



# Guide to complaints process

## Contents

Introduction.....	Page 3
Before you make a complaint.....	Page 3
Is the individual an IAB member?.....	Page 3
Time Limit.....	Page 3
Member’s internal complaint policy.....	Page 3
Criminal matters.....	Page 3
Matters we consider.....	Page 4
Matters we cannot consider.....	Page 4
Civil matters.....	Page 4
How to make a complaint.....	Page 4
Complaint form and contact details.....	Page 5
Supporting evidence.....	Page 5
What happens next?.....	Page 5
How long will the complaint process take.....	Page 5

## Introduction

The International Association of Bookkeepers (IAB) upholds high standards of competence and professional conduct. Bookkeeping is a trusted and respected professional and we aim to ensure that our members:

- Behave professional and ethically
- Comply with IAB Regulations and relevant UK legislation
- Keep their skills and competence up to date

We can assist with your complaint if the bookkeeper/accountant is an IAB member. In many cases, issues can be resolved directly with your bookkeeper/accountant; however, if this is not possible or the nature of issue means that you must report the matter to the IAB, please follow our complaints process.

This guidance document explains what to do.

### **Before making a complaint**

#### **Is the individual an IAB member?**

You must be certain that your complaint concerns an IAB Member. If you are not sure, please contact our Compliance team on [compliance@iab.org.uk](mailto:compliance@iab.org.uk) or 01732 897750

#### **Time Limit**

We will consider complaints only if they are raised within six months of the alleged issue occurring. If you make your complaint outside this period, the conduct committee meeting has a discretion to decide whether the complaint should be considered. This will only happen if there are exceptional circumstances and you are able to explain these to us.

#### **Member's internal complaint policy**

Our members who provide self-employed bookkeeping/accountancy services to the public, should operate an internal complaints handling policy. We will then take into account whether the member has been given an opportunity to resolve a complaints before we intervene.

This means that, wherever appropriate, you should give our member sufficient opportunity to resolve the matter through their own internal complaints procedures before you raise a complaint with IAB. If the member does not resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, you may lodge a complaint with us. When doing so, you must provide copies of all correspondence in connection with the complaint.

## **Criminal matters**

If your problem relates to a criminal matter, you must first report it to the police (or other relevant authority) for investigation. If there are legal proceedings or other ongoing investigations you must advise us of this.

## **Matters we can consider**

We can consider complaints arising from the services provided by IAB's members, where:

- there is evidence that the conduct was pre-meditated, repeated, systematic or dishonest
- the member abused a position of authority or trust
- a client's or other person's interests have been seriously compromised
- any victim of the conduct was vulnerable
- the conduct was motivated by any form of unfair discrimination
- there is grounds for believing that the conduct is likely to be continued or repeated
- the reputation of the IAB or its membership has been damaged
- the code of best practise has been breached and the breach is not minor in nature

## **Matters we cannot consider**

We cannot consider complaints where the issue is one of which IAB has no power to regulate or decide upon, for example:

- Anonymous complaints which are not supported by independent evidence
- Vexatious complaints
- Attempts to use the disciplinary process to support legal action
- Disputes about fees]breaches of contract or civil disputes not involving issues of professional competence or conduct
- Disputes between employers and employees
- The personal activities of the member unless they are of a serious nature and could amount to misconduct

## **Civil Matters**

IAB will not investigate complaints relating to fee disputes as this is not a breach of our standards, guidance or regulations. IAB members are entitled to exercise their legal right to recover any unpaid fees, for example, via debt collection agencies or the small claims court. A member may also exercise a right of lien over books and records if fees remain unpaid or are in dispute if they have met IAB's minimum requirements outlined in the Clients care policy. If you have a civil dispute we recommend you seek legal advice.

## **How to make a complaint**

Please contact the Compliance team on [compliance@iab.org.uk](mailto:compliance@iab.org.uk) or 01732 897750 to request a complaint form.

Forms can either be emailed or posted to the following address:

IAB  
Compliance team  
Suite 5, 20 Churchill Square  
Kings Hill  
West Malling  
Kent  
ME19 4YU

### **Supporting evidence**

All complaints must be supported by evidence of misconduct by a member. We will not investigate your complaint if you do not provide as much documentary evidence as possible in support of your complaint. Please submit this evidence with the complaints form. All evidence will be disclosed to the member during the course of our investigations.

### **What will happen next?**

We will write to confirm receipt of your complaint within seven working days and then carry out an assessment to determine whether there are grounds for us to consider the complaint under our Bye Laws.

This assessment will involve making enquiries with the member or third parties (where applicable). Where necessary we may also ask you to provide additional information.

Once the assessment is concluded we will either

- Inform you we are unable to intervene and explain why
- Resolve your complaint informally:
- Take disciplinary action against the member

If disciplinary action is taken, we will keep you apprised of the disciplinary proceedings and the outcome as a witness.

### **How long will the complaints process take?**

We aim to conclude cases between six and twelve months: however this depends upon the complexity of the complaint and whether the matter needs to be referred to the Conduct Committee for a determination.