The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Tool

FACT SHEET 6
If you are the Respondent and an Office Holder

(Regulation 5.3)

Purpose of the Process

- To address concerns about your conduct as an office holder fairly, pastorally and confidentially, with a view to restoring affected relationships and helping you fulfil the office to which you have been appointed.

Who handles the complaint against me?

- At first instance, all complaints are to be made to the Queensland Synod's Complaints Officer following email: complaints@ucaqld.com.au
- The complaint will, in the vast majority of cases, be referred to the appointing body for the office you hold. It may be your complaint is dealt with under another Synod Policy, Procedure or process. You will be informed about how your complaint is being dealt with.
- If the complaint involves a number of office holders with more than one appointing body, the complaint may be dealt with by the entity best placed to deal with it.
- The Complaints Officer may refer your complaint to the Moderator, ex-Moderator, Moderator-Elect or Secretary to determine which entity is best placed to deal with it.
- If you are also a Ministry Agent and the complaint is, or becomes, a CFD complaint, the matter may be referred to the Moderator who will decide how the complaint is to be further dealt with.

What can I expect?

- The complaint process must be conducted confidentially, subject to the Regulations.
- You should be given sufficient information about the complaint to know what is alleged.
- You should be given an opportunity and sufficient time to prepare and present a response.
- You may be offered pastoral, spiritual or financial support if within the resources of the Appointing Body.
- The appointing body should seek to deal with the complaint through visitation, pastoral counselling or guidance.
- You may have a support person, noting that a support person provides emotional support only and does not represent you.

What are the possible outcomes?

- The complaint will be dealt with in a fair and transparent manner.
- You may be helped to discern and fulfil your office, nurture your gifts, and receive encouragement and guidance to enrich your office.
- You may be advised, guided and supported where advice, guidance or support is required.
- The matter may be referred to alternative dispute resolution.

- You may be encouraged to observe any applicable Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice or Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders, where relevant and appropriate.
- You may be removed or suspended from office, or conditions may be imposed on the performance of your office.
- A written comment may be made in a report to the relevant Presbytery, or, if you are a lay person, the relevant Church Council.

What are my rights to appeal?

- You may appeal a determination made by the appointing body only on the ground that the appointing body acted contrary to procedural fairness.
- What if I have concerns with the process?
    - If you have concerns with the process as it is taking place, you should raise those concerns with the person or body handling the matter.
    - If your concern relates to the person or body handling the matter having a conflict of interest or being biased or some other concern → fill out the Form (located on the Hub) – *"Concerns about a Conflict of Interest / Bias / Other"* and send that Form to the Synod's Complaints Officer.

Related documents

Assembly's Member or Adherent – Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Complaints Policy

Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders

Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice

Form – Tool – Concerns about a Conflict of Interest / Bias / Other

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Adherent	means a person not being a member but recognised as sharing in the life of the Congregation and within the pastoral responsibility of the Church.
Appointing body	is a reference to the Church entity that has appointed a person to hold a particular Office, such as: (a) an Elder who is appointed by the Congregation; (b) a member of Presbytery who holds the office of Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer as appointed by the Presbytery (Regulation 3.6.2); (c) the Moderator who is elected by Synod (Regulation 3.6.3.1); (d) the Secretary of the Synod who is appointed by Synod (Regulation 3.6.3.3); (e) the President of the Assembly (Regulation 3.6.4.1); (f) the General Secretary of the Assembly (Regulation 3.6.4.4); and

Term	Meaning
	(g) any person appointed to any other body as referred to in Part 3.7 of the Regulations; but does not include a member of a Church Council.
Appointment	when used in reference to a person being appointed to an office, includes electing a person to an office.
Bias	is determined by considering whether a fair-minded person who is informed of the relevant facts might reasonably apprehend that the decision-maker might not bring an impartial and unprejudiced mind to the resolution of the matter.
CFD	means the Committee for Discipline
CFD Complaint	means a complaint against a Minister: (a) that is being dealt with under Part 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 or 5.6 and that alleges conduct as referred to in Regulation 5.7.2(a) to (e); and (b) in respect of which a responsible entity at any time while dealing with the complaint under this Part 5 forms an opinion that the allegations, if they were to be substantiated in any future proceedings of the Committee for Discipline under Part 5.7, may warrant the Committee for Discipline determining that the Minister's recognition as a Minister of the Church be withdrawn
Complainant	means a member, adherent or Minister who is making a complaint.
Complaint	means a written complaint made by a Complainant: (a) against a member or adherent; (b) against an office holder; or (c) against a Minister describing, in each case, the conduct complained of.
Conflict of Interest	generally refers to an actual, potential or perceived conflict arising from the facts. Such conflicts can come in many forms, but the more common types of conflicts arise from personal, financial or relational interests infecting the impartiality of the decision-maker.
Member	means a baptised member, confirmed member, and a member-in-association.
Ministry Agent	means a Minister as referred to in the Code of Ethics (i.e. Candidates, Community Ministers, Deacons, Deaconesses, Interns, Lay Pastors,

Term	Meaning
	Ministers of the Word, Pastors, Youth Workers and Ministers from another denomination serving in an approved placement), and includes a Synod Secretary, Moderator, Assembly General Secretary, President, and Presbytery Minister.
Procedural Fairness	includes ensuring: (a) the Respondent is given sufficient information regarding the complaint to know what is being alleged; (b) the Respondent is given the opportunity and sufficient time to prepare and present a response; (c) no person who is closely associated with the Complainant or Respondent deals with the complaint; and (d) the entity that deals with the complaint remains impartial.
Respondent	means the member, adherent, office holder or Minister against whom a complaint has been made.
Support person	means a person not otherwise involved in the complaint process who only provides emotional support to a Complainant, Respondent, or a witness. Note: A support person does not have a right to be heard in the complaint and disciplinary process and is not permitted to represent a party.

Revisions

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