



Abuse of the Complaints Process

Any member of the public may lay a complaint against any person signing off as a Competent Person (or Competent Valuator). Procedures and outcomes are defined in the Constitutions, Code of Ethics/Professional Conduct of the various statutory and/or professional bodies to which the CP/CV might belong. Any such statutory registration or professional membership implies that the member (whether employed in academia, research, industry or government) agrees to abide by them and be subject to them and the associated Complaints and Disciplinary processes.

Of the cases investigated by the SAMCODES Standards Committee (SSC) over the past 10 years, several complaints had to be abandoned because there was little/no cooperation by the Complainants. These individuals took the time to put in a written complaint (often not in the form of an affidavit), and then failed to provide follow-up details or evidence when requested by the relevant committee (perhaps too much effort or insufficient substance to the complaint?).

A second disturbing trend is that a few complaints are found to be unsubstantiated or frivolous, based upon hearsay, personal opinion and/or individual bias. This often goes along with the fact that some professionals have taken up the mantle of “serial complainers”, finding fault with even the most inconsequential issues.

Such disputes highlight an unfortunate, unintended consequence of the complaints process – that complaints are sometimes being used to settle academic and/or professional disagreements. This is an unacceptable abuse of the system as it has the potential to irreparably injure the reputation of the subject of the complaint and it wastes the time of the various committees that must deal with them.

The SSC is also aware of complaints on CP/CVs with respect to fraudulent and unethical practices and would like to remind all consultants that to compile a Public Report, it is necessary to be properly registered with the relevant authority and have applicable experience. In due recognition of this, consultants may only practice within the scope of their competency and may only accept work for which they are properly qualified and have the capacity to carry out effectively.

Nonetheless, the Complaints process is a vitally important part of Public Reporting responsibility. It is necessary for valid and substantiated complaints to be made to ensure that CP/CVs are held accountable for their actions. So, the SSC would like to encourage members of the public to bring legitimate and well supported complaints to the attention of the SSC.