



# Indian Society for Applied Behavioral Science

## Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy

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## Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy

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## Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy

### 1. Preamble, Scope and Coverage

#### Preamble:

Founded in 1972, Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science (ISABS) is a national, non-profit voluntary society of behavioural scientists engaged in applying their knowledge and skill to the well-being of persons, organisations, communities and the society at large.

The Vision of ISABS being “*Dedicated to the dignity and autonomy of human beings as individuals in groups, organisations and society at large*” sets the context for this Policy Prevention of Sexual Harassment [ISABS PoSH Policy]

Since its inception in 1972, ISABS has been pioneering human sensitivity in general and sensitivity to diversity, equity / equality and inclusion in particular. Towards this end, ISABS has consistently taken pragmatic steps in devising its Ethics framework for ensuring that the institution lives these values. ISABS PoSH Policy reflects the above values from its Ethics Framework and is committed to creating a safe working environment that enables members and participants to interact and learn without fear of prejudice, intimidation, victimization, discrimination or sexual harassment. ISABS believes that all Members and participants have the right to be treated with dignity. Respect for individuals is a key value ISABS insists upon while ensuring a positive and safe work environment.

ISABS PoSH Policy is in compliance with **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 [The GoI PoSH Act]** which provides for protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Sexual harassment can occur in several forms and adversely affects individuals across genders. When subject to sexual harassment, individuals can feel physically and mentally threatened, impacting their engagement at the work and learning spaces in many ways. Differential power hierarchies is often correlated and sometimes causes / aids / plays a significant role in sexual harassment. It is important to note that informal power matrix exists in almost every relationship and this should not be exploited to engage in behaviors that disrespect the dignity of another.

The bottom-line of this policy is that ISABS as an institution will not tolerate behaviors which threaten the dignity and safety of members in all its dimensions.

ISABS, being uniquely organized with only a couple of employees on its payroll and predominantly represented through the Professional Member Community, relies on its Professional Members to be both the Guardians and Stewards of the spirit of ISABS’ commitment, shared values and vision for Human and Gender Sensitivity as above and also compliance with The GoI PoSH Act in letter and spirit.



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### Scope and Coverage:

While facilitating the compliance of The GoI PoSH Act in letter and spirit, this policy seeks to broaden the scope and coverage. Whereas The GoI PoSH Act provides for prevention, redressal and prohibition of sexual harassment of women at workplace, the ISABS PoSH Policy seeks to cover persons irrespective of their gender, and all the contact points of ISABS and any person in any context including formal, contractual, social, official and chance contact while on travel or commute, etc. etc. The scope and coverage is dealt with more specifically throughout this policy.

## 2. Commencement

This ISABS PoSH Policy comes into force with effect from **7 November 2020**

## 3. Definitions

### 3.1. Member

“Member” means professional members, associate members, employee on payroll, interns, trainees, those engaged on contract by ISABS directly and all persons deputed by service providers, participants of ISABS’ learning events, social events, consultancy or other projects and activities, persons belonging to the client organizations or any other person who comes in contact with ISABS in it’s regular activities or vice versa.

### 3.2. Workplace

“Workplace” includes all places in the premises of ISABS’ activities, including the premises of it’s members where ISABS’ regular activity takes place and also virtual platforms / spaces. Workplace is an all-encompassing term which includes the actual work space, work related meetings, work trips / travels and commutes, phone calls, messages, chats, or any place where one visits in relation to work; and any other circumstances where the professional relationship exists. An illustrative, but not exhaustive, example of the workplace is as follows:

- All events where instruction, training, mentoring, research, administration and any other activities connected with the functioning of ISABS are conducted.
- Workshop venues, meeting amongst members including mentoring meetings (both online and off-line).
- Travel and commute is also an extended workplace as per the policy.
- Public places on campus / in the building or any other public space that is used for meetings, etc.
- It covers the labs, faculty meetings, the professional members’ learning sessions, community sessions, parties and all other formal and informal interaction times, whether in-person or online. It includes all locations beyond official locations, where members have met for events organized by ISABS whether formal or social; as well as programs / work at third party locations.

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### 3.3. Sexual harassment

Sexually offensive behaviour can take many forms of unwelcome behaviour. “Sexual harassment” includes any one or more of the following unwelcome acts or behavior (whether directly or by implication) namely:

- physical contact and advances; or
- a demand or for sexual favours; or
- making sexually coloured remarks; or
- showing pornography; or
- any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature;

Any behaviour that constitutes a ‘**Quid Pro Quo**’ or ‘This for That’ action where a Member feels uncomfortable or is put in an embarrassing situation will also be considered as harassment and appropriate action initiated.

Any behaviour that makes the work environment **hostile or uncomfortable** to work in because of such actions, will be considered harassment under this policy and appropriate action initiated.

Behaviours mentioned above will constitute sexual harassment in all forms of interactions - in-person, telephonic and virtual medium.

It is the **impact on an individual** that will be taken into consideration, not the **intent of the respondent**

Some examples of behaviour that constitute sexual harassment at workplace are included in Annexure 1. This is an illustrative list and not an exhaustive list.

### 3.4. Aggrieved Person

“Aggrieved person” means—

- in relation to a workplace, any person, whether a member as defined above or not, of any age employed or not, who alleges to have been subjected to any act of sexual harassment by the respondent;
- It includes “aggrieved woman” as defined under The GoI PoSH Act.

### 3.5. Respondent

“Respondent” means a person against whom the aggrieved person has made a complaint. It includes person/s against whom an “aggrieved woman” makes a complaint under the GoI PoSH Act.

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### 3.6. Internal Committee

“Internal Committee” [ISABS IC] means an Internal Complaints Committee constituted by ISABS under section 4 of The GoI PoSH Act. The constitution and functioning of the ISABS IC is defined in the subsequent section titled ‘Internal Committee of ISABS-IC’ below.

### 3.7. Chairwoman

“Chairwoman” means the Chairperson of the IC nominated under sub-section (1) of section 7 of The GoI PoSH Act;

### 3.8. Presiding Officer

“Presiding Officer” means the Presiding Officer of the Internal Complaints Committee ie ISABS IC nominated under sub-section (2) of section 4 of The GoI PoSH Act;

## 4. Internal Committee (IC) and Management of Complaints

### 4.1. Constitution of IC at ISABS

In compliance with the GoI PoSH Act, the Executive Board [EB] of ISABS, by an order in writing, constitute an Internal Committee hereinafter known as the “ISABS IC” and nominate its members as follows:

- The total number of nominated members of the ISABS IC shall not be less than 4 as per the Act. However, ISABS IC will have additional members as decided from time to time and as demanded by the proposed activities of the committee.
- The EB of ISABS shall nominate a Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer who shall be a woman and a Professional Member of good standing of ISABS as defined in the Memorandum of Association of ISABS, with at least 5 years’ tenure. She must have shown commitment to the cause of ethical functioning and gender sensitivity in ISABS.
- The EB of ISABS in consultation with Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer shall nominate following members:
  - One member from amongst non-governmental organisations or associations committed to the cause of women or a person familiar with the issues relating to sexual harassment;
  - Not less than two members from amongst Professional Members, preferably committed to the cause of women or who have had experience in social work or have legal knowledge.
  - One employee, preferably committed to the cause of women or who have had experience in social work or have legal knowledge;
- Additional Members: The additional number of members of ISABS IC over and above 4 members nominated by the EB of ISABS as above, shall be decided by the Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer from time to time.
- In any case, and at any point of time, at least half the members of ISABS IC shall be women.

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- A quorum of 60% members is required to be present both in in-person meeting and virtual meeting for the proceedings of the ISABS IC meetings to take place
- The list and contact details of the members of ISABS IC shall be prominently published, as in Annexure - 2, in the websites and shared with members.

### **4.2. Tenure of Membership**

The Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer and each of the nominated and additional members of ISABS IC shall be part of the ISABS IC for a period of 3 years from the date of nomination or appointment to the committee.

### **4.3. Sub-Committees**

The Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer in consultation with ISABS IC shall constitute sub-committees in order to expedite decision making and the discharge of the responsibilities of the ISABS IC effectively. All final decisions will be with consent of the Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer.

### **4.4. Inquiry Committee**

The Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer shall constitute an Inquiry Committee consisting of not less than 4 members [including Presiding Officer and the member from the NGO must be part of the inquiry committee] for the purpose of dealing with complaints of sexual harassment. The tasks of investigation, conciliation, fact finding and recommendation, etc. shall be allocated to members of the Inquiry Committee by the Presiding Officer. The committee shall attempt to build consensus on matters related with the complaint including reconciliation, investigation, fact finding and recommendation, etc.

### **4.5. Resignation and Removal of Members**

- a. The resignation and removal of nominated members of ISABS IC shall be dealt by the Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer in consultation with the Executive Board.
- b. The resignation of the Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer shall be dealt by Executive Board.
- c. Removal of the Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer of ISABS IC shall be by consensus in the Executive Board and duly ratified in the Extraordinary General Meeting of ISABS exclusively constituted for this purpose as per the relevant provisions of the Memorandum of Association.
- d. Resignation and removal of additional members of ISABS IC shall be dealt by the Chairwoman-cum-Presiding Officer.

All instances of removal of members of ISABS IC shall follow the principles of natural justice.

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### 4.6. Preventive Measures

The roles played by Professional Members (e.g. as facilitator, mentor, regional and national institutional roles) are recognised as powerful roles providing them with an unusual opportunity to exercise power for the purpose of assisting others to grow and learn about themselves. Professional Members are expected to be constantly vigilant that this power is used at all times to promote the growth and enhance the dignity of the participants.

Each professional member of ISABS plays a critical part and is responsible for preventing any behavior that is disrespectful of the dignity or a threat to safety of another person arising out of sexual harassment during the course of a laboratory, events - both learning and social, or consulting / training assignments, etc.

- Professional Members shall not engage in erotic or sexual contact with participants in an ISABS program. This includes verbal or non-verbal interactions of a sexual or romantic nature not necessarily involving direct physical contact. (In this context the definition of the term 'program' is expanded depending upon whether the Professional Member is a Human Process Lab Facilitator, in a Mentor-PDP candidate relationship, facilitator in an extended Professional Development Programme or working on a consulting assignment for an ISABS client. It also includes before or after the program contact with participants/clients when the professional member is likely to have the role-related power described as above.)
- Professional Members are expected to confront any perceived violation of ISABS' stated ethical principles or potential violation of ISABS PoSH Policy by a colleague in an ISABS program. When there is evidence that a colleague has violated a stated ethics principle or any of the provisions of this policy, it is an ethical obligation of professional members to make a written report of such violation to the ISABS IC.

In line with the provisions of The GoI PoSH Act, ISABS shall take reasonable steps to ensure prevention of sexual harassment at work place. Such steps may include:

- a. Carry out ISABS PoSH Policy education and gender / feminist related sensitization training on sexual harassment. ISABS IC shall mandate the Executive Board of ISABS to facilitate the ISABS PoSH Policy education.
- b. Circulation of this policy to all Professional Members, and also participants during the events / workshop / training.
- c. Ensure that prevention, prohibition and redressal of sexual harassment as an issue is raised and discussed at ISABS at national and regional meetings and events.
- d. Carry out ISABS PoSH Policy education and gender / feminist related sensitization training on sexual harassment.
- e. Publicize that the Sexual Harassment is a crime and ISABS will have zero tolerance for the same.
- f. The ISABS PoSH Policy is to be shared with every existing and new professional members, employees especially and members as defined above will confirm in writing to ensure that the same has been read and understood and practiced in letter and spirit by all.
- g. Ensure that the policy is made available to all participants and others covered under the definition 'member' as above.





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- h. New Professional Members need to sign a document stating that they are aware of the ISABS PoSH Policy and that they have undergone requisite training as mandated by ISABS IC from time to time.
- i. No professional member or consultant hired by ISABS shall be permitted to facilitate, consult or train, or engage with any activities of ISABS, unless they have gone through the mandatory training / learning or qualifying criteria, if any, that ISABS IC may stipulate from time to time.

### 4.7. Management of Complaints

#### a. Filing of a Complaint

- (i) Any aggrieved person may make, in writing, a complaint of sexual harassment at workplace to the ISABS IC within a period of three months from the date of incident and in case of a series of incidents, within a period of three months from the date of last incident.

Provided that where such complaint be made in writing, the Presiding Officer or any Member of the ISABS IC as the case may be, shall render all reasonable assistance to the person for making the complaint in writing.

Provided further that the ISABS IC for the reasons to be recorded in writing, can extend the time limit beyond three months, if it is satisfied that the circumstances were such which prevented the woman from filing a complaint within the said period.

- (ii) Where the aggrieved woman is unable to make a complaint on account of her physical or mental incapacity or death or otherwise, her legal heir or such other person as may be prescribed may make a complaint under this section.

#### b. Conciliation

The complaints from aggrieved woman shall be dealt with as follows:

- (i) The ISABS IC before initiating an inquiry under section 11 of The GoI PoSH Act, and at the request of the aggrieved woman shall take steps to settle the matter between her and the respondent through conciliation:  
Provided that no monetary settlement shall be made as a basis of conciliation.
- (ii) Where settlement has been arrived at under sub-section (i) above, the ISABS IC, shall record the settlement so arrived and forward the same to the Executive Board of ISABS to take action as specified in the recommendation.
- (iii) The ISABS IC shall provide the copies of the settlement as recorded under sub-section (ii) to the aggrieved woman and the respondent.
- (iv) Where a settlement is arrived at under sub-section (i), no further inquiry shall be conducted by the ISABS IC.

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### c. Inquiry

- (i) Where the aggrieved woman does not want to choose the reconciliation and wants the complaint to be investigated, ISABS IC shall proceed to make an inquiry into the complaint.
- (ii) Where the aggrieved woman informs the ISABS IC that any term or condition of the settlement arrived at under the reconciliation process above has not been complied with by the respondent, the ISABS IC shall proceed to make an inquiry into the complaint or, as the case may be, forward the complaint to the police:

Provided that where both the parties are employees, the parties shall, during the course of inquiry, be given an opportunity of being heard and a copy of the findings shall be made available to both the parties enabling them to make representation against the findings before the Committee.

### d. Powers of ISABS IC

For the purpose of making an inquiry under above section, ISABS IC shall have the same powers as are vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908) when trying a suit in respect of the following matters, namely:

- (i) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath;
- (ii) requiring the discovery and production of documents; and
- (iii) any other matter which may be prescribed.

### e. Duration

The inquiry under the above sub-section (c) shall be completed within a period of ninety days.

### f. Interim Measures

- (i) It may be necessary that interim measures be taken while a complaint is being reconciled, investigated or decided. Such measures will be precautionary, not disciplinary.
- (ii) During the pendency of an inquiry, on a written request made by the aggrieved Member, the ISABS IC may recommend to the EB; grant of certain relief measures to the aggrieved member, such as a temporary removal from current roles and responsibilities of the respondent or the complainant, or give permission to the complainant to work with a different member to complete any assignments or any other interim measure as the ISABS IC deems fit in the circumstances.
- (iii) In case of any employee of ISABS is the aggrieved person, ISABS IC may mandate grant of additional leave over and above the entitlement up to a maximum of 3 months, transfer the person to another location of her choice, or provide any other reasonable and appropriate relief.

EB shall implement the above recommendations of interim relief to the aggrieved member immediately / at the earliest and send the report of the implementation to the ISABS IC.

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### g. Inquiry Report and Recommendation

- (i) On the completion of an inquiry under this Act, the ISABS IC shall provide a report of its findings to the EB of ISABS within a period of ten days from the date of completion of the inquiry and such report be made available to the concerned parties.
- (ii) Where the ISABS IC arrives at the conclusion that the allegation against the respondent has not been proved, it shall recommend to the EB of ISABS that no action is required to be taken in the matter.
- (iii) Where the ISABS IC arrives at the conclusion that the allegation against the respondent has been proved, it shall recommend to the EB of ISABS specific action to be initiated as follows:
  - ISABS IC will take into cognizance the role of the respondent, severity of the incident as well as any prior warnings given / prior incidents of similar involvement.
  - The specific action may include - written apology, warning, reprimand or censure, termination of membership / association with ISABS, asking either or both parties to undergo counselling, etc.
  - In respect of employees on payroll of ISABS, additional actions will be recommended as mentioned in the Act.
- (iv) The EB of ISABS shall act upon the recommendation of the ISABS IC within sixty days of its receipt in writing.

### h. Compensation

For the purpose of determining the sums to be paid to the aggrieved woman under above sub-section ISABS IC shall have regard to:

- (i) the mental trauma, pain, suffering and emotional distress caused to the aggrieved woman;
- (ii) the loss in the career opportunity due to the incident of sexual harassment;
- (iii) medical expenses incurred by the victim for physical or psychiatric treatment;
- (iv) the income and financial status of the respondent;
- (v) feasibility of such payment in lump sum or in instalments.

### i. Dealing with the Malicious Complaints

- (i) Where the Internal Committee arrives at a conclusion that the allegation against the respondent is malicious or the aggrieved person making the complaint has made the complaint knowing it to be false or the aggrieved person making the complaint has produced any forged or misleading document, ISABS IC shall recommend to EB, as the case may be, to take appropriate action against the person who has made the complaint.
- (ii) However, a mere inability to substantiate a complaint or provide adequate proof need not attract action against the complainant under this section. Also, the malicious intent on part of the complainant should be established after an inquiry in accordance with the procedure prescribed, before any action is recommended.
- (iii) Where the ISABS IC arrives at a conclusion that during the inquiry any witness has given false evidence or produced any forged or misleading document, it may recommend to the EB of ISABS to take appropriate action.



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(iv) False evidence by any witness shall attract appropriate punishment to be recommended to the EB of ISABS to take action.

### **j. Maintaining Confidentiality**

Notwithstanding anything contained in the Right to Information Act, 2005 (22 of 2005), the contents of the complaint made under section 9, the identity and addresses of the aggrieved woman, respondent and witnesses, any information relating to conciliation and inquiry proceedings, recommendations of the ISABS IC and the action taken by the EB of ISABS shall not be published, communicated or made known to the public, press and media in any manner:

Provided that information may be disseminated regarding the justice secured to any victim of sexual harassment under this Act without disclosing the name, address, identity or any other particulars calculated to lead to the identification of the aggrieved woman and witnesses.

### **k. Breach of Confidentiality**

Where any person entrusted with the duty to handle or deal with the complaint, inquiry or any recommendations or action to be taken under the provisions of this Act, contravenes the above provisions on confidentiality, he or she shall be liable for penalty in accordance with the provisions of the service rules applicable to the said person if he or she is an employee or where such a person is not an employee of ISABS, in such manner as may be prescribed.

### **l. Appeal**

(i) Any person who is aggrieved by the recommendations of the inquiry report or in the event of non-implementation of the recommendations, including payment of penalty may prefer an appeal to an appropriate court or tribunal. (ii) The appeal under the above sub-section shall be preferred within a period of ninety days of the recommendations.

### **m. Dealing with the Complaint from Aggrieved Person other than a Woman**

The complaint of sexual harassment received from any person of any gender other than a female gender, shall be dealt in line with the principles of natural justice. The spirit of the above process for managing complaints shall be followed in respect of the aggrieved person being other than female gender.

## **5. Obligation of EB of ISABS**

- a. The GoI PoSH Act mandates that the EB implement the recommendations made in the Inquiry Report expeditiously and report back, in writing, confirming the implementation to the ISABS IC.



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- b. The EB of ISABS shall facilitate implementation of the various preventive and prohibition of sexual harassment related measures as above.
- c. The Executive Board of ISABS shall provide all necessary support including allocation of adequate budgetary provision as required by the IC for ensuring full, effective and prompt implementation of this policy.
- d. The EB of ISABS shall play a facilitative role in ISABS IC being able to comply with the letter and spirit of The GoI PoSH Act.
- e. With respect to the review and revision of the ISABS PoSH Policy, the ISABS IC shall have the powers to effect the changes required in the policy in consultation with the EB.
- f. Consultations shall be held with the spirit of finding consensus between EB of ISABS and ISABS IC.
- g. The ISABS IC will prepare and present an annual report to the Board and to the District Officer containing the following details :
  - i. No. of complaints of sexual harassment received in a particular year
  - ii. No. of complaints of sexual harassment disposed-off during a particular year
  - iii. No. of workshops / awareness programmes conducted for prevention of sexual harassment at workplace
  - iv. Nature of action(s) taken by the ISABS

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### **Annexure 1: Examples of what constitutes Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment in the workplace can take various forms. It may involve, but is not limited to:

- Making sexually suggestive remarks or innuendos.
- Serious or repeated offensive remarks, such as teasing related to a person's body or appearance.
- Offensive comments or jokes.
- Inappropriate questions, suggestions or remarks about a person's sex life.
- Displaying sexist or other offensive pictures, posters or emails.
- Intimidation, threats, blackmail around sexual favours.
- Threats, intimidation or retaliation against an Member who speaks up about sexual harassment
- Unwelcome behaviour with sexual overtones.
- Unwelcome social invitations, with sexual overtones commonly understood as flirting.
- Unwelcome sexual advances which may or may not be accompanied by promises or threats, explicit or implicit.
- Physical contact such as touching or pinching.
- Caressing, kissing or fondling someone against their will (could be considered assault).
- Invasion of personal space (getting too close for no reason, brushing against or cornering someone).
- Persistently asking someone out, despite being turned down.
- Stalking an individual.
- Abuse of authority or power to threaten a person's job or undermine her performance against sexual favours.
- Falsely accusing and undermining a person behind closed doors for sexual favours.
- Controlling a person's reputation by rumour-mongering about his/her private life.
- The five forms of Sexual harassment as illustrated in the policy are also applicable on any electronic or virtual medium. Some examples of the same could be inappropriate and offensive gestures, asking people to adjust to the camera to view their body parts, inappropriate use of language over call and chat.
- Perception, not intention, determines what constitutes sexual harassment, and perceptions may vary with gender, age, situation, time and nature of relationship. A certain conduct acceptable to a gender may be offensive to the other.
  - "I didn't mean any offense"; or
  - "I'm like that with everyone"; or
  - "I was only joking"are; are not good enough excuses.
- If certain behaviour is reasonably perceived as sexually offensive, it is inappropriate and may be considered harassment.
- Furthermore, sensitivities may change. Members have the right to ask you to stop behaviour that was previously welcome.



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#### Annexure 2: Details of the ISABS IC: 2023 – 25

Name	Role/ Designation	Contact Information (phone number and email address)	Date of Expiry of Membership of ISABS IC*
1. Dr. Punam Sahgal	Presiding Officer	9810360950 posh@isabs.org	31-Dec-2025
2. Shruti Vidyasagar	External Member	99450 69481 shruti.vidyasagar@gmail.com	31-Dec-2025
3. Archana Shrivastava	Internal Member	9825405758 archanayuva67@gmail.com	31-Dec-2025
4. Anuradha Prasad	Internal Member	9845236741 anueswar@gmail.com	31-Dec-2025
5. Shridhar Kshirsagar	Internal Member	9820430159 shridhar.ksagar@gmail.com	31-Dec-2025
6. K. Bhanumurthy	Internal Member	9407982170 ebhanu8@yahoo.co.in	31-Dec-2025

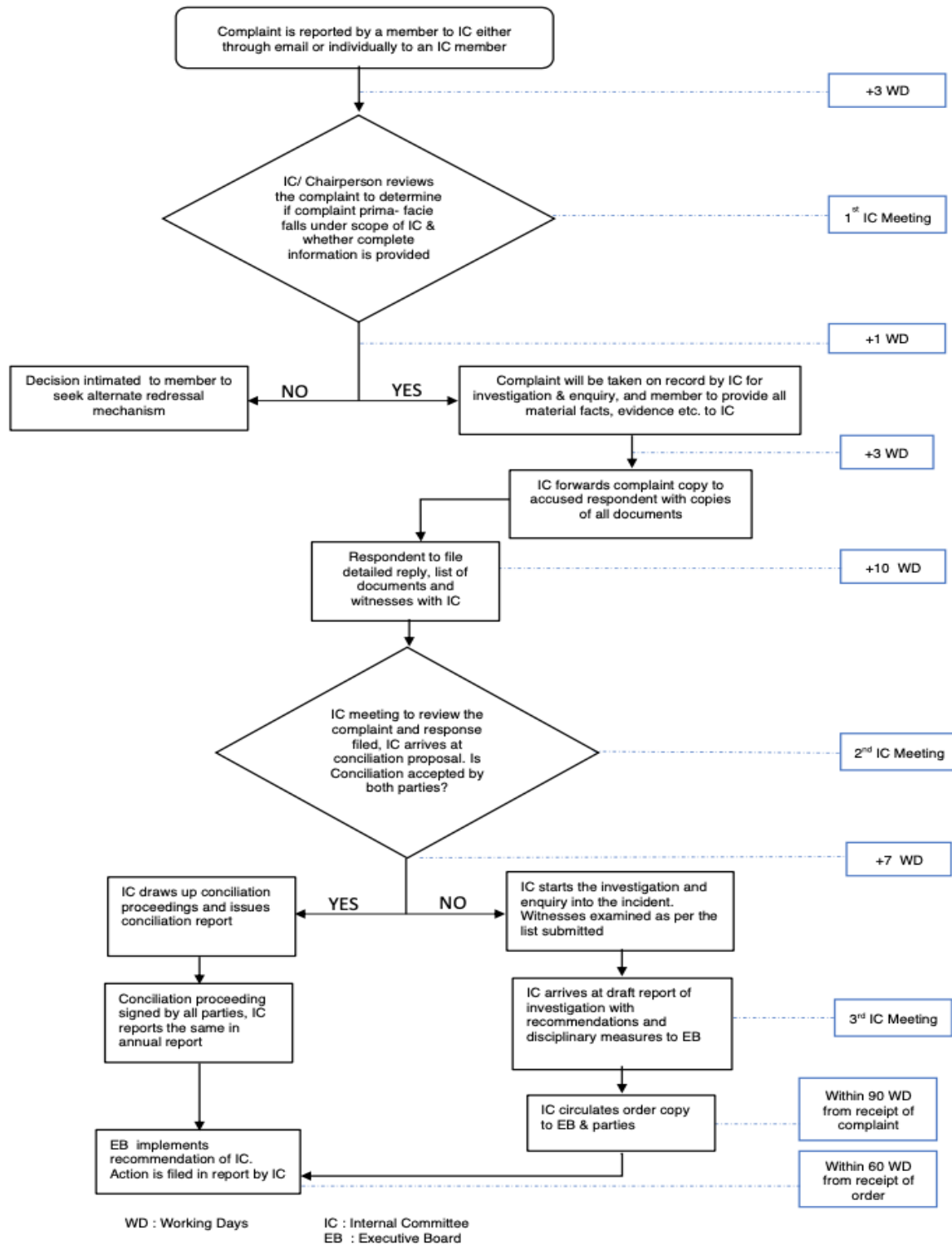
\*Three years from appointment or date of resignation from ISABS whichever is earlier





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### Annexure 3: Inquiry Process at a glance





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### Revision History

Ver. #	Release date	Revised By	Approved By	Link to Rational for Changes and Summary of Changes Documents
1.0	07-Nov-2020			New policy
1.1	16-Jan-2020	IC	EB	In line with Ethics policy and more detailing from the Act and Rules
1.2				