



Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC)

Halifax Centre

Dedicated to the Advancement of Astronomy and Allied Sciences

G12: Policy Regarding Expulsion from RASC Halifax Centre Membership

(Adopted May 3, 2022; Revised September 3, 2024)

Background:

Any person can become a member of The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) and request affiliation with RASC Halifax Centre. There are grounds to consider expulsion if at any time members act in such a way that is injurious to the Centre or its purposes, and consequently affects the Society and/or any of its members.

This policy is based on the RASC and the RASC Halifax Centre By-Law No. 1, and policies relating to membership and conflict resolution.

Membership Policy Statements:

Members are expected at all times to conduct themselves appropriately and with due regard to the best interests of the Centre, the Society and their fellow members. To retain their status as a RASC member, they must adhere to the bylaws and all written policies as set by the RASC and by the RASC Halifax Centre. Failure to comply may result in a review of their membership resulting in discipline, or eventual expulsion from membership in accordance with the RASC Halifax Centre By-Law No. 1 and with this policy. When it appears that such measures are necessary, proper and tactful handling of the case is of prime importance. It is in the best interest of all concerned to make every effort to obtain a satisfactory solution of the matter quietly and informally.

Guiding Principles:

1. The RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors is responsible to manage all complaints relating to possible expulsion.
2. There is recognition by all parties involved that a problem exists and that there is mutual agreement to address the issue and find a solution.
3. If more than one person is involved, the Board will decide if each member will be considered individually, or if all members will be considered collectively.
4. There is an effort to understand the perspective and concerns of the individual(s) and the Centre.
5. The Board of Directors, the Committee of Investigation, and the member(s) involved do not have the right to make public any information obtained through such investigation.
6. Threats of harm or concerns that harm may develop must be immediately referred to the appropriate professionals or authorities. The expulsion process will be suspended until such time as the risk of harm has been safely addressed at which time a review shall be undertaken by the Board of Directors to determine if further action is required.
7. It is always in the best interest of all concerned to offer the member the opportunity to resign their RASC Halifax Centre membership before an inquiry is held. The Centre would then notify the Society of the reason for the resignation.
8. Once a member has been summoned and the case has been concluded, the same charges cannot be readdressed.

Expulsion Process:

A situation may also arise where a member whose continued membership in the Centre may not be in the best interest of the Centre. The process as outlined below should be followed.

A. Receipt of Complaint

1. If the outcome from the process outlined in the policy regarding membership and conflict resolution results in a recommendation for expulsion, the recommendation must be received in writing.
2. If the accused is the President, the complaint shall be forwarded in writing to the Secretary who will inform the President and the Board.

B. Investigation by Committee of Investigation

1. Once notification of an offence has been made known to the Board of Directors, an ad hoc Committee of Investigation comprising 3 RASC Halifax Centre members is formed via resolution. Committee members cannot be a member of the currently elected Board of Directors. Members will be selected for known integrity and good judgment.
2. The person(s) being considered for expulsion has the right, with grounds, to object to a member serving on the Committee.
3. Once formed, a confidential investigation is conducted to determine whether further actions are warranted, including referral to the appropriate professionals or authorities. All efforts should be made to obtain all the relevant facts.
4. A written report is presented to the Board of Directors. The report goes into sufficient detail to support its recommendation(s) as to the actions the Board should take and should only close with a resolution relating to the case.
5. A summoned member(s) may be excluded from Centre activities until they are due to appear before the Committee, especially if their alleged misconduct is serious.

C. Meeting of the Committee of Investigation

1. The Secretary sends the accused and the complainant a written summons to appear before the Committee at an appointed time and date. The specific charges should also be stated in the letter. The accused should receive the notice at least 6 days before the meeting. A copy of all documentation sent to the accused is retained in the Centre's files.
2. A failure by the accused to obey the summons without just cause is enough for summary expulsion. If there appears to be any reasonable excuse for non-attendance by the accused and/or the complainant, a new meeting date and time shall be set and another summons sent. The accused shall be informed that if they fail to attend on a second occasion the case will proceed in their absence. The complainant shall be informed that if they fail to attend on a second occasion the case will be dropped. The committee should give the member every opportunity to attend and meet the charge against them.
3. A discussion with the accused is made to hear their side of the story and to introduce witnesses, if they so desire. Either party should be allowed to cross-examine the other's witnesses and introduce rebutting testimony.
4. When the evidence is all in, the meeting is adjourned.
5. The Committee shall meet to deliberate upon the question, and finally act by a vote upon the question of acquittal, expulsion, or other discipline proposed. The voting results and recommendations relating to the proposed outcome shall be included in the report to the Board.

D. Meeting of the RASC Halifax Board of Directors

1. The report and its recommendation(s) is presented to the Board for consideration.
2. The vote to approve the recommendation(s) should be by ballot, except by general consent. A record should be kept of votes for and against.
3. Expulsion requires a vote of two-thirds of the Board members voting.

Policy Statements Regarding Outcome:

After the committee's report is voted on by the RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors, a letter is sent to the accused regarding the outcome and a copy is retained in the Centre's files.

If the Board of Directors votes for expulsion from the Centre, the Centre shall, within fifteen days, notify the Society's Secretary of the change in the member's status and the circumstances of the expulsion along with all relevant documentation.

All decisions and recommendations made by the Board of Directors will be final and binding without any further right of appeal.

All documentation relating to the conflict will be kept in confidence. Records of the complaint and resolution and all supporting documentation shall be filed with the meeting minutes of the Board of Directors in the Centre's files.

RASC Level Process

If a complaint cannot be resolved at the RASC Halifax Centre level, the complaint and all support documentation will be forwarded to the Society Board of Directors who will address the issue.

If the conflict seems to have policy/governance implications for the Society that do, or could, extend beyond the Centre, all support documentation regarding the complaint will be forwarded to the Society's Secretary who will address the issue.

All decisions and recommendations made by the Society regarding any and all conflicts will be final and binding without any further right of appeal.