

Harassment and Inappropriate Conduct Policy

The organisers of Furnace, Revelation, Longcon and North Star are dedicated to providing a positive convention experience for everyone. Underpinning this experience is the creation of an environment that is free from harassment and inappropriate conduct.

WHAT IS HARASSMENT AND INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT?

Harassment is defined in law as “unwanted conduct on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic or national origins, disability, gender reassignment, or religion which has the purpose or effect of either violating the claimant’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.”

Inappropriate conduct is “conduct towards an individual that is unwanted and causes discomfort, intimidation, offence, or humiliation, or creates an intimidating environment.” Note the words “unwanted,” “purpose or effect,” “causes discomfort.” Providing a positive environment does not mean censorship.

What are some examples of harassment or inappropriate conduct?

Some examples are (but not limited to):

- offensive comments or humour about gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.
- unwanted sexual innuendo, suggestions of a sexual nature or sexual contact
- unwanted physical contact of a non-sexual nature
- intimidation or threatening behaviour
- stalking or following
- actions designed to deliberately disrupt the activities of others without good reason

What can we do to avoid problems?

Almost all problems can be avoided by the application of good manners: treat other convention attendees with respect and politeness. Activities that involve content likely to offend or harass others should be carried out in a private location, or where persons wishing to avoid the activity can do so without having to avoid other convention activities. Most importantly of all, apply common sense to your actions.

GMs

GMs are responsible for creation of a safe space at their table at the convention. Beyond the principles of respect and good manners described above, we require GMs to:

- 1) **Provide a description of your game that will give players (and the organisers) a good understanding of what the content involves.** Should the scenario include “mature content”, we recommend that you call it out in the description.
- 2) **Include the mandatory tags** outlined in the [Tags for RPG Scenarios at Conventions](#) document.
- 3) **Consider the safety tools that are appropriate for the game being offered and discuss how they will work with their players at the start of the session.**

We assume the use of the [X-Card](#) and OpenTable safety tools for all our games to minimise the likelihood of problems occurring in a game. Details of these, and other, tools can be found at <https://ttrpgsafetytoolkit.com/> - if you have never used safety tools, ask about them on the convention Facebook or Discord groups, or reach out to the committee, for some guidance.

[X-Card](#) is a check-in tool. Think of it as being like an emergency stop for a participant when something is happening in-game that they are uncomfortable with. Tapping it allows the group to change, rewind or skip the content.

OpenTable is the assurance that someone can leave or take a break from the game for their own safety and well-being without being judged.

However, we recognise that there are other, equally valid, safety tools that can be applied - for example lines and veils. The most important thing is that players are clear about what to do in the event they feel uncomfortable or unsafe. If you cannot find an appropriate safety tool, please discuss this with the organisers when you make your game pitch and ensure the **'No X-card'** tag is recorded on your game description.

Issues occurring with the use of the X-Card (or other safety tools) by players or GM should be escalated to the convention organisers to assist resolution. If necessary, the outcome will be managed through the application of this policy.

Use of **a safety tool**, combined with the appropriate tags and descriptions will demonstrate that the GM (narrator, facilitator etc.) has taken reasonable steps to enable a safe environment for everyone at their table.

Players.

Beyond the principles of respect and good manners described above, we require players to treat safety tools with respect, and to consider the impact of their actions on others.

If you are uncomfortable with the game you are playing, please raise this with the GM. If this doesn't resolve your concerns, excuse yourself from the table and see one of the organisers. Remember, you are free to walk away from a game that you feel unsafe or uncomfortable in - this is the OpenTable principle described in the GM section above.

What should we do in the event of harassment or inappropriate conduct?

If you are being harassed or treated inappropriately, or see others being treated this way, you should if possible direct the offending party to stop their conduct; this will resolve many cases of such behaviour. If you cannot, or do not wish to, bring it directly to the attention of the offending party, or if the behaviour continues afterwards, you should inform a member of convention staff. Serious actions should be reported to the appropriate authorities, such as the Police, immediately.

Harassment incidents will be handled by one or more of Graham Spearing, Dom Mooney, or

Elaine McCourt.

What will happen next?

The convention organisers will discuss the matter with you and the offending party, and any witnesses. We'll treat all parties with discretion and sympathy. We'll treat information as confidential and only reveal what's necessary to other parties so that we can ask the right questions. Once we have obtained all the necessary facts of the incident, we will decide on the outcome of the complaint.

If a complaint is deemed to be valid and upheld, we will determine any appropriate sanctions, including but not limited to, the requesting of an apology, the removal from a specific event, or removal from the convention. Any removal will be without refund.

If the complaint is deemed to have no basis but made in good faith no action will be taken. If the complaint is deemed to have no basis and to have been made maliciously (i.e. to cause stress or discomfort for the target) the Convention Organiser may choose to apply sanctions to the maliciously complaining party.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

As Convention Organisers it is our aim to provide all attendees an enjoyable, positive experience, free from harassment and inappropriate conduct. Beyond such an aim we have a responsibility to put in place procedures to protect convention attendees from such behaviour.

This document details the procedures to be undertaken by the Convention Organisers to:

- inform convention attendees of conduct that is unacceptable
- inform convention attendees of the process of making a complaint
- to manage and investigate complaints received
- to act on the outcome of the investigation
- to record the events surrounding the complaint

Definitions

For the purposes of this procedure the following terms are defined below. The term harassment, and its specific subtypes, have definitions under UK law; as such the terms should be used very carefully in the management of complaints.

Harassment: The accepted legal definition of harassment is “unwanted conduct on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc, which has the purpose or effect of either violating the claimant’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.” Harassment can be based on sex, race, culture/ethnicity, religious belief, disability, age or gender reassignment.

Inappropriate conduct: This is defined here as “conduct towards an individual that is

unwanted and causes discomfort, intimidation, offense or humiliation, or creates an intimidating environment.”

Complainant: An individual making a complaint of harassment or inappropriate conduct.

Respondent: An individual against whom a complaint of harassment or inappropriate conduct has been made.

Responsibilities of the Convention Organisers

The Convention Organisers are Graham Spearing, Dom Mooney, & Elaine McCourt. They are responsible for ensuring:

- all complaint handling and investigation complies with this procedure and is fair and unbiased
- that the appropriate outcome is determined for each complaint
- that all records are completed and retained correctly
- interviewing the Complainant to determine the specifics of their complaint
- interviewing the Respondent to record their response to any accusations
- interviewing witnesses towards investigating the complaint

COMPLAINT HANDLING

Confidentiality

Complaints can be stressful and contentious and as such all complaints should be actioned as confidentially and discretely as possible. The events of the complaint should not be discussed with individuals not involved in the complaint and when witnesses are interviewed no details should be shared with them beyond those required to enable questions to be asked. All records should be retained only by the Convention Organisers. Complainants and Respondents should be provided with a copy of the complaint record upon request.

Interviewing the Complainant

The Convention Organiser(s) should interview the Complainant as soon as possible after the receipt of the complaint. This interview should take place in a quiet, private area, with a chaperone if this is deemed necessary or requested by either party. This interview does not have to be a formal event, and could take the form of a chat in a quiet side area.

During the interview the Convention Organiser(s) should attempt to uncover all key points about the complaint. Specific attention should be paid to the following:

- the identity of the Respondent(s)
- the events and actions being complained about
- the location and time of the events being complained about
- witnesses to the events being complained about
- what outcome the Complainant is looking for (an apology, the Respondent being asked to stay away from them, the Respondent being ejected, etc)

Interviewing the Respondent(s)

Following the Complainant interview the Respondent(s) should be informed that a complaint has been received about their activities and that an investigation is being undertaken. They should be offered the chance to explain the events from their point of view in an interview (or informal chat if the Convention Organisers deem it appropriate). The interview should focus on the specifics of the accusation.

Interviewing any witnesses

If there are witnesses to the events they should be approached by the Convention Organiser(s) and asked about the events. They should not be provided with details of the complaint, and any questions should be specifically targeted towards the events of the complaint.

Deciding the complaint

When the Complainant, Respondent(s) and all witnesses have been interviewed the Convention Organiser(s) will detail the specifics of the complaint and will determine on the balance of probabilities (the events of the complaint do not have to be proved “beyond reasonable doubt” as in a criminal prosecution, but simply be “more likely than not to have occurred” to be upheld) the validity of the complaint within one of the following three categories:

- complaint upheld
- complaint not upheld but believed to be in good faith
- complaint not upheld and believed to be malicious in nature

Complaint upheld

Where the complaint is deemed to be valid the Convention Organisers will determine the sanctions (if any) to be undertaken against the Respondent.

Complaint not upheld

Where the complaint is deemed not to be valid the Convention Organisers must determine if the complaint is believed to have been made in good faith (i.e. that the Complainant made the complaint genuinely and not simply to cause discomfort for the Respondent).

If the complaint was not upheld but was made in good faith then no sanctions should be taken against any involved parties.

If the complaint was believed to be malicious the Convention Organiser must determine the sanctions to be taken against the Complainant (a malicious complaint is a form of inappropriate conduct towards the Respondent and should be dealt with as seriously as any complaint).

Determining sanctions

Following the determination that sanctions are appropriate, the Convention Organisers must assess the severity of the actions and determine the appropriate sanctions. The

Complainant's wishes should be considered, but the Convention Organisers have a responsibility to ensure sanctions are proportionate to the actions. Many Complainants are happy with an apology and reassurance that the actions will not be repeated; severe sanctions such as ejection from the event and/or banning from future events should be used carefully.

Informing the Complainant and Respondent

The Convention Organisers should separately inform the Complainant and Respondent of the determination and any sanctions. Where either party is unhappy with the outcome they should be directed to complain to the Convention Organisers in writing so the complaint can be reassessed (this reassessment need not necessarily take place during the convention).

Complaints record

Once the complaint has been resolved the Convention Organisers must complete the complaints record detailing the outcome and sanctions. This record is retained by the Convention Organisers. The records will be pseudonymised so the name of those involved is not directly available on the record. A separate list of pseudonyms will be maintained.

Third-party complaints

Where a third party informs a convention staff member that another convention attendee has been treated inappropriately the Convention Organisers should discuss this with both the third party and the attendee named as having been treated inappropriately separately to determine if the complaint has basis. If the named attendee does not wish to pursue a complaint then the process may not be necessary, but the Convention Organisers should consider if the actions of the Respondent have caused offence for the third party (for example: comments of a sexual nature directed towards a convention attendee that the attendee does not object to may still be offensive to third parties) – in this case the third party may become the Complainant.

Managing the process

Though the above process is detailed and complete, many complaints may be resolved quickly and simply following a short chat with the Complainant, a short chat with the Respondent, and an apology or other quickly determined sanction. The Convention Organisers should ensure that all complaints are appropriately managed and recorded even if the processes steps are modified due to the specifics of the complaint.

Potential criminal actions

Convention staff should be aware of the limits of this policy and ensure that any actions that are potentially criminal (including but not limited to: actions of a sexual nature that can constitute sexual assault, physical attacks, damage to property, etc) are referred to the appropriate authorities.

Record Keeping Responsibilities

The Convention Organisers are responsible for retaining records of any complaints handled in a secure location in line with the requirements of data protection.

Retention policy

All complaint records are to be retained for 12 months from the date of complaint in case of the event of challenge to the outcome (either directly from the Complainant(s) / Respondent(s) or legal authorities).

Destruction policy

All complaint records greater than 12 months old and not currently involved in ongoing action should be destroyed securely.

Release policy

Complaint records should not be disclosed to parties other than the Complainant(s), Respondent(s), the Convention Organisers without good reason, and all releases should be supported by requests in-writing and comply with data protection requirements.