

CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR MEMBERS

The CBAI has agreed on a standard procedure for formally dealing with complaints by its members against fellow members, clubs and officials. The purpose of this procedure is to facilitate the resolution of difficulties where they may arise, in an agreed and fair manner.

This document lays out in five stages the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed at each stage. Please note this is a non-statutory procedure and does not supersede the rules of Bridge or the constitution of the CBAI.

Only those complaints about CBAI members which are written and signed by complainants may be investigated formally by clubs and Regional Complaints Committees, except where those complaints are deemed by the Regional Tournament & Play & Procedures Committee (RTPPC) to be:

- on matters of professional competence by a bridge teacher(s) and Tournament Directors, which are to be referred to the CBAI qualifying body;
- Frivolous or vexatious complaints, as deemed to be such by the RTPPC.

Unwritten complaints, not in the above categories, may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

Stage 1

1. A member who wishes to make a complaint should approach the Tournament Director with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Where the complaint cannot be resolved in this manner s/he should approach the club's officers with a view to resolving it.
3. If the complaint is still unresolved the complainant should raise the matter with his or her County Development Officer and the Regional Secretary, as a further attempt to resolve the matter.

Stage 2

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further s/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the RTPPC.
2. The chairperson of the RTPPC should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the person being complained of, supplying a copy of the material received, and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within five days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

1. If the complaint is still not resolved the chairperson of the RTPPC should make a formal report to both parties within 10 days of receipt of the complaint.
2. If the RTPPC considers that the complaint is not substantiated the person being complained of and the complainant should be so informed within three days of the RTPPC assessment of the complaint.
3. If the RTPPC considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:
 - a) both parties should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage,
 - b) both parties should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint,
 - c) both parties should be requested to supply written statements to the RTPPC in response to the complaint,
 - d) both parties should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of their respective cases to the RTPPC and encouraged to attend. Parties would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting.Such a meeting will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).

Stage 4

1. When the RTPPC has completed its investigation, the chairperson should convey its decision in writing to the complainant within five days of the meeting.
2. The CBAI will be made aware of the decision of the RTPPC.

If the final decision of the RTPPC is not accepted by either party, the option remains to take the matter to the Conduct Panel of the CBAI, at which stage a deposit of €100, which may be forfeited, will be required.

Note: The vast majority of complaints are resolved locally and informally. However, in certain circumstances, for example, where a complaint is considered to be serious in nature, or where the person is required to submit a written response to his/her Club Officers, CDO, RTPPC or CBAI Head Office for advice and assistance, the matter may need to be dealt with using this agreed procedure.

In advising a member, the CBAI will be anxious to ensure that there is due process and fair procedures have been applied, which generally include:

- that the member(s) in question be fully appraised of all matters being considered by the RTPPC, including being provided with copies of all relevant documentation;
- that the member(s) have the right to respond and adequate time to prepare a response;
- that members are aware of their entitlement to be represented by a friend or adviser if necessary.

Where a complainant contacts the CBAI directly in relation to a complaint(s) made against him/her, the officials involved will generally refer him or her to the procedure outlined herein.

Parties involved in disputes will be made aware of the complaints procedure.

The RTPPC may withdraw from this agreement having given the parties three months' notice of its intention to do so.

In this agreement 'days' means working or week days.