



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF SCHEMA THERAPY
ETHICS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION COMMITTEE
**CODE OF CONDUCT ACTIONS &
PROCEDURES**

Approved by the Executive Board October 13, 2022

Introduction

The International Society of Schema Therapy (ISST) is committed to advancing good practice in all its members. ISST's *Code of Conduct* ([Click here to be taken to ethical procedures and guidelines](#)) is a set of principles and values that provides a Schema Therapist with a solid foundation for good, safe, and ethical practice.

All ISST members, regardless of their grade or position, are invited to commit to the good practice standards presented in this *Code of Conduct*. The *Code of Conduct "Actions & Procedures"* is the Ethics and Conflict Resolution Committee's (ECRC) main reference when considering professional conduct complaints that are brought before the Committee.

The ECRC will not commence an investigation of a complaint if an investigation is already underway with the respondent's licensing or professional body and will pause its own investigation if it is discovered that such an investigation has been initiated.

The ECRC is committed to investigating all cases objectively and independently.

ISST cannot stop a practitioner from continuing to practice or help a member receive financial compensation.

This document describes the principles underlying the mission of the ECRC under six headings: (I) Objectives; (II) The decision to investigate a complaint; (III) Suggestions to the Clinician and/or Recommendations to the Executive Board (EB); (IV) Procedures for Filing a Complaint; (V) Appeal Process; and (VI) Review.

I. Objectives

When a complaint is filed against *any* member of ISST, the ECRC's objectives are to:

- A. Investigate.
- B. Resolve.
- C. If there is no resolution, then recommend actions to ISST's Executive Board (EB) that are necessary to uphold the aims of ISST, founded in 2008 at a conference in Coimbra, Portugal:
 1. To promote training in schema therapy at a high professional level by specifying a curriculum for training and to provide accreditation and certification for trainees who show that they have met these requirements.
 - 2). To promote the development and dissemination of new developments within schema therapy by holding regular conferences and training events.
 - 3). To provide a structure for networking among schema therapists and those seeking to become certified as schema therapists.

- D. If an ethical complaint is unfounded, the ECRC will offer suggestions of “good practice” to the clinician. These suggestions of “good practice” are not meant as a punishment.
- E. When reviewing a complaint, the ECRC will carefully consider the evidence as well as the perspectives of all sides before making suggestions of “good practice” to the Clinician or a recommendation for further action to the EB.

II. The decision to investigate a complaint

- A. If a complaint against an ISST member is found to be of a serious nature (e.g., violence, sexual offence, serious or sustained dishonesty or fraud), and the member is registered with an organization that either statutorily or voluntarily regulates that member, the ECRC will ask the complainant to refer the complaint to the respondent’s licensing or professional organization for action.
- B. The ECRC will not commence an investigation and will pause their investigation if one is under way with the respondent’s licensing or professional body.
 - 1. The ECRC will defer to the outcome of that investigation unless the outcome indicates a deviation of ethical codes stipulated by the ISST or if the member presents new evidence to the ECRC.
- C. Complaints about ISST members, regardless of whether they are members of a professional/regulatory body, will be reviewed according to the Complaints Procedure of the ISST.
- D. When another professional/regulatory body or tribunal has completed its investigation of the same allegations and has found no merit to the allegations, the ECRC may, at its discretion, decide not to open an investigation or, if already open, to close it.
- E. The ECRC may open its own investigation when a member:
 - 1. Has been expelled or suspended from a professional/regulatory body or similar entity.
 - 2. Has been denied a license/accreditation, certificate, or registration.
 - 3. Has had a license/accreditation, certificate, or registration withdrawn or suspended by a professional or regulatory body or similar organization.
 - 4. Has voluntarily surrendered a license/accreditation, certificate, or registration because of pending allegations.
- F. If the individual’s professional body has already reached a decision upholding the complaint, that decision must stand. If new evidence has become known, the ECRC may review the complaint again.

III. Suggestions to the ISST member and/or recommendations to the ISST EB

- A. The EB of ISST will suspend a clinician's ISST membership while the judiciary investigates the following criminal offences:
 - 1. Sexual misconduct involving a child or vulnerable adult including any offence involving indecent images or pornography.
 - 2. Sexual misconduct against a person who has mental health problems.
 - 3. Any other criminal offence for which a term of custodial sentence is imposed, probation is not being considered, and such conviction is not under appeal.

- B. The EB of ISST will terminate a clinician's ISST membership when they are convicted of the following criminal offences:
 - 1. Sexual misconduct involving a child or vulnerable adult including any offence involving indecent images or pornography.
 - 2. Sexual misconduct against a person who has mental health problems.
 - 3. Any other criminal offence for which a term of custodial sentence is imposed, probation is not being considered, and such conviction is not under appeal.

- C. The ECRC will make recommendations to the ISST EB with respect to a member's membership when:
 - 1. A member is found guilty of malpractice or incompetence by the professional body that regulates their professional practice.
 - 2. A member has been found by a court or tribunal, an employer's internal disciplinary investigation, or a university disciplinary investigation to have plagiarised the work of another or to have falsified the results of, and/or data relating to, psychological or other types of research.
 - 3. A member who, while holding an elected or appointed position within the Society, is found to have acted in a way that is in serious conflict with the mission of the Society.
 - 4. A member has claimed to hold a grade of membership to which he or she has not been elected or has been found to have used false or misleading titles or descriptions.
 - 5. Members found by the Society to have provided false or misleading information in an application to become a member of the Society, or an application for election to a membership grade organization, based on a finding of lack of competence will have their membership withdrawn.
 - 6. Any member struck off the Register of their professional or regulatory body for reasons other than lack of competence may, at the discretion of the ISST EB, have conditions placed upon their membership, which could include suspension or termination.

- D. When the ECRC has concluded their investigation of a complaint, the ECRC may engage in any of the following actions:
 - 1. Dismiss the case if:
 - a. there is insufficient evidence.
 - b. the member has not violated the ethical standard as charged.
 - c. the violation is only minor or technical and would not warrant further action.

- d. the violation of the member has been addressed in another forum.
2. In the case of ethical violations, recommend to the ISST Board that the ISST member consider the following:
 - a. incorporate specific changes into the ISST member's practice.
 - b. that the ISST member cease the specified unethical behavior (s).
 - c. that the ISST member undergo additional training, which could include consultation with a Schema Therapy Therapist at the Supervisory Trainer level holding expertise in the specific area of concern.
3. Recommend that the ISST EB consider **suspending** the ISST member's membership for a specified period **not to exceed 3 years**.
4. Recommend that the ISST EB consider **terminating** the Clinician's ISST membership.
 - a. the Clinician may apply to reinstate their membership in ISST **after 5 years** provided, they have satisfied conditions requested by the ISST EB, at the time of their termination of membership.
5. Offer suggestions of "good practice" to the ISST member.
- E. With respect to actions 3 and 4 above, the member will undergo review for a specified period to ensure compliance with the ISST EB's directives.
- F. If the ISST member chooses to not comply with the ECRC's requests for information investigation of the complaint will continue to the best of the ECRC's ability, and may lead to ISST's EB terminating the ISST member's membership.

IV. Procedures

- A. When an ISST member wishes to file a complaint about the behavior of another ISST member, they must follow the procedure outlined on the ISST website that pertains to the ECRC ([Click here to be taken to ethical procedures and guidelines](#)).
- B. It is suggested that prior to filing the complaint that the ISST member review the ISST's Code of Conduct as well as the ISST's Policy and Procedures Regarding Dual/Multiple Relationships to determine if the conduct of concern is addressed in these documents.
- C. The Complaint Form must be completed in its entirety and signed by the Complainant. The signature must be clearly recognizable, and the printed name noted adjacent to the signature. The ECRC will not accept anonymous complaints.
- D. The Complaint Form must describe the behavior that is of specific concern, reference either the *ISST Code of Conduct* and/or the *ISST Policy and Procedures Regarding Dual/Multiple Relationship* and include evidence to support the allegation.

- E. If the ECRC considers that the matter falls within the *ISST Code of Conduct* and action is taken, the ISST member against whom the complaint has been filed shall be informed.
- F. When a complaint is upheld and it is decided that action is necessary, ECRC will recommend to the ISST EB suggested measures such as, whether conditions are placed on the membership, including suspension or termination of membership:
 - 1. When the ISST EB has determined that membership of the ISST member will be **suspended** the suspension period **will not normally exceed three years**.
 - 2. When the ISST EB has determined that membership of the ISST member will be **terminated**, the member may apply to reinstate their membership with the ISST **provided five years have elapsed** since the decision to end their membership and that he/she/they meets reinstatement criteria.
- G. If the ECRC receives multiple complaints against the same ISST member within a **three-year period**, the ECRC may review all complaints in their entirety before concluding their review of the case.
- H. If the ISST member, after being notified of a complaint elects to resign from the Society, he or she must inform the ISST EB and the ECRC of this decision.

V. APPEAL

- A. When recommendations have been made by the ECRC to the ISST EB regarding an ISST member (against whom the complaint has been filed and investigated) with respect to modifications of practice, and suspension or termination of membership, the member may submit a request for an Appeal Panel Review to the ISST EB within two weeks of the ISST EB letter detailing the grievance or suggestion(s) of “good practice.”
- B. The Appeal Panel is established by the ISST EB to provide ISST members against whom complaints have been filed an additional opportunity for an unbiased review.
- C. In response to the request for an Appeal Panel:
 - 1. The Executive Board shall nominate at least three members from the Appeal Panel who have not been previously involved in the case, and who are not close affiliates of the ISST member under investigation.
 - 2. The Review Panel shall be independent of the ECRC and shall operate under their discretion.
- D. When considering an appeal, the Appeal Panel may uphold the first decision, substitute any one of the three outcomes (place conditions to membership, suspend, or terminate), or decide that the first decision should be set aside and that no further action is necessary.

VI. REVIEW

- A. In cases where the ECRC has suggested recommendations to the ISST EB, for further training or consultation, in terms of Section II above, the ECRC will review the matter before the end of the specified period and evaluate whether the required conditions have been adequately met.
- B. The aim of the review is to protect the public. If the ECRC determines that the conditions imposed by the ISST EB have not been fulfilled, it may recommend to the ISST EB that conditions upon the membership be extended.
- C. Depending on the extent to which the modifications to practice have been satisfactorily fulfilled, the ECRC may recommend to the ISST EB an extension of the review period, or further suggestions to the ISST member's practice, extension of the review period, or termination of membership to ensure the protection of the public.
- D. Although the extent to which requirements have been met will be automatically reviewed before the specified period has elapsed, the ISST member may apply to the ECRC to have the review brought forward, if he/she/they believes that his/her/their circumstances have changed since the requirements were imposed.
 - 1. For example, if the requirement for additional training was completed before the specified period or if the issues that led to the sanction being placed have been resolved. This is not the same as appealing against the decision to impose the requirements.