

## GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

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### 1. Introduction

The College fosters a culture in which you can raise any workplace problems, complaints, or concerns in a supportive framework and where all genuine grievances are dealt with quickly and fairly.

The aim of this Grievance Procedure is to provide College employees access to a process where workplace problems, complaints or concerns can be raised in confidence and considered with sensitivity and outlines the roles of those involved and the support that is available to you.

It should be emphasised that the principles of good faith, confidentiality, fairness, representation, and equal opportunities should continue to guide all parties involved in the grievance process at all times.

The Procedure has been written in accordance with and after consideration of current ACAS and Methodist Church guidance. It does not form part of an employee's terms and conditions of employment and the Executive Committee reserves the right to change this policy at their discretion, at any time.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to employees of the College.

It does not apply to contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation.

Similarly, grievances relating to and raised against Ministers and Deacons should not use this process unless the Minister or Deacon is employed via a traditional contract of employment.

If you have a grievance that relates to ongoing disciplinary proceedings against you, you should raise this during the disciplinary procedure (for example during the disciplinary meeting or appeal stage).

If you raise a grievance during disciplinary proceedings that is unrelated to those proceedings, the disciplinary proceedings and grievance procedure will normally run independently in parallel.

### **3. Mediation**

Depending on the nature of your grievance, we may suggest mediation as a means of trying to resolve it. This involves the appointment of a third-party mediator, who will discuss your grievance with all of those involved and seek to facilitate a resolution.

We will use mediation only where you, and the other parties involved in your grievance, agree to do so.

### **4. Fairness and Respect**

We recognise that a grievance procedure can be stressful and upsetting. Everyone involved in the process is entitled to be treated calmly and with respect.

We will not tolerate abusive or insulting behaviour from anyone taking part in a grievance procedure and will treat any such behaviour as misconduct under our disciplinary procedure.

### **5. Remote Proceedings**

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting under this procedure, we will conduct the process remotely. We will ensure that all those participating have access to the necessary technology. Your rights will not be affected, and we will ensure that the procedure remains fair and reasonable.

### **6. Adjustments to Proceedings**

If any aspect of the grievance procedure causes you difficulty because of a disability, or if you need assistance because English is not your first language, you should raise this with Human Resources, who will make appropriate arrangements for you.

### **7. Recording of Meetings**

A written record of all meetings conducted under this procedure will be made, either by the person holding the meeting or by an additional person arranged by us to take notes.

You, or any person acting with you or on your behalf, are not normally permitted to record electronically any meeting that we hold under the grievance procedure. This is to encourage openness and full participation. Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.

In certain limited circumstances, we may permit a meeting to be recorded electronically, for example where it is a reasonable adjustment for an employee with a disability. Where we permit a meeting to be recorded electronically, we will take responsibility for making the recording.

Where we intend to record meetings held remotely, we will comply with our data protection obligations and obtain prior consent from all attendees.

## 8. Raising an Informal Grievance

In the first instance, you should raise any grievance that you may have informally with your Line Manager. If your grievance is about your Line Manager, you should raise this with a more senior manager.

The relevant manager will meet with you to give you the opportunity to explain your grievance and seek to identify whether the issue can be resolved informally. Many concerns can be resolved informally.

However, while we encourage the informal resolution of complaints, we recognise that this is not always possible or appropriate, for example if your grievance relates to a serious issue such as discrimination. Therefore, if the informal process does not resolve matters or is not appropriate, you should raise a formal grievance under this procedure.

## 9. Raising a Formal Grievance

Where your grievance has not been resolved informally, or if your grievance is serious in nature, you should raise the matter formally in writing.

It is important that you set out clearly the nature of your grievance and indicate the outcome that you are seeking. If your grievance is unclear, we may ask you to clarify your complaint before we hold a grievance meeting.

Your complaint should be headed "Formal grievance" and sent to your Line Manager. If your complaint relates to your Line Manager, you should send your written grievance to a more senior manager instead.

## 10. Stages of the Process

### Stage 1 - Investigation

Your grievance will be kept confidential as far as possible.

However, before proceeding to a grievance meeting, we may have to carry out an investigation. This will usually be conducted by the same manager who will hear your grievance. The relevant manager will write to you confirming that they are conducting the investigation and the timescale for completion.

The level of investigation and time this will take will vary depending on the nature of your grievance. You will be given a copy of any evidence collated during the investigation in advance of the grievance meeting. However, in some cases, the evidence given by individuals may have to remain confidential. Where confidentiality is necessary, we will provide you with an appropriate summary of the evidence.

### Stage 2 - Hearing your grievance

#### *The grievance meeting*

The grievance meeting will be held within seven working days of receiving your written complaint. If this is not possible, you will be informed of the reason for any delay. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official.

The grievance meeting will be conducted by your Line Manager unless your grievance relates to your Line Manager in which case it will be conducted by a more senior manager. Where it is considered appropriate, our external human resources partner may be in attendance.

The purpose of the meeting is for you to explain the nature of your complaint and what action you feel should be taken to resolve the matter. If more information comes to light, it may be necessary to adjourn the grievance meeting to conduct a further investigation and reconvene when this has been done.

If you are unable to attend the meeting because of circumstances beyond your control, you should inform the manager conducting the meeting as soon as possible. If you fail to attend without explanation, or if it appears that you have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the grievance meeting may take place in your absence, based on your written grievance statement and any other documentation available.

#### *The outcome*

Following the meeting, the relevant manager will inform you in writing of the outcome and any action that will be taken as a result of your complaint. This will usually be within seven working days after the meeting.

## **11. Making an Appeal**

### Stage 3 - Appeal

#### *Appealing against the outcome*

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your grievance, you may submit a formal appeal.

You should appeal in writing to the manager who heard your grievance within seven working days of receipt of the grievance outcome letter.

Your letter should clearly state the grounds of your appeal, i.e., the basis on which you consider that your grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved.

#### *Appeal meeting*

We will then arrange an appeal meeting within seven working days to consider the matter. However, if this is not possible, you will be informed of the reason for any delay.

You are entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official.

The appeal meeting will be conducted by a more senior manager than the manager who conducted the original grievance meeting, who will consider your grounds for appeal and review the conclusion reached in the original grievance meeting. Where it is considered appropriate, our external human resources partner may be in attendance.

If you are unable to attend the appeal meeting because of circumstances beyond your control, you should inform the manager conducting the meeting as soon as possible. If you fail to attend without explanation, or if it appears that you have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the meeting may take place in your absence, based on your written grievance statement and any other supporting documentation available.

#### *Outcome of appeal*

Following the appeal meeting, the relevant manager will inform you in writing, usually within seven working days, of the outcome. The outcome of the appeal is final.

## **12. Data Protection**

We process personal data collected during informal complaints and the formal grievance procedure in accordance with our data protection policy. In particular, data collected as part of informal complaints and the grievance procedure is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of responding to the complaints or conducting the grievance procedure.

You should immediately report any inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data in accordance with our data protection policy as this constitutes a data protection breach. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which we will deal with under our disciplinary procedure.