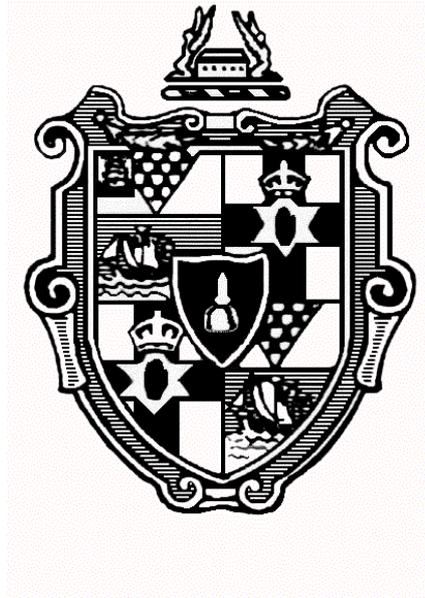


Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim



Unmasonic Conduct Procedures

Procedure for dealing with Unmasonic Conduct

1 Introduction

It is the duty of all Masons to uphold the concepts of Peace, Love and Harmony and to do all in their power to both defend and spread these principles upon which the Order is founded. A Freemason is required to live his life according to the highest moral standards and to respect his fellow man in all his dealings and conduct.

However, it is accepted that from time to time difficulties or disagreements may arise within lodges or amongst brethren or between Masonic families. In the first instance, such issues should be resolved at lodge level, with the assistance and guidance of senior members of the lodge. In the event that a matter cannot be resolved at lodge level, then it should be referred to Provincial Grand Lodge through communication with the Provincial Grand Secretary.

This document sets out the procedure for dealing with allegations of unmasonic conduct, that is to say, conduct unbecoming a Mason or conduct which contravenes the Laws and Constitution of the Order or the By-laws of Provincial Grand Lodge or any Masonic obligation or conduct which fails to uphold the Ancient Landmarks of the Craft. If all brethren adhere to the tenets outlined in the first paragraph then it should not be necessary to have to invoke this procedure.

Where it is found necessary to invoke this procedure a Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim (PGLA) Hearing Committee (see Appendix 2) will be set up to exercise all the powers and functions of the Provincial Grand Lodge or the Provincial Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes under Grand Lodge Law 35 and any Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes Policy and Procedures in respect of Charges of Unmasonic Conduct in force from time to time.

2 Initiating a Charge of Unmasonic Conduct

2.1 A Charge of Unmasonic Conduct (hereinafter called the Charge) must be formally registered with PGLA using the form provided for that purpose (See Appendix 1).

2.2 The Charge may arise (but not exclusively) from one of these sources:

- (a) A formal complaint about a Brother from a Brother Freemason, other Brethren, his Lodge, or some other Masonic body
- (b) A formal complaint from a Lodge or other Masonic body about a Brother or Brethren or another Masonic body

2.3 The Charge must be registered within three months of the alleged unmasonic conduct taking place or becoming known. However these time limits shall not apply to conduct subject to civil or criminal proceedings.

3 Action by PGLA on receipt of the Charge

3.1 The Provincial Grand Secretary (hereinafter referred as the Secretary) will immediately acknowledge receipt of the Charge and will also advise the Brother / Brethren / Lodge / other Masonic body who is / are the subject of the Charge (hereinafter referred to as the Accused Party).

3.2 The Secretary will convene a Hearing Committee (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) within twenty-one days of the date of receipt of the Charge, in accordance with the provisions of Appendix 2, and at a suitable venue.

3.3 The Secretary will request the party submitting the form (hereinafter referred to as the Aggrieved Party) to make available all relevant documentation and the names of any material witnesses.

3.4 The Secretary will make available for the members of the Committee copies of the form registering the Charge (hereinafter referred to as the Form) and any other supporting information which may be available at that time.

4 Hearing Committee - Pre-Hearing Assessment

4.1 Where the evidence is clear and obvious (e.g. the verdict of a court of law) the Committee shall proceed to arrange a Formal Hearing.

4.2 Where further consideration is necessary, the Committee shall review the available evidence and shall determine a course of action to either:

4.2.1 Dismiss the charge and recommend exoneration of the Accused Party;

OR

4.2.2 Where the Committee is satisfied that a case has been made it shall proceed to a Formal Hearing of the Charge of Alleged Unmasonic Conduct;

OR

4.2.3 Refer the Charge of Alleged Unmasonic Conduct to be dealt with under the Guidelines for handling Grievances.

4.3 It shall be the responsibility of the Secretary in each case to write to both parties and advise them of the Committee's decision.

5 Hearing Committee - Formal Hearing

5.1 Where the decision is to proceed to a Formal Hearing the Hearing will follow the procedure set out in Appendix 3

5.2 Where the Committee decides to issue a verbal or written reprimand the Chairman shall inform the Accused Party of this at the end of the Hearing. Where the decision is to issue a written reprimand the Accused Party will be informed that this will follow in due course signed by the Secretary on behalf of the Committee.

5.3 In the case that the Committee shall recommend to the Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes the suspension of or expulsion of any Brother, it shall report the recommendation to the next meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes for its information. The decision of the Grand Lodge shall be brought to the attention of the Provincial Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes at a subsequent meeting.

6 Verdict

The Secretary shall communicate in writing the outcome of the proceedings however they are determined, to:

The Accused Party

The Aggrieved Party

The Secretaries of the Lodges to which the aggrieved and accused parties belong

PGLA Board of General Purposes

Grand Lodge when appropriate

7 Appeal

The Accused Party or the Aggrieved Party may lodge an appeal against the decision of Provincial Grand Lodge in accordance with the Laws and Constitution of Grand Lodge.

8 Review

This Procedure will be reviewed from time to time by the PGLA Executive Committee in order to assess its suitability and efficacy.

Appendix 1



Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim

Registering a Charge of Alleged Unmasonic
Conduct

Ref

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Please use this form to tell us about your concerns. Complete in black ink.

1 Your details (please use block capitals)

Name in full		
Lodge Name & Number		
Masonic Rank		
Address (including postcode)		
Telephone / E-mail	Home: _____ Mobile: _____ E-mail: _____	

2 If you are acting with, or on behalf of, other brethren, please give names, lodges and Masonic rank, or particulars of the Masonic body for whom you are acting

Name	Lodge / Masonic Body	Rank (if applicable)

3 Details of alleged unmasonic conduct

Please state the name(s) and allegation(s) with date(s) and place(s) where appropriate. More detailed information should be recorded overleaf

Allegation

Detailed information about the allegation, if available e.g., court proceedings, witnesses; attach any relevant documentation

4 Declaration

I confirm that the information I have given is, to the best of my knowledge, correct.

I understand that the information on this form, with the exception of my personal details, will be made available to the Brother about whom I am registering the charge of unmasonic conduct

I understand the confidentiality of any proceedings will be subject to the regulations of the Data Protection Act and other associated legislation.

I understand that my allegation will be investigated in accordance with the Laws and Constitution of the Grand Lodge of Ireland, the Bye-Laws of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim and in the interests of maintaining the highest standards of Masonic conduct.

Signature Date

<p>Return this form to:</p> <p>Provincial Grand Secretary Provincial Masonic Hall 15 Rosemary Street Belfast BT1 1QA</p>	<p>For Office use:</p> <p>Form received: _____</p> <p>Acknowledged: _____</p> <p>Hearing Cttee: _____</p>
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Appendix 2 Constitution of the Hearing Panel and Hearing Committees

1 The Board of General Purposes of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim (hereinafter referred to as the Board) shall nominate a Panel of thirty-six Brethren (hereinafter referred to as the Hearing Panel) who are members of Lodges under the jurisdiction of PGLA. Membership of the Panel shall be approved by the Board which may establish criteria for membership of the Panel. Members shall serve for a maximum of three years, after which time they shall not be re-considered for membership until a further three years have elapsed. Each year, twelve members of the Panel will be replaced, thereby establishing a three-year cycle of membership. In each of the first two years of the Panel's existence the members to be replaced shall be determined by the drawing of lots. Thereafter, the replacement process shall be determined by length of service (i.e., three years).

2 On receipt of the Form, the Secretary shall convene a Hearing Committee comprising twelve Brethren who are members of the Panel. This Committee will hear the Charge: the membership of the Committee shall remain the same for the duration of the proceedings concerning the Charge. Each member is expected to attend every meeting of the Committee. Eight members shall constitute a quorum and decisions shall require a simple majority of those present.

3 The Hearing Committee shall be chaired by a Provincial Assistant Grand Master, who will be assisted by the Secretary and the Provincial Grand Registrar. None of these three brethren shall be entitled to vote in the decision making process. A majority of those members of the Committee in attendance and entitled to vote will be required for a charge of Unmasonic Conduct to be upheld. Otherwise the Charge will be dismissed.

4 Any member of the Committee who feels he has a conflict of interest shall declare that fact and shall be excused from serving on the case being considered. The Secretary shall arrange for that brother to be replaced.

5 Members of the Executive Committee shall not be eligible for membership of the Panel and shall not participate on Hearing Committees except as outlined in 3 above.

Appendix 3 Conduct of Proceedings of the Hearing Committee

1 The Chairman will first see that all present are introduced as may be necessary.

2 The Chairman will set out the parameters of the Hearing.

3 Each party may give evidence and will have the opportunity of questioning the other, and any witnesses appearing for them, and examining any documentary evidence produced by them immediately after such evidence is given, under the guidance of the Chairman.

4 The Chairman will first ask the Secretary to set out details of the Charge. (Any questions will follow).

5 The Chairman will then ask the Provincial Grand Lodge, Subordinate Lodge, Brethren or Brother to state their case and give their evidence followed by the evidence of their witnesses (if any) and by any documentary evidence in support. (Any questions will follow).

6 The Chairman will then ask the Accused's Provincial Grand Lodge, Subordinate Lodge, Brethren or Brother, or their representative to answer the Charge,

give their evidence, followed by the evidence of their witnesses (if any) and by any documentary evidence in support. (Any questions will follow).

7 It is important for all parties to bear in mind that admissible evidence consists of what has been actually observed or heard by the witness relating to the matter under consideration. Relevant facts appearing in formal records and documents are also admissible. Hearsay, i.e., that which has not been observed by the witness directly but merely heard by him from others, is not usually admissible evidence. These rules of evidence are observed by Judicial Bodies generally to ensure, as far as is possible, a fair hearing and a just decision. The Committee is no less expected to reach its decisions and recommendations upon the same basis.

8 At all times the Chairman will give the parties such guidance as may be necessary as the hearing proceeds and any members of the Committee may ask questions of the parties or witnesses in order to obtain or clarify relevant facts.

9 At conclusion, each party will be given a further opportunity, if they so desire, of adding anything which they consider relevant and helpful to their case, after which the Chairman will ask the parties to retire temporarily whilst the Board considers its findings.

10 Finally, the parties will be recalled and informed of the Committee's findings and proposed recommendation to the full Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes.

11 The hearing will then be closed.

Appendix 4 Sanctions & Disciplining Authorities

The following are the sanctions and the bodies implementing them.

Sanction	Disciplining Authority
No further action	P G L A
Verbal reprimand	P.G.L.A
Written reprimand	P.G.L.A
Suspension	Grand Lodge
Expulsion	Grand Lodge

Appendix 5 Role of the Provincial Grand Secretary

1 Because of responsibilities of his office, the Secretary is in a key position to offer the necessary administrative support for the smooth operation of the Procedure. The duties at the various stages in the Procedure are outlined below.

2 Receipt of a Charge of Unmasonic Conduct

2.1 Write to the Aggrieved Brother, acknowledge receipt and invite the submission of documentation, and the names of witnesses accompanied by witness statements.

2.2 Write to the Accused Party advising him of the situation

2.3 Contact twelve members of the Panel (as per Appendix 2) and arrange a date for the Pre-Hearing Assessment.

2.4 Prepare the necessary documentation for each member for the Pre-Hearing Assessment (copy of the Form; copy of any other document included with the Form; copy of any relevant information which becomes available).

2.5 Where the Committee is satisfied that there is a case to answer the Secretary is to issue a Summons to the Accused Brother and proceed to a Formal Hearing of the Charge. The Summons shall be accompanied by details of the Charge, any documentary evidence, witness statements and details of the time and place of the Hearing. The Secretary shall act in accordance with Paragraphs 3.1 to 3.4 as set out below and should ensure that Grand Lodge Law No 35 and any Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes Policies and Procedures in respect of Charges of Unmasonic Conduct are adhered to.

3 Hearing Committee (Formal Hearing)

3.1 Attend the meeting as Secretary and make such records as may be appropriate.

3.2 In consultation with the Chairman, arrange for adjourned meetings to be re-convened and advise the membership accordingly.

3.3 Write to both parties on behalf of the Committee, as required, according to the outcome of the meeting.

3.4 Make the necessary reports to the PGLA Board of General Purposes and Grand Lodge Board and the Secretary of Grand Lodge (when appropriate)

4 When an appeal is submitted, attend to the necessary administration as required.

5 All letters to the Accused Party and the Aggrieved Party must be sent by Recorded Delivery

7 Records

Ensure that all records (and access to the same) relating to the Charge and its outcome are secured in accordance with Provincial Lodge By-Laws, the Data Protection Act and any associated legislation.

Appendix 6 Rights and Records

1 In all proceedings, acknowledgement must be given to natural justice. It is essential that the natural and self-evident rights of both the aggrieved party and the accused party are respected throughout.

2 Ascertaining the truth about any issue must be the overriding concern and personal prejudice must not be allowed to influence perceptions or outcomes: this principle applies to the Committee, the aggrieved party and the accused party.

3 The accused party must be considered to be innocent of any allegation until, and if, the findings of the Committee indicate otherwise.

4. Record keeping must be in accordance with the Laws and Constitution of Grand Lodge, the By-laws of PGLA, the Data Protection Act and other associated legislation. Records of a particular Hearing Committee should include the original Form, letters sent and received by the Secretary and written submissions from the Committee.

5 When a brother has been found to be guilty of unmasonic conduct a record of this verdict, together with the sanction applied, shall be maintained by Provincial Grand Lodge and provided to Grand Lodge.

6 Access to records will be in compliance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act.