

Guidelines for Members of the Complaints and Client Relations Committee at Committee meetings

Guidelines when dealing with all attendees

1. The Chairperson shall introduce every Committee member so that it is made clear from the outset that lay members are present and are contributing to the Committee's decision. The Chairperson will advise the format of the meeting.
2. If items become contentious, or the Committee need to deliberate, the Chairperson should make use of his/her entitlement to call for a recess during an item.
3. The Chairperson will lead the questions and when finished will open the matter to the other Committee members who will address all questions through the Chairperson.
4. All mobile phones/pagers should be switched to silent and should not be accessed while an item is in progress.
5. At the conclusion of the meeting all Committee papers will be left in the meeting room for shredding.
6. Once an item has commenced, and the attendee is present, no one should enter or leave the meeting room without the leave of the Chairman.
7. If a member thinks they have a conflict of interest they should absent themselves from the meeting. In this regard members should take into consideration the Law Society's protocol for conflicts of interest relating to proceedings of regulatory meetings.
8. All attendees shall be treated with courtesy and respect.
9. Committee Members are not permitted to communicate directly with either party, solicitor or complainant, in relation to an item on the Committee's agenda outside the confines of the Committee Meeting.

Additional guidelines when dealing with Complainants

11. Prior to the attendance of complainants, they should receive from the Society, guidelines with regard to how the meeting will be run. This should include inter alia, confirmation that complainants and solicitors attend separately, confirmation that they are welcome to bring with them up to a maximum of 2 persons (excluding legal representation) clarification that the only submissions that will be considered by the Committee are with regard to the facts of the complaint itself and the meeting is not the forum at which peripheral issues (i.e. complaints about the secretariat) can be aired, the fact that there are time constraints, that there are other people waiting to be heard etc.
12. The complainant's attendance at the meeting is to assist the Committee in its deliberations. The Committee's role is inquisitorial rather than adversarial and solicitors and complainants attend separately.

13. The Committee will use plain English as much as possible.
14. The Chairperson will, as the occasion demands, consider if the layout of the room is appropriate for meeting the complainant.