



Complaints Policy and Procedure

The World Congress of Soil Science 2022 (WCSS22) is committed to resolving complaints in an appropriate, fair and timely way. We welcome feedback as this helps us to improve the way we work.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the WCSS22's approach to receiving and dealing with complaints, how you can make a complaint, what you can expect from WCSS22 when you do so and how you can escalate a complaint if you are unhappy with the outcome. This policy applies to all areas of the Congress's activities.

Our Approach

We are sorry if you are unhappy with any aspect of the WCSS22. Whilst WCSS22 is committed to operating to the highest standards, there may be times when you feel that we do not achieve the level of service, or demonstrate the behaviours that you expect. If you do have a complaint, please let us know so that we can try and help.

We take all complaints seriously and we will be in touch as soon as we can once you have told us your concern. This policy reflects our commitment to ensuring that we have effective and transparent procedures in place for fair and efficient handling of complaints.

We will keep all complaints confidential to the extent possible, subject to the need to disclose information necessarily as part of any investigation, as required by statutory authorities such as the Charity Commission and/or as a result of legal or regulatory obligations placed on us. If you make a complaint, we will treat you with respect and we expect you to treat our staff in the same way.

Complaints can range from an expression of dissatisfaction; to something that is the cause or subject of protest or outcry; to an allegation concerning WCSS22.

How to get in touch

If you would like to make a complaint, the best way to do this is by email. You can contact us via wcss22@soils.org.uk. If you would prefer to write to us, please address your complaint to: World Congress of Soil Science, Building 42a, Cranfield University, Bedfordshire, MK43 0AL.

If you cannot make your complaint in writing, you can reach us by phone on: 01234 752917.

Making a Complaint

To help us to effectively investigate your complaint, please set out the facts in as much detail as you can, as clearly as possible. In particular, please tell us:

- a. what happened
- b. when it happened
- c. who you dealt with

- d. why you consider this to be a complaint
- e. what you would like us to do to address your complaint.

Please be aware that we will keep your complaint and any information or document you disclose to us confidential. We will only disclose information internally or to our external advisors to the extent necessary to investigate your complaint effectively.

What we will do

We take complaints seriously and all complaints will be investigated. We will take action in response to any failures identified by the complaint or investigation, if applicable.

We aim to respond to your complaint within 10 Business Days of receiving it and:

- will assign a Complaint Lead to deal with your complaint which will usually be the Executive Officer. If it is not appropriate as the complaint concerns the Executive Officer, the complaint will be assigned to a member of the WCSS22 Working Group to respond to
- if we have been able to resolve the complaint within that time, we shall include details of this and shall treat the matter as closed
- If a complaint requires further investigation, we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and set out who will be dealing with the complaint and their contact details (the "Complaint Lead").

The Complaint Lead will investigate your complaint competently, diligently, and as impartially as possible. They may need to speak to you further to gather such additional information as necessary to assess your complaint. They will consider the subject matter of the complaint, whether they consider the complaint should be upheld and, if so, what remedial action or redress the WCSS may consider appropriate.

Where the complaint is of a nature which could affect the Society's reputation, the Complaint Lead will share details of your complaint with our committees, Council and/or Board.

The Complaint Lead will usually advise you of their findings and the Charity's conclusion within 30 days of the acknowledgement of receipt of your complaint. If we are unable to give a definitive response within that timeframe, for example because an investigation has not been fully completed, we send a progress report with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Next steps

If you are not happy with our response, please let us know as soon as possible. Your complaint will be escalated to WCSS22's Trustees (or a member of the WCSS Working Group if the complaint relates to the Trustees), who will carry out a review and let you know the outcome within 30 days. The decision taken at this stage is final.

If you remain dissatisfied with our response, please refer to the Charity Commission's guidance publication ['CC47 Complaints About Charities'](#).

Further Information

- If you have a concern or issue that you do not consider amounts to a complaint, as defined in the policy, we still want to hear from you. Please discuss the matter informally with any member of WCSS22 staff

as soon as possible, so that it can be addressed at an early stage or alternatively, you can share your views with us on wcss22@soils.org.uk

- Complaints relating to venue management activities should be directed to the organisations carrying out those activities on our behalf. These organisations will instigate their own complaints policy and/or procedures. Depending on the nature of the complaint, WCSS22 may also decide to investigate. Some complaints may also be escalated to WCSS22 following the conclusion of that organisation's complaint process
- This policy is not for use in relation to complaints from WCSS22's staff or volunteers (such as e.g. cases of bullying or harassment), which are dealt with by the WCSS's equality, diversity and inclusion statement of general principles
- In addition to reporting any complaints to WCSS22:
 - if your complaint relates to actual or suspected criminal activity or raises a serious safeguarding concern which poses a threat to a person's life or wellbeing, please report this immediately to the police; or
 - if it relates to actual or suspected fraudulent activity, this can be reported to [Action Fraud](#) on 0300 123 2040.

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