



The Story Island Project Grievance Policy – Volunteers

Purpose

The purpose of this *Grievance Policy* is to provide a framework for handling grievances in a fair and timely manner.

Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers of the Story Island Project, including volunteer tutors and members of the Story Island Project Board.

Definition

A grievance is any problem, concern or complaint related to a volunteer's work environment, including changes to the volunteer's role, their safety or the behaviour of others in the workplace.

Roles and responsibilities

It is the role of the President of the Story Island Project Board to manage grievance complaints from Board members.

It is the role of the Volunteer Coordinator to handle any grievance complaints from volunteers.

If a grievance complaint concerns the Volunteer Coordinator, it is the role of the President to manage the complaint.

If a grievance complaint concerns the President, it is the role of the Senior Vice-President to manage the complaint.

1 Introduction

The aim of this *Grievance Policy* is to settle grievances fairly, simply and quickly. Every effort will be made to resolve grievances at the earliest possible stage. At each stage efforts will be made to avoid proceeding to the next stage and to settle the issue amicably.

If a volunteer has a problem with any other volunteer or a staff member, and is unable to sort it out informally, the matter should be referred to the Volunteer Coordinator. You may be able to agree to an informal solution between you. Informal approaches are encouraged.

In certain circumstances it may, with mutual agreement, be helpful to consider using an independent third party to help resolve the problem. In some cases, an external mediator might be appropriate. Mediation does not decide on who is right or wrong. Nor can the parties be forced to undertake mediation – it must be a purely voluntary process.

If the problem is serious, or remains unresolved, or the volunteer wishes to raise the matter formally, the volunteer can use the formal grievance procedure outlined below.

2 The Procedure

Volunteers

First step	Second step	Third step
<p>Volunteer has a conversation with the Volunteer Coordinator about their grievance.</p> <p>Volunteer Coordinator will aim to resolve the grievance at this step.</p>	<p>Volunteer puts their grievance in writing and gives it to the Volunteer Coordinator.</p> <p>Volunteer Coordinator arranges a meeting to hear the volunteer’s grievance, and will inform the volunteer of their decision in writing.</p>	<p>Volunteer can appeal the decision of the grievance meeting (second step) by writing a letter of appeal to the President of the Story Island Project Board.</p> <p>An Appeal Panel (made up of members of the Board) will meet to hear the volunteer’s appeal, and will inform the volunteer of their decision in writing.</p> <p>The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.</p>

(Please note: if a volunteer has a grievance with the Volunteer Coordinator, they can follow the procedure with the President of the Board of the Story Island Project. In the case of the grievance being with the President, the matter should be raised with the Senior Vice-President.)

i) Informal resolution

As a first step, the Story Island Project encourages volunteers to speak to the Volunteer Coordinator if they have a grievance. The grievance may be able to be resolved informally.

If the grievance cannot be resolved informally, the volunteer can raise a formal grievance in writing, and it will be dealt with by the Volunteer Coordinator as outlined below. If the volunteer is not happy with the decision at any step, they can take the next step in this procedure.

ii) Raise the grievance in writing

The volunteer should raise their grievance in writing with the Volunteer Coordinator/President/Senior Vice-President without unreasonable delay, normally within one month of the incident (or final incident) which gives rise to the complaint.

Whoever deals with the grievance at the grievance meeting will be excluded from hearing any appeal.

The volunteer must detail in writing the specific circumstance or circumstances which constitute the grievance, with dates, times, witnesses, etc. as applicable. The volunteer should stick to the facts and avoid insulting or abusive language.

Where a volunteer has difficulty expressing themselves because of language or other difficulties, they may like to seek help from a staff member.

iii) Invitation to a Grievance Meeting

The Volunteer Coordinator/President/Senior Vice-President will invite the volunteer to attend a meeting, without unavoidable delay, to discuss the matter.

The meeting should ideally be arranged within five working days of receiving the written grievance.

The Volunteer Coordinator/President/Senior Vice-President will also state that the volunteer is entitled to be accompanied by a colleague at the meeting.

This colleague can speak at the meeting on behalf of the volunteer, but they cannot answer questions put directly to the volunteer.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for volunteers with disability, such as allowing a support worker or sign language interpreter to attend the meeting.

iv) Grievance Meeting

A note taker, who must be uninvolved in the case, will take down a record of the proceedings.

The Volunteer Coordinator/President/Senior Vice-President of the Board (as appropriate) will introduce the meeting, read out the grounds of the volunteer's grievance, ask the volunteer if the information is correct and ask the volunteer to provide clarification regarding details of the grievance if unclear.

The volunteer will be given the opportunity to put forward her/his case and say how they would like to see it resolved. The volunteer may call witnesses and refer to any documents previously provided to the Volunteer Coordinator/President/Senior Vice-President.

The Volunteer Coordinator/President/Senior Vice-President may question the volunteer and any of the volunteer's witnesses.

The volunteer will be given the opportunity to sum up but may not introduce any new material.

The meeting may be adjourned by the Volunteer Coordinator/President/Senior Vice-President if it is considered necessary to undertake further investigation. Any necessary investigations will be carried out to establish the facts of the case. The meeting will be reconvened as soon as possible.

Generally, a meeting will be adjourned before a decision is taken. This allows time for reflection and proper consideration. It also allows for any further checking of any matters raised.

Having considered the grievance, the Volunteer Coordinator/President/Senior Vice-President will give her/his decision regarding the case in writing to the volunteer and this will normally be within five working days. If appropriate, the decision will set out what action the organisation intends to take to resolve the grievance or, if the grievance is not upheld, will explain the reasons. This will also include notifying the volunteer of her/his right of appeal and of the procedure to be followed.

Any volunteer or staff member who is the subject of a grievance should be provided with an opportunity to respond to the complaints made against them.

v) Appeal

If still unresolved, the volunteer may refer the matter, in writing, to the President of the Board of the Story Island Project, or if the President has already been involved in an earlier stage of the procedure, to the Senior Vice-President.

The volunteer wishing to appeal against a grievance decision must do so in writing within five working days of receiving written notification of the grievance decision, stating the reasons for the appeal. Any documents submitted in support of the appeal must be attached.

Arrangements for the appeal meeting will be made by the President (or the Senior Vice-President if appropriate) who will ensure that a note taker is present. The appeal meeting

should be held without unavoidable delay. At least two members of the Board will constitute an Appeal Panel. The Board members hearing the appeal should have had no direct involvement in the case.

The volunteer is entitled to be accompanied by a colleague at the appeal.

The meeting may be adjourned by the Appeal Panel, if it is considered necessary to undertake further investigation. The meeting will be reconvened as soon as possible.

The decision of the Appeal Panel shall be final.

Documentation

All documentation regarding the grievance should be added to the file of the volunteer.