

The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS)

Procedures to Address Complaints of Ethical Misconduct

1. Introduction

This document establishes the procedures for investigating allegations of misconduct by TWAS Fellows or TWAS Young Affiliates Network (TYAN) Members (collectively referred to as *TWAS Members*). It elaborates on Section 7, "Procedure for Handling Ethics Complaints," of the *TWAS Code of Conduct for Fellows and Young Affiliates* (see: [TWAS Code of Conduct](#) for Fellows and Young Affiliates).

Upholding the integrity and ethical standards of TWAS is essential for maintaining the trust and reputation of the organization. Clear and fair procedures ensure that allegations of misconduct are addressed consistently, confidentially, and in accordance with the TWAS Code of Conduct, other applicable TWAS policies, and relevant laws.

2. Complaint procedure

2.1. Who May File a Complaint

Any individual may submit a complaint. Only complaints containing verifiable facts are accepted for investigation.

2.2. Submission of Complaints

Complaints must be addressed to the Executive Director (ED) of TWAS and submitted via the official postal or email addresses designated for this purpose. Complainants requesting anonymity must confidentially disclose their identity to the TWAS ED.

Upon receipt, the ED must:

- a. Verify that the complainant is a *bona fide* individual.
- b. Confidentially forward the complaint to the Chair of the Ethics Committee.

2.3. Content of Complaints

A valid complaint must include:

- a. The identity and contact information of the complainant(s). Their identity and contact information will remain confidential, accessible only to the President, Executive Director and Ethics Committee. However if anonymity is requested by the complainants, their identity will not be shared with the Ethics Committee.
- b. A clear description of the alleged misconduct.
- c. Any supporting evidence or documentation available.

2.4. Initiation of Complaints by TWAS

The TWAS President/Management Committee may independently initiate a complaint if allegations of misconduct concerning a TWAS Member appear in the public domain.

3. Investigation Procedure

3.1. Opening an Investigation

Upon receiving a forwarded complaint, the Chair of the Ethics Committee shall conduct an initial review to determine whether the complaint appears credible. The Chair will then consult with the Committee to decide whether to proceed with an investigation or dismiss the complaint.

Complaints that are deemed unfounded may be dismissed at this stage. Those that merit further examination will be investigated according to the Ethics Committee's internal procedures, including consultation with external experts when necessary — particularly in cases requiring specialized knowledge, local context, or language proficiency not available within the Committee.

All complaints, whether dismissed or investigated, must be reported to the TWAS Management Committee and Executive Director.

3.2. Conflict of Interest and Recusal

If Ethics Committee members have a conflict of interest that could affect their impartiality, they must promptly disclose this to the Chair of the Ethics Committee. In such cases, the member(s) shall recuse themselves from all discussions, deliberations, and decisions related to the complaint. If the Chair has a conflict of interest, the TWAS President should ask another committee member to chair the Ethics Committee for the investigation of this particular case.

3.3. Expert Consultation

The Ethics Committee may:

- a. Request written reports from external experts.
- b. Invite experts to participate in Committee discussions. Experts are not required to be TWAS Members.
- c. Seek information from relevant institutions (such as national academies, research centers, universities, journal editors, other ethics committees) as deemed appropriate to the Ethics Committee.

3.4. Confidentiality Requirements

The complainant must maintain confidentiality of their request, and must refrain from publicly disclosing the matter until a final decision has been reached.

All members of the Ethics Committee, the ED, and any TWAS staff member or official who has authorised access to complaint files or related materials must maintain confidentiality regarding complaints, investigations, and deliberations. All efforts must be made to ensure that consulted experts keep confidentiality similarly. Only the TWAS President will communicate the results of an investigation of a complaint to the membership or public.

3.5. Right of Reply

The respondent must:

- a. Be formally notified of the allegations.
- b. Be given the opportunity to respond in writing.
- c. If deemed necessary by the Ethics Committee, be offered an opportunity to present their defence via video conference.

3.6. Reporting and Decision

The Ethics Committee will deliberate based on gathered evidence and the Member's response. It will prepare a written report sharing its findings, reasoning and supporting documentation and submit it to the TWAS President. The Committee should aim to complete investigations within 3-6 months.

The respondent has the right to appeal to the TWAS President against the Ethics Committee's decision who will determine whether to re-open the investigation or uphold the decision.

3.7. Independence of Investigation

During the investigation process, the Ethics Committee will function independently of the Executive Director and the TWAS President, except where explicitly outlined.

4. Action on Misconduct

4.1. Recommended Actions in Cases of Misconduct

If misconduct is confirmed, the Ethics Committee shall recommend one of the following actions depending on the severity of the offense:

- a. A letter of concern from the President (for minor or unintentional misconduct).
- b. Temporary suspension from the Academy for a specified period, with conditions for reinstatement.
- c. Permanent expulsion from the Academy.
- d. Other appropriate actions may be proposed by the Committee, depending on the circumstances.

4.2. Communication of Outcomes

The TWAS President is responsible for informing the complainant and the respondent of the outcome of the accusations, whether or not the allegations are upheld.

In cases where a Member is suspended or expelled, no public announcement shall be made on the TWAS website. The Member's name shall simply be removed from the list of active Members, and the individual shall be formally notified that they are no longer permitted to present themselves as a TWAS Fellow or TYAN Member, nor to use this title in any form. The individual shall also be instructed to correct any future misrepresentation by others. Continued unauthorized use of TWAS affiliation may result in a public clarification issued by TWAS.

4.3. Reporting and Transparency

Complaints that are upheld will be reported to the TWAS Council and properly archived. A summary of complaints shall be presented annually at subsequent Council meetings for informational purposes.

Summarised statistics on misconduct cases and their outcomes (without personal details or names) shall be presented at the TWAS Annual Meeting each year to promote transparency and accountability.

4.4. Record keeping

All records related to complaints, investigations, and decisions shall be securely retained by the TWAS Executive Director's office for a pre-determined period. Successive Governing Council members, Executive Directors, and Ethics Committee members shall be made aware of these records to ensure continuity.

5. Exceptions

If the complaint concerns the ED, it must be submitted directly to the TWAS President, who will assume all the responsibilities including verifying the identity of the complainant and forwarding the complaint to the Chair, Ethics Committee. Complaints concerning members of the Ethics Committee should be handled jointly by the President, the ED and either the Chair or another member of the Ethics Committee as appropriate.