

Standards Investigation Panel Members – Job Description – Editorial member

IPSO is the independent regulator of most newspapers, magazines and digital news in the UK. Its purpose is to uphold the highest editorial standards to protect the public and freedom of expression.

Alongside IPSO's work handling complaints about individual standards breaches, IPSO also has the power to conduct a standards investigation where it considers that there may have been serious and systemic breaches of the Editors' Code.

In an instance where IPSO's Board decided to initiate a standards investigation, three standards investigators would be chosen from a pool to oversee the investigation and to report their findings back to the Board.

About standards investigations

IPSO can undertake a standards investigation to investigate where it has serious concerns about the behaviour or actions of one, or more, of its members.

IPSO's Board makes the decision about whether to launch a standards investigation after looking at information gathered by staff on complaints, the whistleblowing service and members of the public.

IPSO may require that a standards investigation takes place in one or more of the following circumstances:

- Where IPSO reasonably considers that there may have been serious and systemic breaches of the Editors' Code of Practice;
- Where there has been at least one failure to comply with the requirements of the Board;
- In exceptional circumstances, where IPSO reasonably considers that an investigation is desirable because substantial legal issues or Editors' Code compliance issues are raised about the practices of a publisher or publishers;
- Where an annual statement identifies significant concerns, either in relation to a single incident, a publisher's compliance processes or a pattern of significant, serial or widespread breaches of the Editors' Code;
- Where, on analysis of statutory authority reports into press standards, in the view of IPSO there have been substantial Editors' Code compliance issues identified at one or more publisher.

Role of the panellists

Panel members, reporting to the IPSO Board, carry out a number of tasks as part of their investigation, which include:

- Working to Terms of Reference drawn up by IPSO's Board, developing and agreeing a plan for undertaking the investigation;
- Undertaking appropriate activities to investigate the matters identified in the Terms of Reference, which could include (for example) reviewing relevant documentation held by IPSO; identifying and obtaining relevant documentation held by third parties; and undertaking interviews with representatives of the publisher(s) under investigation or third parties with information relevant to the outcome;
- Reaching conclusions on the outcomes of the investigation and detailing the contents in an investigation report.

The investigation panel will work as a panel of three. Two members of the panel will be independent (meaning they have no connections to the news industry), whilst the third member will have experience in a senior position within the digital or print news industry (but may not be a currently serving editor).

Required skills

- An understanding of and interest in the principles and/or practice of regulation.
- An awareness of the media landscape, including national and regional newspapers, magazines, and digital news and of the changes taking place in the media environment.
- An understanding of the principles underlying good governance.
- Excellent analytical skills, including the ability to assimilate large quantities of detailed and technical information and to analyse, question, understand and objectively assess complex arguments.
- An understanding of the importance of confidentiality and an ability to follow safeguards in place to avoid breaches of confidentiality.
- A high level of interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to interview witnesses who may be vulnerable.
- Integrity and independence of mind.
- The ability to work effectively with other members of the panel.

Editorial panellists required skills

- Recent senior editorial experience at one or more of the different types of publishers that IPSO regulates (tabloid and broadsheet national newspapers; local newspapers; magazines; and Scottish newspapers).

Examples of skills which may be relevant

- Experience of leading investigations.
- Senior legal experience.

- Experience of participating in tribunals.
- Experience in audit or finance, and familiarity with accounting principles.
- Expertise in regulation and regulatory issues, either gained through direct experience at another regulator, or experience of a highly regulated industry.

It is not possible to serve as a panel member if you are:

- a serving editor of a title that IPSO does or could regulate;
- a member of the Editors' Code of Practice Committee;
- a member of IPSO's Board; or
- connected to the Regulatory Funding Company.

Panel members must declare past or present interests that could reasonably be thought to cast doubt on their independence or impartiality in the role.