

The Feminist & Women's Studies Association (FWSA)

Membership Code of Conduct

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The aim of the Feminist Women's Studies Association (FWSA) is to promote the research and discussion of issues pertaining to feminist, women's and gender studies. The FWSA encourages a representation of a **diverse range of feminist opinions**, which requires courtesy, acceptance and consideration in all interactions undertaken within the FWSA.
- 1.2 The Membership Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure (this Code) applies to all members of the FWSA. The Code of Conduct sets out the standard of conduct that the FWSA expects of its members during their interactions within the FWSA, which the FWSA believes is consistent with encouraging discussion and research into women's/gender/feminist studies in a supportive and nonthreatening space.
- 1.3 As well as applying to members conduct at FWSA events, this Code of Conduct also refers to the interactions which occur online, through the use of the FWSA's social media (Twitter, Facebook), and through email distribution lists.

2. AUTHORITY

- 2.1 This Code is endorsed by the FWSA Executive Committee, which oversees the management and running of the FWSA.

3. FWSA MEMBERSHIP CODE OF CONDUCT

- 3.1 The FWSA expects that when its members are engaged in interactions with other members within the context of the FWSA environment:
 - 3.1.1 to behave in a responsible manner that will help foster and encourage mutual respect and understanding between all members of the FWSA community, and an environment which promotes dialogue and debate between members.
 - 3.1.2 to not engage in any activity or behaviour that is likely to bring the FWSA into disrepute.
 - 3.1.3 to behave and communicate in ways that do not unreasonably offend others. Examples of unreasonably offensive behaviour include using abusive or obscene language and engaging in any form of discriminatory behaviour.

3.1.4 to treat everyone with whom they come into contact with respect; in both the FWSA online spaces, as well as at FWSA events.

4. DEFINITION OF MISCONDUCT

4.1 The FWSA considers the forms of inappropriate conduct that are set out below to constitute misconduct, and which are likely to lead to disciplinary action under the Membership Code of Conduct.

4.2 The list should not be regarded as exhaustive.

4.3 In addition to members' conduct at FWSA events, this Code also refers to the interactions that occur online, through the use of the FWSA's social media sites (the FWSA blog, Twitter and Facebook pages), as well as through the email distribution lists.

4.4 Behaviours that will be regarded as misconduct include, but are not limited to:

4.4.1 discrimination, harassment, or victimisation of others on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender re-assignment, sex, pregnancy, maternity, race, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, or sexual orientation.

4.4.2 religion refers to any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion.

4.4.3 belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief.

4.4.4 failure to respect the rights of others to freedom of speech within the law.

4.4.5 bullying or harassment of any kind towards a member of the FWSA; including cyber-bullying, cyber-harassment, or harassment through social media.

4.4.6 any behaviour that damages, or has the potential to damage the FWSA's reputation or relationship with external organisations and groups.

4.4.7 actions that involve making defamatory statements and/or false claims about a member of the FWSA community.

5. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

5.1 Where it is alleged that a member has breached the Code of Conduct, the matter shall be dealt with in accordance with one of the procedures that are set out below.

5.2 Separate guidelines are available for members who comprise the Disciplinary Panel (see Appendix 1).

5.3 When filing a complaint:

- 5.3.1 an allegation may be brought to the notice of the FWSA Executive Committee by a member of the FWSA.
- 5.3.2 An alleged incident of misconduct by an FWSA member which cannot be resolved satisfactorily between the parties themselves should be reported to the FWSA Executive Committee.
- 5.4 Any misconduct as defined in this Code will be considered under one of the following two levels of disciplinary action in the first instance:
 - 5.4.1 In cases of minor infringements, the FWSA will seek to resolve disciplinary matters **informally** under Stage 1 of the procedure (see Section 6). The Stage 1 procedure is conducted by the FWSA Executive Committee.
 - 5.4.2 If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the Disciplinary Panel will conduct a formal investigation under the Stage 2 procedure (see Section 7).
 - 5.4.3 FWSA members will have the right to appeal against decisions at each stage of the Disciplinary Procedure.

6 STAGE 1 – MINOR MISCONDUCT

- 6.1 When an allegation of misconduct is brought to the attention of the FWSA, Executive Committee, they will contact the alleged offending member to notify them that a complaint has been brought against them.
- 6.2 A meeting will take place with the Chair of the FWSA and two other members of the Executive Committee (who will be chosen from the pool of the Executive Committee members). They will consider the appeal and its evidence, and will then decide if the offence can be labeled as minor.
- 6.2 In cases where an act of misconduct is deemed to be of a minor nature, the member will be cautioned by the FWSA Executive Committee (or their respective nominee(s)) as appropriate.
- 6.3 Any member deemed to have breached the members' code of conduct will be expected to make appropriate recompense or an apology for any offence or harm caused to the member who has brought forward the complaint.
- 6.4 The instance of misconduct will be noted and stored for one year in the offending member's record. If the member is found to engage in misconduct on a subsequent occasion, a previous caution (and any other previous penalty) may be taken into account when deciding on the level of penalty on the subsequent occasion.
- 6.5 If the member is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 procedure, they may submit an appeal to the Executive Committee to be considered for Stage 2 of the Disciplinary Procedures as set out in Section 7.

- 6.6 Where a complaint is not upheld, either 'on balance' or where it is unfounded, mischievous or malicious, the FWSA will exercise their discretion in handling such a case.

7 STAGE 2 - DISCIPLINARY CASES INVOLVING MISCONDUCT

- 7.1 In the case of a more serious breach of this Code, or of reoffending after a previous caution, the Executive Committee as appropriate will:
- 7.1.1 undertake an investigation into the allegation;
 - 7.1.2 inform the member of the nature of the alleged misconduct;
 - 7.1.3 determine, in light of the evidence, whether a breach of this Code has been committed;
- 7.2 The Disciplinary Panel, having considered matters, may take one or more of the following courses of action:
- 7.2.1 resolve that no action needs to be taken;
 - 7.2.2 issue a written warning to the member indicating the consequences of future misconduct, to be entered into the member's file;
 - 7.2.3 recommend that the member is excluded from the FWSA with immediate effect.
- 7.3 On completion of Stage 2 procedure, the member will be sent a notice in writing stating the outcome of the investigation, the reasons for that outcome, a summary of the alleged facts on which the disciplinary action is based and any penalty imposed. The notice will include a statement on to the procedure for an appeal against the decision (Section 8). A further copy of the notice will be sent to the FWSA administrator to be held for audit purposes.

8. APPEALS AGAINST STAGE 1 AND 2 DISCIPLINARY DECISIONS

- 8.1 Any appeal against a decision or penalty imposed by the FWSA Executive Committee (or their respective nominee(s)) under the Stage 1 or 2 procedures should be submitted via email to the FWSA administrator within 14 working days of any decision or penalty being notified to the member concerned.
- 8.2 A member may submit an appeal on the following grounds;
- 8.2.1 procedural irregularity or other administrative error;

- 8.2.2 where there is new evidence of extenuating circumstances which, for good reason, was not available at the time that the Executive Committee (or their respective nominee(s)) made its decision;
- 8.2.3 where the Executive Committee (or their respective nominee(s)) has acted unfairly or imposed an unfair penalty.
- 8.4 Members of the FWSA Executive Committee who were not involved in the previous disciplinary procedures will form the Appeals Team that will then review the appeal.
- 8.5 After reviewing the disciplinary procedure, the Appeals Team will submit a written summary outlining the facts of the case and the reasons for their decision. A copy of this summary will be sent to the member concerned with an invitation to comment.
- 8.6 When the documentation referred to in Section 8.5 has been received, the information will be passed to the Chair of the FWSA to either reject or uphold the appeal. The decision of the Chair of the FWSA (or the respective nominee) is final and a decision letter and a 'Completion of Procedures' letter will be issued within 14 days of the decision.

APPENDIX 1 – STAGE 2 DISCIPLINARY PANEL MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Disciplinary Panel comprises FWSA Executive Committee members selected to be representative of the FWSA membership, and provide a balance of discipline and ethnicity where possible. The Disciplinary Panel will be chaired by the Chair of the FWSA. A member of the Disciplinary Panel may not consider the case of a student from their own institution, a student they know, or a case in which they have been previously involved in any capacity at an earlier stage.
- 1.2 The Disciplinary Panel meeting will be attended by the FWSA Chair, and three members of the FWSA Executive Committee drawn from a pool of 12 members. The Disciplinary Panel will be timetabled to meet on an as-needs basis (except in August).
- 1.3 If an allegation involves a member of the FWSA Executive committee, the member with whom the allegation is concerned will not sit on the Disciplinary Panel. Former chairs of the FWSA will be contacted to sit on the Disciplinary Panel to maintain neutrality.
- 1.4 Given the nature of the FWSA representing the UK and Ireland, and the location of the Executive Committee members, Disciplinary Panel meetings may be conducted via Skype.