Canadian Cardiovascular Society | Société cardiovasculaire du Canada

Canadian Cardiovascular Society
Code of Conduct

Approved by the CCS Board of Directors on June 3, 2024

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MISSION STATEMENT & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The vision of the Canadian Cardiovascular Society (CCS) is strong heart teams in a heart-healthy Canada, and the CCS mission is *to advance heart health for all*. We strive to achieve our vision and deliver on our mission through research, education, collaboration, and advocacy. We foster interdisciplinary collaboration among healthcare professionals, promote cardiovascular education and prevention programs, advance innovative research, advocate for policy changes that prioritize cardiovascular health, and empower individuals to take proactive control of their heart health through informed decision-making and lifestyle changes.

We build a community that fosters our guiding principles, which are as follows:

Integrity
We do what we say we're going to do. We finish what we start, hold each other accountable and honour our commitments. We do what's right, even when no one is watching.

Community
We bring people together. We create opportunities for networking, knowledge sharing and collaboration. We build relationships and seize opportunities to work together with others who share a common purpose.

Excellence and Quality
We continuously improve ourselves and what we do. We seek out new and better ways of doing things. We learn from others and embrace change. We see obstacles as opportunities and treat failure as a learning opportunity.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
We believe unique voices and experiences make us stronger. We actively engage the broad range of heart health stakeholders. We provide opportunities for members and others to engage on their terms. We strive to make all members feel included in our community.

Health
We take care of ourselves and each other so we can best serve others. We believe the well-being of the members, staff and the profession is critical to the immediate and long- term sustainability of the organization. We honour the trust members place in CCS by maintaining a financially healthy organization.

Evidence
We make decisions based on facts and data. We think critically and act on evidence. We measure and report on our own outcomes to evaluate our success as we continuously drive improvement.

PURPOSE

The CCS seeks to promulgate a professional association environment that is inclusive and safe for all. We promote excellence, celebrate diversity and inclusion, build trust, and conduct ourselves with honesty and mutual respect, with a determined focus on the mission and values of the organization. We do not tolerate unprofessional behaviours including behaviours that are disrespectful of others. A clear expression of professional conduct is important to support implementation of the CCS values and maintain a strong and reputable presence in the cardiovascular field. A code of conduct serves as a compass for culture and decision-making, ultimately contributing to the organization's success, credibility, and the well-being of those it serves.

APPLICABILITY OF THE CODE of CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct ("The Code") serves as a tool to promote a positive and inclusive environment, and to uphold contemporary professional standards of behavior. It reinforces the integrity of the Society's mission and values.

This Code is prospective in that it articulates expectations for behaviours and culture as of the date of its approval. The Code applies only to the conduct of all members when conducting CCS Business and/or participating in official CCS events and activities[1] or in limited circumstances outside of CCS business as described in the definition of Disreputable Conduct below.

A member whose conduct contravenes this Code may be subject to actions pursuant to the Complaints and Discipline process outlined below.

Note that the conduct of CCS staff is regulated by the Workplace Harassment and Violence Protection Policy.

[1] Official CCS business, events or activities are those that are organized and/or hosted by the CCS. See expanded definition p.5

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

Members of the CCS are expected to comply with this Code and contribute to an environment that builds a foundation of inclusivity and mutual respect. However, it cannot provide rules for every situation. Those who face a situation where the appropriateness of conduct is ambiguous or have questions about the complaint process may obtain further information from the Chairs of the CCS Governance and/or Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committees.

Compliance with this Code ensures that in conducting the business of the CCS, and/or participating in/communicating about CCS events or activities, CCS members will:

1. Maintain respectful communication on all platforms including face-to-face, virtual, email, text and social media;
2. Be professional about the viewpoints of others;
3. Endeavor to be a positive and constructive participant and able to demonstrate/sustain collaborative and collegial professional working relationships.

Complying with these conduct expectations ensures that members of the CCS contribute to an environment that supports the CCS to advance its overall mission.

DEFINITIONS

Clear definitions are crucial for consistency and shared understanding and furthermore set expectations, guide reporting, facilitate enforcement, and promote accountability.

Member:

An individual who holds an active membership in CCS.

Employee:

An individual who is an employee of the CCS, and other service providers, including contractors or agents of the CCS who are deemed to be “employees” only for the purposes of this Code.

Volunteer:

An individual who is not remunerated for the services provided and willingly offers their time, skills, and services to support and assist the CCS in its business/activities/events.

Participant:

An individual who takes part in a CCS-related event or activity including attendees, guests of members, and staff employed by CCS event venues.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

- **Equity:** The principle of considering peoples’ unique experiences and differing contexts, and ensuring they have access to the resources and opportunities that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes. Equity aims to eliminate disparities and disproportions that are rooted in historical and contemporary injustices and oppression.[2]

- **Diversity**: The variety of identities found within an organization, group or society. Diversity is expressed through factors such as culture, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, language, education, ability, family status or socioeconomic status.[1]
- **Inclusion**: The practice of using proactive measures to create an environment where all people feel welcomed, respected, and valued, and to foster a sense of belonging and engagement. This practice can involve changing the environment by removing barriers so that each person has equal access to opportunities and resources and can achieve their full potential.[1]

Disreputable conduct:

Any conduct that may harm CCS, has the potential to undermine the mandate of the CCS or that may harm the reputation of the CCS or its members, volunteers, and employees while on CCS Business as defined in this Code (this may include, but is not limited to disrespectful speech or actions, violence, discrimination, harassment, plagiarism, misuse of CCS resources, misrepresentation and falsifying information or data); or outside of CCS business if a court, authority or regulatory body finds the CCS member has committed a crime of moral turpitude, abused the physician-patient relationship or breached ethics in research.

CCS Business:

Refers to the day-to-day activities of the CCS in which a member may participate, including CCS sanctioned events. CCS Business may be conducted at CCS headquarters, at other locations, or virtually. CCS Business does not include participation in, or attendance at events that are not expressly sanctioned by CCS including events that may follow or flow from expressly sanctioned CCS events.

Violence:

Any form of violence, actual or threatened, including the use of physical force, aggression or harmful behavior that is intended to cause personal injury, duress, and suffering. Examples include:

- Physical abuse
- Attempted physical harm
- Threats of violence
- Sexual assault

[2] Government of Canada (2023, April 4). Resources of the Language Portal of Canada. Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology. Retrieved September 19, 2023, from https://www.noslangues-ourlanguages.gc.ca/en/publications/equite-diversite-inclusion-equity-diversity-inclusion-eng

Discrimination:
The unjust or prejudicial treatment of a person or group of people based on certain characteristics that are outside of their control or that Canadian society has determined should not be detrimental to them. Canadian human rights legislation sets out the following prohibited grounds of discrimination: race, national or ethnic origin, colour, creed (religion), age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability.[1]

Harassment:

Behaviour that is characterized by the recurrence of unpleasant and unwanted acts or comments that are intended to be demeaning, belittling, humiliating, intimidating, or threatening to a person, and that cause them distress. Although harassment usually involves a recurrence of acts or comments, a single serious incident can sometimes be considered as harassment.[1] In addition, intention is determined by what a reasonable person would conclude in the context of the questionable conduct taking into account all of the evidence. Harassment can also be sexual in nature ("sexual harassment") and includes unwanted advances, unwanted touching and proposing workplace/professional benefits to an individual in exchange for sexual favours. Examples include:

- Mocking a colleague
- Unwanted sexual advances or touching
- Inappropriate comments about one's physical appearance or abilities
- Making derogatory or dismissive remarks
- Excluding an individual from an event
- Any conduct that compromises one's ability to feel safe and welcome, or causes one to fear personal safety

Plagiarism:

The act of presenting someone else's work, ideas, or information as one's own, without proper attribution or permission.

Misuse of CCS Resources:

The misuse of CCS resources includes using organizational assets, time, or materials for personal gain, non-authorized activities, or anything that is contrary to the best interests of the CCS.

Misrepresentation:

Any instance where an individual deliberately presents false information or misleads others about their identity, qualifications, or intentions in a way that they may obtain an unfair advantage or that can harm the reputation of the CCS.

Falsifying Information or Data:

This involves deliberately altering or providing inaccurate information or data, especially in the context of research or reports, to deceive or manipulate.

BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

In the event of a perceived breach of the code of conduct, the recommended initial step is for the individual (s) who perceives a breach (i.e., complainant(s)) and/or a trusted colleague in a position of influence (i.e., a third party) who was present for or is familiar with the situation or who has relevant perspective, to address the specific issue directly with the alleged offender (respondent).

A direct conversation between the complainant, the respondent and/or a trusted third party is strongly encouraged.[3] This informal approach aims to foster open communication, enabling parties to clarify misunderstandings and collaboratively resolve the concern to the complainants satisfaction. Complainants may contact the Governance Committee Chair for a suggestion for a neutral third party to hold an informal conversation, if needed. The goal is to raise awareness, encourage a constructive, professional dialogue and achieve resolution before resorting to formal escalation.

When the above is not appropriate or possible, including because the complainant is not comfortable doing so, or informal resolution proves to be ineffective, the complainant may escalate a complaint related to a breach of the Code as follows:

In the event a complainant alleges Disreputable Conduct at a point in time since this Code was launched, the complainant may report this event, in writing, as soon as possible, to the Chair of the CCS Governance Committee, who is the Past President of the CCS.

Upon receipt, the Governance Committee Chair (GCC) will initiate a consultation with the complainant. This initial consultation serves to achieve all the following:

1. Explore whether the conduct being reported could constitute Disreputable Conduct as defined in this Code;
2. Outline the complaint process;
3. Offer pertinent information; and
4. Emphasize how CCS will maintain confidentiality throughout an investigation of the complaint. It should be clear that the reporting individual's confidentiality will be respected as much as possible. However, information will be used and disclosed on a need-to-know basis for the purpose of conducting the investigation, for any legal proceedings and as required by law.

INFORMAL MEDIATED RESOLUTION

Based on the allegations made by the complainant, and at the discretion of the GCC, the GCC (or their delegate) may attempt to mediate a resolution of the conflict. If mediation is pursued, the GCC will address the matter directly with the respondent to seek a resolution. Whether a resolution is possible depends on the agreement of the complainant, respondent and CCS. In reaching a mediated resolution, CCS may impose conditions on the respondent, including, for example, a warning or directives on how to avoid Disreputable Conduct.

[3] This common practice of a "coffee chat" to privately address behavior with the colleague is a hallmark of professionalism, while not having the conversation may imply endorsement of the behavior and may risk its repetition.

INVESTIGATION *Fact finding:*

Matters that are not suitable for mediation or fail to achieve a resolution shall proceed to the fact-finding stage. The GCC shall, with the advice of the CEO, appoint a single investigator to carry out the fact-finding exercise. The investigator may be another member of the Governance Committee or any other individual deemed appropriate by the GCC, including a professional external investigator.

The investigator will initiate the following process:

a. **Interview the Complainant:** After interviewing the complainant, the investigator shall provide the complainant with a written statement summarizing the complaint. The complainant will be given a period of five (5) business days to approve the statement or make clarifications, which timeline may be extended by up to five business days at the sole discretion of the investigator.

b. **Notice to the Respondent:** The respondent(s) will be provided with written notification detailing the alleged Disreputable Conduct. Factual details surrounding the conduct in question will be disclosed to the respondent to ensure that they comprehend the grounds of the complaint and can respond properly.

c. **Interview the Respondent:** After interviewing the respondent, the investigator shall provide the respondent with a written statement summarizing their evidence. The respondent will be given a period of five (5) business days to approve the statement or make clarifications, which timeline may be extended by up to five business days at the sole discretion of the investigator.

d. **Interview the Witnesses:** If any witnesses are identified by either the complainant or respondent, they will be interviewed next. Witnesses shall also be provided with written statements summarizing their evidence in which they will be able to make clarifications for the investigator.

e. **Second Interview(s).** If the respondent raises a fact not covered in the complaint or complainant's interview, the investigator shall review the new information with the complainant. Likewise, the evidence of the witnesses shall be reviewed with the complainant and/or respondent as deemed necessary by the investigator.

f. **Evaluation:** When the evidence is gathered, the investigator shall evaluate the evidence to determine what happened. Part of this process may involve weighing evidence and making findings of credibility.

g. **Report:** The investigator shall draft a report for the Assessment Panel which includes a summary of all of the evidence, how the investigator resolved conflicts in the evidence (including findings of credibility) and the investigator's findings (the Investigator's Report).

ASSESSMENT PANEL

The GCC shall strike a three-member panel to review the Investigator's Report. The Assessment Panel may be composed of the CEO and any members of the Governance Committee. The members of the Assessment Panel shall decide the following:

1. Whether the facts set out in the Investigator's Report constitute Disreputable Conduct as defined in this Policy;
2. Whether the Assessment Panel would benefit from advice from the CCS EDI Committee; and,
3. What consequences, if any, will be imposed on the respondent.

Where the EDI Committee is called upon for advice in a particular matter, the Chair of the EDI Committee shall be provided with a copy of the Investigator's Report and shall answer any questions posed by the Assessment Panel, including advising the Assessment Panel of equity considerations, if any, that should be considered in the deliberations of the Assessment Panel. If the Chair of the EDI Committee has already been involved in the matter (including acting as a resource person for the complainant or respondent), the Chair shall select another member of the EDI Committee to advise the Assessment Panel.

The decision of the Assessment Panel shall be contained in a written Decision, which shall include a high-level summary of the Investigator's factual findings, whether the alleged conduct of the respondent was found to constitute Disreputable Conduct (as defined in this Policy) and any consequences imposed on the respondent as a result. The report shall not contain the identities of any of the participants in the investigation. The complainant and respondent shall be provided with a copy of the Panel's decision.

Decisions can be made by the Assessment Panel on the basis of a simple majority.

REVIEW

Members subject to consequences arising from the decision of an Assessment Panel have the right to request a written review of the Panel's decision (a Review). In a Review, the GCC shall appoint an uninvolved member of the Governance Committee (Reviewer) to conduct the review. The Reviewer shall be provided with a copy of the Investigator's Report and the Assessment Panel's decision. The Reviewer's authority is limited to (1) determining whether the process was fair and (2) whether the decisions of the Assessment Panel were reasonable. The Reviewer shall prepare a brief written decision answering these two questions and shall provide a copy to the complainant, respondent and the Assessment Panel. The decision shall not contain the identities of any of the participants.

If the Reviewer finds the process was unfair, the GCC shall appoint a new investigator to conduct a fresh fact-finding exercise after which the same Assessment Panel shall review the Investigator's Report to determine whether the factual findings have changed. The Assessment Panel may render amended decisions.

If the Reviewer finds that the investigation was fair but that an aspect of the decision of the Assessment Panel was unreasonable, the Reviewer shall provide written reasons on why a decision of the Assessment Panel was unreasonable. The GCC shall have the option to either ask the Assessment Panel to reconsider its decision after taking notice of the Reviewer's decision or the GCC may strike a fresh Assessment Panel to render a new decision. There are no other rights of appeal, review or reconsideration other than as described in this
Code of Conduct.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Criminal proceedings: If the subject matter of a complaint is also being investigated as a criminal offence, CCS shall liaise with police so as not to compromise any such criminal investigation. In some circumstances, CCS's investigation may be delayed until the criminal investigation has been completed.

Above applies to a parallel proceeding. In any case, CCS has the right to investigate the situation and impose consequences.

CONSEQUENCES OF A BREACH

Note: The Code attempts to leave decisions about consequences sufficiently open for situation-specific context to be factored in (similar to other criminal codes) so as not to unduly restrict the Panel in their decision. There may also be some past institutional precedents that could inform decisions and maintain consistency of CCS measures across situations. Legal history suggests situations are each unique and consequences will be equally unique. The Panel will be guided by legal advice/guidance in these serious situations.

In cases where a respondent's actions are deemed to constitute Disreputable Conduct, the CCS reserves the right to enforce one or more of the following sanctions:

- Formal written reprimand noting the breach of CCS's Code of Conduct and that further breaches will result in more serious consequences.
- Immediate suspension from participating in the implicated CCS business activity for the duration of that activity.
- Immediate suspension from participating in CCS events and activities for 1-5 years, without membership fee reimbursement.
- Immediate suspension from participating on CCS committees for 1-5 years.
- Immediate suspension from being a member of the CCS for 1-5 years.
- Exclusion from being nominated for consideration of CCS awards for 1-5 years.

- Exclusion from being a contributing writer to CCS guidelines for 1-5 years.
- Permanent expulsion from the CCS with no future opportunities to be involved as a member or employee of the CCS, and where appropriate, with a formal letter written to their home academic institution.

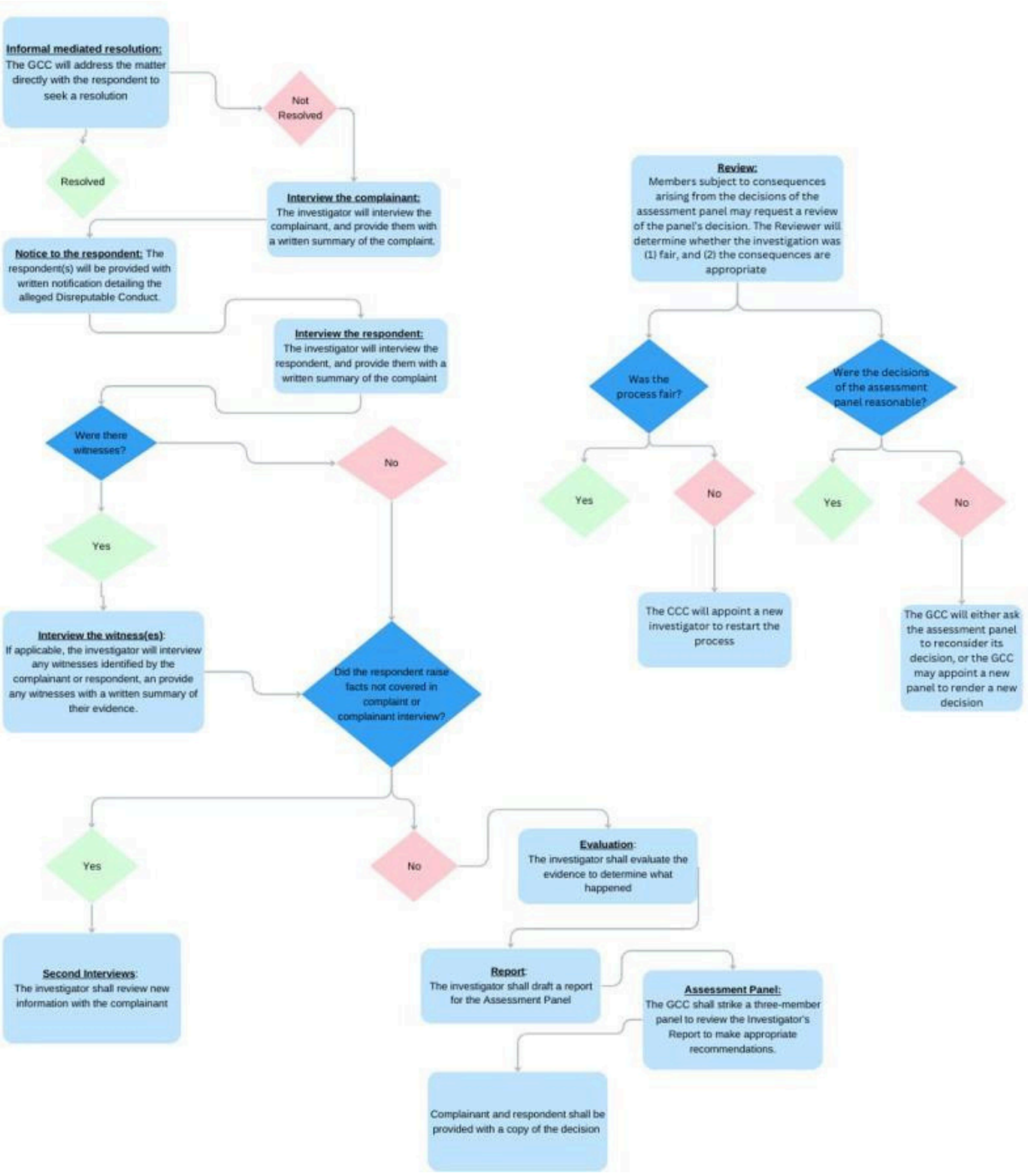
Sanctions vary when there has been a breach of the Code based on numerous factors related to the severity of the breach and the harm caused. The review panel may impose additional sanctions as they determine appropriate. In consequences containing suspension or exclusion, the review panel reserves the sole discretion to determine the duration of suspension or exclusion. In the event an individual(s) has more than one complaint against them, an escalating approach to consequences will be pursued at the Review Panel's discretion. If an individual(s) is found to be in breach of the code for three (or more) complaints, they will be permanently barred from involvement in the CCS and its business.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

In the event any of the individuals occupying the positions referenced above having a conflict of interest, an alternate individual shall be substituted at the discretion of the other members of the investigation team or the Board. In particular, if the Governance Committee Chair is implicated in breach of the Code or is in a conflicted position with the complainant or the individual(s) implicated in the alleged breach of conduct, a complainant is directed to contact the office of the CCS President and/or the CEO who will determine next steps.

CCS KNOWLEDGE

Recognizing that decisions can only be made by well-informed members, the Governance Committee and EDI Committee Chairs will:

1. Take EDI-Indigenous Reconciliation training prior to taking on the role of Chair or commit to taking/have taken such training within 3 months of starting in the role of Chair. This can be coordinated/supported by the CCS.
2. Be familiar with and indicate commitment to upholding CCS values, mission and the Code of Conduct
3. Maintain an understanding of the professional, social, and political environments within which the CCS operates in conducting its business.

APPENDIX: DRAFT Process Flow Chart