered under our disciplinary process. This may include but is not limited to:

Examples of misconduct:

- a. Disrespectful or disruptive behaviour
- b. Repeated lateness or unreliability
- c. Ignoring agreed procedures.

Examples of gross misconduct:

- d. Theft, fraud or dishonesty
- e. Violence or intimidation
- f. Sexual harassment or assault
- g. Serious harassment, bullying or discrimination
- h. Deliberate safety breaches.

Disciplinary process

If the Committee identifies misconduct through the handling of a complaint, the following steps will apply:

Informing all parties

The person subject to the concern will also be informed of the key details of the complaint and given a fair opportunity to respond, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Use of existing investigation

Where a complaint has already been investigated, the findings of that investigation will form the basis of any disciplinary decision. A further investigation will only be initiated if significant additional information emerges.

Suspension (only if necessary)

Suspension from Society activities during the investigation will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, such as if there is a risk to the safety of others or the actions are deemed prejudicial to the interests of the Society. Suspension is not automatic and will not be imposed merely because an allegation of misconduct has been made. If suspension is necessary, it will be a precautionary measure to protect all parties and is not an indication of any wrongdoing.

Decision and outcomes

After reviewing the information, the Committee may decide on one or more of the following:

- An informal conversation or reminder
- A verbal or written warning
- Suspension or expulsion in serious cases.

Decisions to expel a member will be made in line with Rule 6.5 of the Constitution, which provides the member the right to appear before the Committee and, if desired, to address a General Meeting (see Section 6).

Expulsion from the Society

In line with Rule 6.5 of the Society's Constitution, if the Executive Committee decides to expel a member for conduct prejudicial to the interests of the Society, the following process will apply:

- Invitation to appear before the Committee:** The member will be invited to appear before the Executive Committee to present their case. The member will be given the opportunity to address the Committee regarding the concerns raised.
- Opportunity to address a general meeting:** If the member desires, they may also address a General Meeting. This provides them with the opportunity to make their case directly to the wider membership of the Society.

Record keeping and confidentiality

We keep confidential records of formal complaints and disciplinary actions in line with data protection laws. Warnings may be removed after a reasonable period, typically:

- a. 6 months for minor offences
- b. 12 months or more for more serious ones

Records are retained securely and only shared with those who need to know.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Committee, or sooner if necessary. Feedback from members is welcome at any time.