



GUIDANCE ON CONDUCT AT NIPSA CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

Introduction

1. This guidance on conduct at all NIPSA conferences and meetings has been approved by NIPSA's General Council. It draws on the provisions in the NIPSA constitution, in particular Rule 1.3(e) (promotion of equal opportunities), Rule 2.20(c) (duty of members to observe the rules of the union), Rule 4.14 and Annex B (model branch rules), Rule 11.2 (grounds for disciplinary action) and the policy goals set under these rules. The guidance sets out the principles and procedures on conduct to be observed at all NIPSA conferences and meetings.
2. The guidance applies to NIPSA members and NIPSA employees. Consequently all references in the guidance to members, persons, participants, etc includes NIPSA members, NIPSA HQ Officials, NIPSA Seconded Officers and NIPSA employees.

Principles

3. The purpose of NIPSA conferences and meetings is to further the interests of NIPSA members, in accordance with the NIPSA rules and NIPSA policies. As a key principle, every participant at a NIPSA meeting must have the right to speak and vote without fear of harassment, abuse, ridicule, hostility or any form of intimidation. To achieve this principle the aim at any NIPSA meeting must be to create a good and harmonious working environment where all members, employees and other persons present are treated with respect and dignity. In such an atmosphere all participants are encouraged to deploy their diverse talents to maximise the benefits for members.
4. At NIPSA Conferences and meetings members have the right to criticise the views, opinions, etc. of others, and to question the position or decisions of others. This right has, however, to be balanced against the right of participants set out in paragraph 3 above, to participate free from any form of abuse or harassment. Any such behaviour at a NIPSA Conference or meeting is unacceptable for the conduct of NIPSA business. A person engaging in such behaviour could become liable to disciplinary proceedings under NIPSA Rules 11.1 to 11.16 (members) and Rules 7.4(f) and 7.8 to 7.16 (employees) or legal proceedings for slander or for unlawful discrimination if it is motivated by consideration of religious belief, political opinion, sex, marital status, disability, race, age or sexual orientation (as defined in law).
5. Views and opinions can be expressed strongly, without being abusive, insulting or degrading to any person. Listen to other people's views. Express

disagreement without the use of language which would impugn the character or integrity of any person, or expose a person to hatred, ridicule or contempt whether s/he is present or not.

6. At Conferences or meetings harassment can include unwelcome verbal or physical conduct, which is unreasonable, offensive to the recipient and creates a hostile environment. Statements, remarks, jokes, gossip, etc should be avoided on the subject of colour, race, ethnic or national origins, political opinion, religious belief, sex, disability, age, marital status or sexual orientation.
7. This guidance also applies to conduct by NIPSA members in connection with NIPSA Conferences and meetings. In particular no person should be subjected to verbal, written or physical behaviour which intimidates or harasses any person in connection with any matter due to be considered at a NIPSA Conference or meeting. Similarly, no person should be subject to such behaviour, non co-operation or isolation because of how s/he participated in or voted at a NIPSA Conference or meeting.

Role of Chairperson

8. For business to be conducted in a manner consistent with this guidance and all relevant Standing Orders, the role of the person chairing the Conference or meeting is most important. S/he must be impartial. Where there are differences of opinion, the role of the Chairperson is to ensure that all parties have an equal and fair chance to express their views.
9. The Chairperson of the Conference or meeting is responsible for ensuring that conduct at meetings does not subject any person to intimidation, harassment, bullying or any similar derogatory behaviour. In considering challenges about behaviour the Chairperson should bear in mind that it is the effect on the recipient which is paramount. If a person is behaving in a manner inconsistent with this guidance, the Chairperson must immediately call the person to order and ask him or her to desist from his or her behaviour.
10. If any delegate at a NIPSA Conference or any member at a meeting considers that another person is behaving in a manner inconsistent with this guidance, s/he must immediately raise it with the Chairperson as a point of order. The Chairperson shall then make a ruling on the point of order. This ruling may be challenged in accordance with the NIPSA Rules or the Standing Orders for the body concerned.

Complaints Procedure

11. In addition to the provisions in paragraphs 9 and 10 above on points of order, any person is entitled to lodge a complaint, if s/he considers that s/he has been the subject of behaviour inconsistent with this guidance at a NIPSA conference or meeting. This also applies to behaviour outside a NIPSA meeting, but in connection with a matter considered, or to be considered, at a NIPSA meeting. In the case of NIPSA employees, complaints can be lodged by their recognised trade union.

12. In the first instance the complaint should preferably be made in writing to the Chairperson for the NIPSA Conference or meeting to which the allegedly unacceptable behaviour related. The Chairperson shall arrange for the complaint to be considered within an appropriate time scale and report back on the outcome to the person who made the complaint or to the recognised trade union for a NIPSA employee.
13. If the person who made the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of the process described in paragraph 12 above and the person allegedly responsible for the unacceptable behaviour is a member of the same NIPSA branch as the complainant, s/he may ask his or her Branch Committee to consider instituting disciplinary proceedings against the alleged perpetrator. Alternatively, s/he may write to the NIPSA General Secretary requesting that the General Council consider instituting disciplinary proceedings against the alleged perpetrator.
14. In all cases, except those covered by paragraph 13 above, where there is dissatisfaction with the outcome of the process described in paragraph 12 above, the aggrieved person, or the recognised trade union in the case of a NIPSA employee, may write to the NIPSA General Secretary requesting that the General Council consider instituting disciplinary proceedings against the alleged perpetrator.