

## **Gauge O Guild Code of Conduct**

The Gauge O Guild is committed to promoting its core values of respect, independence, professionalism, timeliness, recognition, innovation and leadership and will not tolerate actions or behaviours on the part of members which undermine these.

The Code sets out

- The standards of behaviour expected of members when engaged in Guild activities whether in person, in print or online.
- The duties and responsibilities of members engaged in Guild activities.
- Behaviours which are not acceptable either because they impact on other members or bring the Guild into disrepute.
- The procedure for making a complaint when it is felt the Code has been breached.
- The process for investigating complaints and where necessary applying sanctions
- The sanctions which may be applied where a breach the Code is judged to have taken place.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

#### **Members**

- To adhere to the Code as a condition of membership
- Not to engage in any actions which could bring the reputation of the Guild into disrepute
- To treat each other with dignity and respect even where disagreements arise

#### **Directors**

- To promote the highest standards of behaviour by members and by doing so. ensure that all members are treated with dignity and respect and fairness.
- To ensure that behaviour identified as inappropriate is discouraged.
- To resolve or where necessary formally investigate complaints in line with the Code.

### **Expected Standards of Behaviour**

The Management Committee has a responsibility to ensure that individuals can engage in Guild activities without fear of attracting behaviour or actions which they or others see as aggressive, demeaning or untrue. Behaviour in this context includes face-to-face interactions, phone conversations, emails, written communications, visual images, texts, social networking websites, forum activity etc. Unacceptable behaviour includes (the list is not exhaustive):

- Actions which could bring the Guild into disrepute.
- Actions which pressure others into actions with which they feel uncomfortable.
- Spreading malicious or unsubstantiated rumours

- Insulting individuals whether Guild members or not.
- Making inappropriate and/or derogatory remarks about another member.
- Using ridiculing or demeaning language.
- Using threatening or abusive words.
- Telling inappropriate and/or offensive 'jokes'.
- Deliberately undermining a member by constant criticism.
- Misusing power or position.
- Circulating offensive images or words.

## **Complaints Process**

In all cases the following principles will apply:

- All potential breaches of the code will be handled in a fair, objective and timely way.
- Confidentiality will be maintained within the limits of the procedure.
- Anyone who lodges a complaint or is subject to a disciplinary process may be accompanied to meetings by another member.
- A record will be kept of any meetings.
- Outcomes will be confirmed in writing.

## **Informal Resolution**

It is always better for all parties to a dispute that they take steps to resolve their issue informally.

Before any formal process is started under the Code members will be expected, unless circumstances make this impossible, to have tried to resolve issues informally.

If this does not resolve the matter breaches of the Code can be raised through a formal complaint:

## **Investigation of Formal Complaints**

### **Instigation of an investigation by the Directors**

The Management Committee may decide that allegations or evidence of unacceptable actions or behaviours are so serious that it will invoke the procedure even if a complaint has not been made.

A Director will be nominated to conduct an investigation and will, without unreasonable delay, seek to understand the issue, who and what it is about, identify any witnesses and areas for further investigation. Formal meetings will be held where necessary and these may be face to face, by phone or via video conference.

The Director will, based on the findings from their investigation, make a determination.

### **Complaint by a member against another member**

A member who wishes to make a formal complaint about another member should do so in writing to the Secretary. If the complaint is about the Secretary then it should be sent to the Guild President who will appoint an investigator. The complaint should set out the nature of the complaint, the actions or behaviours which have led to the complaint and the impact of this on the complainant.

The Secretary/President's appointee will arrange a formal meeting without unreasonable delay. This meeting may be face to face, by phone or via video conference. During the meeting the investigator will seek to understand the complaint, who and what the complaint is about, identify any witnesses, identify and pursue areas for further investigation and ask the complainant to state their desired outcome.

The Secretary/President's appointee will, based on the findings from their investigation, make a determination.

### **Complaint by a member about a Director or the Management Committee**

A member who wishes to make a formal complaint about a Director or the Management Committee in it's entirety should do so in writing to the Guild President. To ensure that the investigation is independent, the President will appoint one of the Guild's Vice Presidents as investigator. The complaint should set out the nature of the complaint, the actions or behaviours which have led to the complaint and the impact of this on the complainant.

The Vice President will arrange a formal meeting without unreasonable delay. This meeting may be face to face, by phone or via video conference. During the meeting the investigator will seek to understand the complaint, who and what the complaint is about, identify any witnesses, identify and pursue areas for further investigation and ask the complainant to state their desired outcome.

The Vice President will, based on the findings of their investigation, make a determination.

### **Outcomes from Investigation**

These will be applied to all complaints

#### **Genuine complaint, not upheld.**

The investigator may conclude that the complaint cannot be upheld because of lack of evidence but accepts that the complainant's distress is genuine.

The complainant will have a right to appeal against this outcome and should submit their appeal in writing to the Guild President within seven calendar days of receiving the outcome setting out the grounds for their appeal.

### **Inappropriate behaviour that breaches the Code**

The investigator may conclude that there are reasonable grounds to believe that misconduct which breaches the Code has taken place and refers the matter to the disciplinary process.

### **Malicious or Diversionary complaint**

The investigator may conclude that the complaint was raised maliciously, or raised as a distraction or diversion and refers the matter to the disciplinary process.

## **Disciplinary Process**

### **Members**

Where it is determined that a member or group of members may have breached the Code the disciplinary procedure will come into operation. The Secretary will appoint a member of the Management Committee who was not part of the investigation to review the case. The Director appointed will have access to all documents from the initial investigation and will be free to seek further information or interview witnesses as necessary before taking a final decision

### **Directors**

Where it is determined that a Director or the Management Committee may have breached the Code the disciplinary procedure will come into operation. The President will appoint a Vice President who has not been part of the investigation to review the case. The Vice President will have access to all documents from the initial investigation and will be free to seek further information or interview witnesses as necessary before taking a final decision.

### **Sanctions**

Where the investigation concludes that a disciplinary breach has taken place, sanctions, appropriate to the issue may be employed.

***Letter of censure - to remain active for six months.*** Any further breach of the code within the life of the sanction may result in termination of membership.

***Withdrawal of membership privileges - to remain active for six months.*** Any further breach of the code within the life of the sanction may result in termination of membership.

***Termination of membership*** – to be applied in the most serious cases of breach of the Code

**Appeals Process**

Any member who is found to have breached the code and had a sanction applied has a right to appeal against the decision. An appeal should be submitted to the President in writing within seven calendar days setting out the grounds for the appeal...

Once an appeal has been heard the process will have been exhausted.