

LSC Grievance Procedure

(approved August 2026)

1 Overview

This document describes the procedure of the LIGO Scientific Collaboration (LSC) for addressing concerns, grievances, or problems that may arise when an LSC member perceives that, in the performance of LSC activities, a violation of LSC policies, including the Code of Conduct, has occurred that leads to an injustice or harm either to an individual, a group, or the wider Collaboration.

The LSC encourages open communication between its members should a conflict arise. In order to provide fairness and equity in the Collaboration's work environment, the LSC has established this Grievance Procedure that is accessible to all members and serves as the Collaboration procedure for the resolution of LSC-related complaints and grievances.

There will be no negative consequences, and no retaliation tolerated, for LSC members using or participating in the Collaboration problem resolution process in good faith. Parties engaged in the Grievance Procedure should attempt to keep the matter confidential while it is under review.

2 Definitions

For purposes of this procedure, a Grievance is defined as a complaint about an alleged violation of LSC policies, including the Code of Conduct that arises between two or more LSC members as peers or in the LSC organization hierarchy, or affects the overall reputation of the LSC.

An LSC activity is defined as any work activity performed by LSC members on behalf of the LSC mission, including but not limited to commissioning and observation, outreach, service work, communication about LSC work, including attendance at meetings and conferences, activities in LSC forums (virtual and corporal) or using LSC resources (virtual or corporal), and technical and/or analysis work.

The *complainant* is the individual or group who submits a complaint via this Grievance Procedure about a perceived issue or violation of the Code of Conduct. The *respondent* is the individual or group who is the subject of that complaint and is given the opportunity to respond, as per this Grievance Procedure. The complainant need not be the person or group to whom the perceived issue or violation was directed.

3 Applicability

The intent of this procedure is to provide LSC members with a way to discuss and address LSC activity-related concerns or problems involving the Collaboration.

This procedure applies when other formal processes do not exist. It does not take the place of LSC institution grievance procedures nor is it intended to replace reporting to appropriate law enforcement agencies. However, LSC members found to have committed serious misconduct by another institution may face sanctions or expulsion from the LSC, under this procedure.

LSC members who believe they have been subject to discrimination in matters of employment or matters of sexual harassment should take the matter to the attention of the appropriate office of the institution where the injustice or harm has occurred. In any case, LSC members may also seek informal advice from the LSC Spokesperson and/or the LSC Ombudsperson (see Section 7).

4 Issues not addressed by this procedure

This procedure does not apply to (a) grievances unrelated to LSC activities and (b) grievances between members from the same LSC institution (except where grievances have been pursued as part of an institution's internal procedures and there is a finding of misconduct against an LSC member that potentially would warrant expulsion from the LSC, and that finding can be disclosed by the complainant to the Spokesperson, the LIGO Director, or the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee, if permitted by their institution).

Where there is a question of applicability, the Standards and Conduct Committee will determine whether or not an issue may be dealt with through this grievance process. If a matter is found non-grievable, the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee will inform in a timely fashion all parties involved.

5 Eligibility

This procedure is available to all LSC members during the performance of their LSC activities as described in the LSC Bylaws and Policies and Procedures.

6 Effect of grievance on LSC member

This procedure forbids retaliation against any LSC member based upon the LSC member's participation in the grievance procedure.

Any LSC member may raise or decline to raise a grievance free from pressure, interference, or coercion by any other member. Any evidence of retaliation or coercion connected to the grievance procedure may be provided to the LSC Ombudsperson, LSC Spokesperson and SComm, and may be taken into account at any point during the procedure.

7 Additional Resources

Should an LSC member not wish to pursue this grievance process, the LSC also offers the option of seeking confidential, informal discussion outside this grievance process for resolving complaints. Those seeking this option for assistance should check with the LSC Ombudspersons, who have their own mandate and guidelines for providing help. (See [LIGO Document M1300006](#).)

8 Exception

Any exception to this procedure requires the approval of the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee. The Committee keeps records of such decisions.

9 Informal resolution

The mutual interest of all the parties involved in a grievance is best served when there is regular, forthright communication.

An LSC member who believes a justifiable LSC-related complaint exists can take steps to resolve the problem in a discussion with the other party. The LSC Ombudsperson may provide confidential non-binding advice. Urgent and/or serious cases may be best addressed by the immediate adoption of these grievance procedures.

The LSC member may seek the assistance of the LSC Spokesperson and the LSC Ombudsperson in the use of the mediation. The LSC Spokesperson and the LSC Ombudsperson are available to assist the Collaboration members involved in any LSC-related problem or concern and provide free and non-binding advice on matters of policy interpretation, rights of LSC members and use of the grievance procedure.

10 Records

The official records of the progress of a grievance and the time limits are kept by the LSC. Access is given to the roles of chair and deputy chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee. A dated copy of the grievance form must be provided to the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee each time a section has been completed by the parties involved.

11 Time Limitations

This grievance procedure sets forth time limits for initiation of action on each step of the procedure. If a grievance is not forwarded by the LSC member within the time allowed in any step, the grievance will be considered discontinued, and no further review will take place, unless an exception is granted by the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee due to special or extenuating circumstances. A written grievance which is not answered within the time allowed may be sent on to the next step within the allotted time frame by the LSC member. The LSC Standards and Conduct Committee may also extend any time limit in the grievance process with the mutual agreement of the parties.

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All LSC members may consult with the LSC Spokespersons or the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee for assistance with the grievance process at any time. During the problem resolution process, interviews and/or meetings with LSC members and management may be conducted. No external legal representatives, such as attorneys, will be permitted to attend interviews or meetings. No tape or other recordings will be made of interviews or meetings without prior approval by everyone involved.

12.1 STEP I

In order to use this process, a LSC member must bring a work-related concern or problem to the attention of their group LSC-PI or LSC-PI's designated representative in writing within 90 calendar days of the incident or event or the most recent example of a pattern of a continuing pattern of misconduct,

about which the LSC member wishes to complain or when the pertinent facts became known to the LSC member.

The LSC-PI will inform the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee of the receipt of the grievance. The LSC-PI will look into the concern or problem and make a reasonable effort to resolve the grievance within a reasonable time. The LSC-PI will provide the LSC member with a written answer within 10 working days after the matter has been brought to their attention.

Upon completion of this process, the LSC-PI will forward a copy of the grievance and its resolution to the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee. If the circumstances of the complaint are such that it would be inappropriate for the LSC-PI to address the complaint, the LSC member may bring their complaint directly to their working group co-chair(s), as defined in the LSC Organizational Chart (step II), or directly to the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee (step III).

12.2 STEP II

If the LSC member is not satisfied with the LSC-PI's resolution and would like additional review, or the circumstances of the complaint are such that it would be inappropriate for the LSC-PI to address the complaint, the LSC member may request in writing the co-chair(s) of the working group that most closely relates to the complaint to review their concerns within 10 working days of receiving the response from their LSC-PI or within 30 calendar days of the incident, event, or concern about which the LSC member wishes to complain or when the pertinent facts became known to the LSC member. The working group chair(s) will inform the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee of the receipt of the grievance.

The working group co-chair(s) or designated representative(s) will schedule a meeting with the LSC member, the group LSC-PI, and any other individuals the working group co-chair(s) determine will assist in the research into and resolution of the problem. The meeting shall be held within 10 working days from receipt of the written grievance. The meeting will be closed. If possible, the working group co-chair(s) will resolve the problem at this meeting. If a resolution is not possible, the working group co-chair(s) will have 10 working days in which to make a final decision. The decision will be promptly communicated to the LSC member and the LSC-PI in writing by the working group co-chair(s).

Upon completion of this process, the working group co-chair(s) will forward a copy of the grievance and decision to the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee. If the circumstances of the complaint are such that it would be inappropriate for a working group co-chair(s) to address the complaint, the LSC member may bring their complaint directly to the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee (step III).

12.3 STEP III

If resolution is not reached between the LSC member and the working group co-chair(s), and the LSC member wishes further review of their concerns, or the circumstances of the complaint are such that it would be inappropriate for the LSC-PI and working group co-chair(s) to address the complaint, within 10 days of receiving the working group co-chair(s) response, or within 30 calendar days of the incident or event about which the LSC member wishes to complain or when the pertinent facts became known to the LSC member, the LSC member may submit a written appeal, or file a grievance, to the chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee.

The LSC member's appeal or grievance should include:

- a description of the concern or problem, the policy that they believe was not followed or violated,
- the LSC member's suggestions about ways in which the problem or concern may be resolved,
- the LSC-PI and working group co-chair(s)' proposed resolution if applicable,
- a copy of the LSC-PI or working group co-chair(s)' written response if applicable,
- any other related written material the LSC member received from the LSC-PI and working group co-chair(s),
- and any other pertinent documents or information.

The appeal or grievance will be considered by the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee. Any member of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee who is a complainant, respondent, witness, or who has a conflict of interest, must recuse themselves from the review of the complaint. If the chair is affected, the committee appoints an interim chair until the process is concluded. The meetings of the Standards and Conduct Committee will be closed. A recording of the proceedings shall be made and stored as part of the records of the case. The chair of the LSC Standards and Conduct Committee will take steps to ensure that the complaint is heard in a timely fashion. The Standards and Conduct Committee will review the LSC member's complaint and make a decision as to whether the complaint is sustained or rejected.

If the complaint is sustained, the Standards and Conduct Committee will consult their record to ascertain if the respondent has been found responsible for any previous violations of the CoC. Prior violations may be considered when weighing the sanctions of the given case. The committee may recommend one or more of the following remedial actions on the respondent:

- 1) an educative letter and/or counseling concerning the alleged violation of the LSC policies, including the Code of Conduct, setting expectations concerning the future behavior of the respondent, which may include the respondent issuing an apology to the complainant, undertaking relevant training or education, and setting expectations regarding their involvement in relevant working groups; this educative letter is stored by the Standards and Conduct Committee in the group's file;
- 2) the respondent may be denied access to LSC-organized, sponsored or supported meetings, events and publications for a finite or indefinite period;
- 3) the respondent's membership may be revoked,

Sanctions 2 & 3 would then be voted on by the LSC Council in accordance with LSC Bylaw §1.8.4. The outcomes and decisions arising from the review of the complaint or grievance will be communicated by the chair of the Standards and Conduct Committee to the LSC Spokesperson, who will then communicate the outcome to the LSC member complainant and the respondent in writing within 30 days. The decision is final.