

Code of Conduct

Policy

Introduction

1. Good governance is crucial to all organisations, including charities such as PNFS. Good governance is supported by establishing a code of conduct and expected standards of behaviour for members of the managing committee who are our trustees. A well-established guide to good governance is the 'Nolan Principles'. In 1995 the Committee on Standards in Public Life, chaired by Lord Nolan, received its first report establishing the Seven Principles of Public Life. Now referred to as the 'Nolan principles', the recommendations aimed at improving standards of behaviour in public life. These principles focus on behaviour and culture rather than process.
2. The Code of Conduct contained within the Nolan Principles framework reflects the duties that apply to charity trustees. It contains seven principles as set out below, with two additional principles.
3. These principles apply to PNFS trustees and all volunteers.

Code of Conduct, Values, and Behaviours

4. **Selflessness:** Trustees should act at all times for the good of the Society, its members, and its charitable objects without preoccupation with one's own interests.
5. **Integrity:** Trustees and other volunteers should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their role as a trustee.
6. **Objectivity:** In carrying out the business of the organisation, trustees and other volunteers should make choices based on merit.
7. **Accountability:** Trustees and other volunteers are accountable for their decisions and actions to their stakeholders and the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their role.
8. **Openness:** Trustees and other volunteers should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take.
9. **Honesty:** Trustees and other volunteers should declare any private interests relating to their trusteeship and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public benefit.

10. **Leadership:** Trustees should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.
11. **Public Service:** Trustees and other volunteers have a duty to act in the interests of the charity of which they are a member and to act in accordance with the core tasks of the charity.
12. **Respect:** Trustees and other volunteers must respect fellow members of the Society and the role they play and treat them with courtesy, at all times. This includes those participating in managing committee meetings and all written and verbal communications.

Breaches of the Code

13. Where a potential breach of this Code arises, the complainant should first seek to resolve the matter informally with the involved parties. Where this is not possible or any party does not wish to engage in the resolution, the complainant should inform the chair, or, should the chair be the respondent in the complaint, another trustee in writing detailing the nature of the alleged breach and including any evidence in support of the complaint.
14. Following the receipt of the complaint, the chair, or the appointed trustee, will follow the steps below in order to resolve the breach:
 - 14.1. Mediation – The chair, or the appointed trustee, invites the complainant and respondent to a facilitated mediation in order to amicably resolve the complaint without recourse to formal process. If all parties agree to mediation and any proposed outcome, no further action may be necessary. Where the complaint relates to potential misconduct or gross misconduct, the process should proceed immediately to the formal review.
 - 14.2. Formal review – The chair, or the appointed trustee, convenes an investigatory panel of 3-5 trustees (inclusive of the convener) to review the complaint.
 - 14.2.1. The panel will take account of the submitted report and evidence from the complainant as well as any written reply from the respondent. If desired, the panel may also elect to take further evidence in writing or by interview from either party and/or any other witnesses.
 - 14.2.2. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the panel decide on the most appropriate action or remedy. This proposed remedy is presented to the Trustees for confirmation.
 - 14.2.3. The Trustees may confirm or not confirm the proposed remedy. They may not provide any alternative. Should the proposed remedy not be confirmed,

the panel will review the evidence anew and take account of feedback provided by the Trustees. They may choose to recommend another remedy, or to confirm their original proposal. After review, the decision of the panel shall be final.

- 14.2.4. After confirmation, the chair, or the appointed trustee, provide a written response detailing this decision to both the complainant and the respondent. Potential outcomes are as listed below:

- 14.2.4.1. Complaint dismissed – no further action necessary
- 14.2.4.2. Complaint upheld – no further action necessary
- 14.2.4.3. Complaint upheld – respondent receives a verbal warning
- 14.2.4.4. Complaint upheld – respondent receives a written warning
- 14.2.4.5. Complaint upheld – suspension from membership in the Society (to include vacating any positions held), normally for a period of six months, though different lengths could be considered by the panel
- 14.2.4.6. Complaint upheld – expulsion from the Society

- 14.3. For repeated breaches of the Code of Conduct, the panel will take account of previous outcomes and sanctions applied to the respondent in determining the most appropriate outcome. In general, repeated breaches will result in escalation of outcomes along the list above.

- 14.4. Where misconduct is confirmed by the panel, as per the definition below, the lowest possible outcome will be a written warning.

- 14.5. Where gross misconduct is confirmed by the panel, as per the definition below, the outcome will normally be expulsion from the Society except if the panel determined exceptional mitigating circumstances, where a Suspension for no less than six months may be applied.

- 14.6. There is no right of appeal.

Definitions

15. **Misconduct** – Wilfully or neglectfully damaging the Society's reputation or exposing it to unacceptable risk.
16. **Gross misconduct** – Acts of aggression, sexual crime, abuse, or any other action that could severely damage the Society's reputation or ability to carry out its functions.

Version History

Version	Summary of changes	Effective from:	Effective to:
1.0	First version	2022-07-29	2024-05-24
2.0	Addition of breach mechanism. Renumbering.	2024-05-24	

