

VSAI Code of Professional Ethics & Compliance Handbook

This handbook outlines the complete ethical framework and compliance procedures for the Virtual Speakers Association International (VSAI). Our aim is to foster a professional, inclusive, and high-integrity environment for all members. By becoming a member of VSAI, each individual commits to upholding the values herein, not only to preserve the credibility of our Association but also to elevate the global speaking profession.

Section 1: Code of Professional Ethics

The VSAI Code of Professional Ethics defines the standards by which all members are expected to conduct themselves. These ethical guidelines ensure the sustainability, credibility, and professionalism of our global community.

Representation

Members must be truthful in how they represent their qualifications, credentials, experience, and achievements. Misleading claims or exaggeration can damage the credibility of both the individual and VSAI.

Professionalism

Professionalism entails behaving in a way that promotes respect for others, fosters constructive interactions, and maintains decorum in all professional contexts. Members must not engage in behavior that could bring disrepute to VSAI or its members.

Client Understanding and Research

Members are responsible for understanding the client's context—including their mission, audience, and organizational culture—before engaging. This ensures that speaking engagements are tailored, respectful, and impactful.

Intellectual Property

VSAI members must not use content—spoken, written, or visual—that belongs to another individual without explicit written permission. This applies to speech content, training materials, branding, and proprietary frameworks.

Respect and Collegiality

Members are expected to engage with one another with courtesy, fairness, and professionalism. Healthy competition is encouraged, but not at the expense of ethical or collegial conduct.

Confidentiality

Members must safeguard confidential information received from clients, collaborators, and fellow speakers. This includes any privileged or sensitive data not meant for public disclosure.

Business Integrity

Members must operate with transparency, honor contractual agreements, and avoid any deceptive or coercive business practices. They must act in good faith in all negotiations and transactions.

Diversity and Inclusion

VSAI promotes a safe and inclusive space for all, regardless of nationality, race, gender, religion, age, or orientation. Members must not discriminate or engage in behaviors that exclude or marginalize any individual or group.

Section 2: Governance of Ethics and Compliance

To ensure that ethical concerns are handled impartially and professionally, VSAI maintains a standing Ethics Panel. This panel is an independent body entrusted with reviewing ethical complaints, ensuring due process, and preserving the Association's integrity.

The panel comprises three individuals: one member from the current VSAI Board and two Professional Members in good standing. They are appointed annually by the President, who may not interfere in individual case deliberations once the panel is formed. The panel members will select their Chair internally.

Section 3: Submitting an Ethics Complaint

Any person—whether a member, client, or third party—may submit a complaint if they have directly engaged with a VSAI member and believe there has been a breach of the Code of Ethics.

Complaints must be submitted in writing and must clearly cite the clause(s) in the Code of Ethics that were allegedly breached. Submissions must include the complainant's full name, email, phone number, and date of incident. Anonymous or verbal complaints will not be accepted. All complaints must be filed within 12 months of the incident.

Section 4: Complaint Review and Resolution Procedure

Once a valid complaint is received, the Chair of the Ethics Panel will initiate the following process:

1. **Preliminary review:** The complaint is verified for completeness and validity.
2. **Notification:** The respondent (accused member) is notified and provided a copy of the complaint. They are given 14 calendar days to respond in writing.
3. **Confidentiality:** Until the formal response is received, panel members may not discuss the matter internally to ensure neutrality.
4. **Review:** After receiving the response, the panel convenes within 2 weeks to deliberate and, if needed, request further clarification or interviews with involved parties.
5. **Decision:** Within 30 days of deliberation, the panel reaches a decision and submits a written report to the President.
6. **Notification:** The President informs both parties of the outcome and any further actions.

Section 5: Outcomes and Disciplinary Measures

After reviewing the complaint and response, the Ethics Panel may recommend the following outcomes:

- **No Breach Found:** The case is closed with no further action.
- **Advisory Note:** Guidance is issued with educational recommendations for the member.
- **Suspension:** The member is temporarily suspended from VSAI, with the terms and timeline for reinstatement clearly communicated.
- **Expulsion:** Membership is terminated indefinitely. The individual loses all privileges, access, and rights within VSAI.
- **Public Education:** A de-identified summary of the case may be published internally to raise ethical awareness.

Section 6: Reinstatement After Disciplinary Action

Suspended or expelled members may request reinstatement only after the stipulated period (minimum 1 year for expulsion). Such requests must be made in writing to the President and will be reviewed by the Board. Reinstatement is not automatic and requires demonstrated commitment to ethical standards.

Section 7: Updates to This Policy

This handbook may be revised by the VSAI Board to reflect evolving ethical standards and member feedback. Revisions will not apply retroactively to ongoing complaints. Members will be notified of updates.