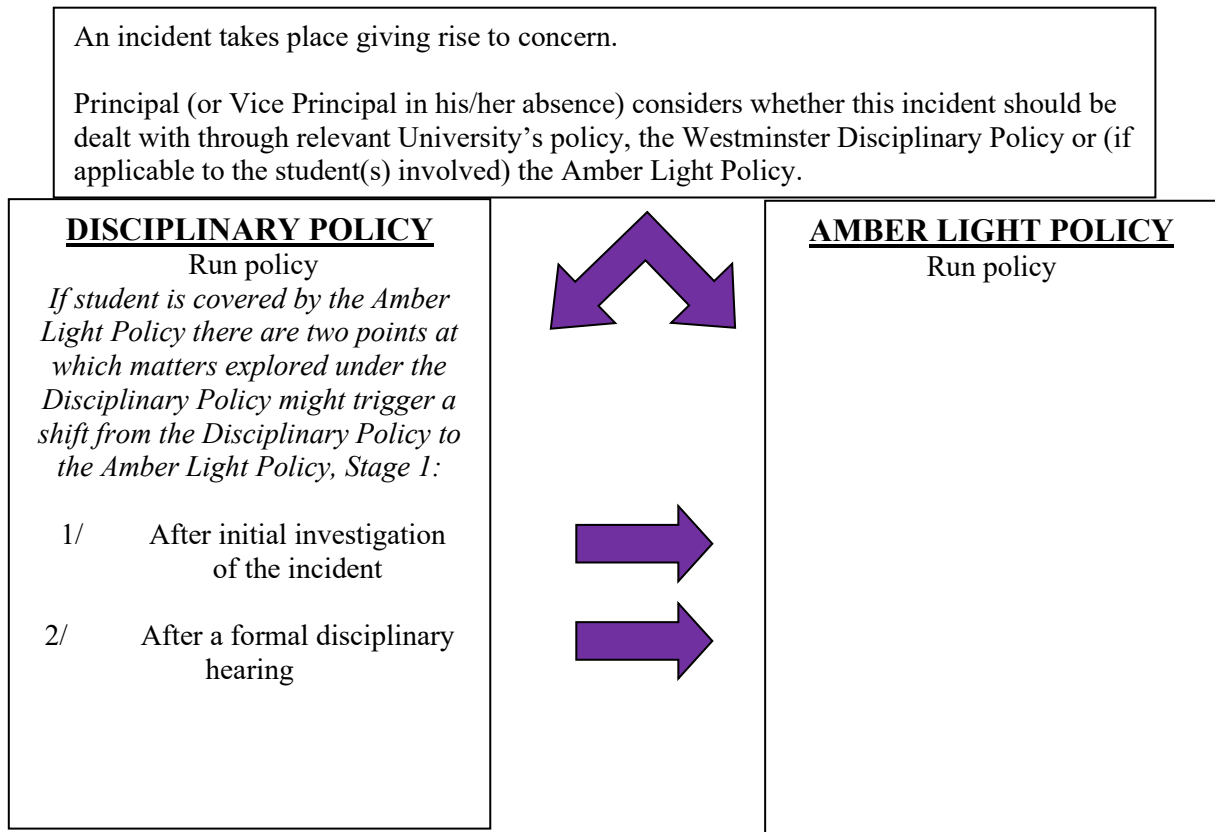


Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

1. Who the policy applies to and how it relates to the Amber Light Policy

This policy and procedure applies to all students at Westminster College. Students undertaking a university course at Westminster College will also come under the relevant policies of their awarding university. These university policies are available from the relevant university and/or from the Cambridge Theological Federation. In enacting this policy an initial decision will need to be taken by the Principal/Vice Principal as to whether a disciplinary matter is to be pursued through this Westminster Disciplinary Policy or the relevant university policy.

For students sent by the URC for ordination training this policy applies in circumstances where the Amber Light Policy is deemed not to apply. Denominations sponsoring other students at Westminster can agree to have the Amber Light Policy applied to their students. This Disciplinary Policy applies to such students in circumstances where the Amber Light Policy is deemed not to apply. For any students who are included in the Amber Light Policy the following diagram illustrates the points at which decisions might be taken to move from the Disciplinary Policy to the Amber Light Policy if this was deemed appropriate:



2. Why the policy is needed

2.1 It is expected that all students at Westminster will behave with grace, kindness, and courtesy and will be committed to creating and sustaining a just and peaceful community. Any action which significantly breaches the good order, discipline and peace of the community shall be described as either misconduct or gross misconduct; and any student alleged to have committed a disciplinary offence may be subject to this disciplinary procedure. Examples of misconduct and gross misconduct are given at section 7 of this document. The purpose of this policy is to restore relationships, help a student improve her/his behaviour, and to enable all concerned to move forward positively and graciously. In extreme cases this policy may lead to a student's relationship with Westminster being terminated.

- 2.2 Where disciplinary policies of any of the relevant Universities have been activated with regard to a student from Westminster those university procedures would need to be completed before a decision was taken by the Principal/Vice Principal, in consultation with teaching staff colleagues, as to whether or not either this Disciplinary Policy, or the Amber Light Policy, needed to be activated consequently.
- 2.3 This Disciplinary Policy must be activated within three months from when the incident (or latest occurrence of the incident) first came to light. This time limit only relates to this Westminster Student Disciplinary Policy; the practice for other relevant university and denominational policies may differ.

3. The policy principles

- 3.1 Any failure by a student to meet expected standards of behaviour is, in the first instance, a pastoral issue. Some matters would normally and naturally be dealt with in informal conversation between student and tutor, and would go no further. Where appropriate a student might be offered further support and/or access to counselling.
- 3.2 However, in some cases, the Principal/Vice Principal, on the basis of what s/he has been told or witnessed, might judge that this disciplinary procedure should be initiated.
- 3.3 A student shall have the right to appeal at the appropriate stage of the disciplinary procedure. Such an appeal would be lodged by using the Westminster College Student's Appeal Policy
- 3.4 The Principal/Vice Principal will ensure that the student is offered pastoral support whilst under the disciplinary policy.
- 3.5 A student has the right to be accompanied by a fellow student or other individual offering pastoral support at any stage of the disciplinary procedure. Such pastoral support could be offered by a Trade Union representative if the student belongs to a Trade Union.

4. The definition of terms used in the document

4.1 *Amber Light Policy:*

The policy of the URC's Assessment Board, employed across all of the colleges at which ministers receive training, when there are serious concerns about a student's progress towards ministry.

4.2 *Principal/Vice Principal:*

Normally this disciplinary policy will be activated by the Principal. It can, however, be activated by the Vice Principal in the Principal's absence.

4.3 *Student file:*

The Westminster College hard copy file held on each student.

5. How the policy will be applied

The disciplinary procedure may encompass the following stages:

[A] When a matter which may require discipline is brought to the notice of the Principal/Vice Principal s/he, normally with the student's tutor, will meet with the student to inform the student of the alleged misconduct/gross misconduct. The Principal/Vice Principal will ensure that the student concerned has a copy of this disciplinary policy.

[B] The Principal/Vice Principal will conduct an initial enquiry to ascertain the gravity of the allegation and any information that may substantiate it. This involves the collection of facts including a statement from the student(s) concerned to be taken at a meeting with the Principal/Vice Principal. It may also be necessary to take statements from any witnesses.

This initial meeting and enquiry shall be concluded within 7 days of the matter being brought to the notice of the Principal/Vice Principal, unless specific circumstances make this impossible.

[C] The Principal/Vice Principal, having to the best of his/her ability established the facts of the case, may conclude that misconduct/gross misconduct has not taken place. In this case no further action would be taken and nothing would be recorded in the student(s) file(s).

[D] If the Principal/Vice Principal believes that there is a case to answer s/he may:

[D.1] Pursue matters through the policies of the relevant University, or

[D.2] Pursue matters through the Informal or the Formal Procedure set out below, or

[D.3] Activate the Amber Light Policy (if it applies)

5.1 The Informal Disciplinary Procedure

5.1.1 The student may be issued with an informal warning. This would be issued at a meeting with the student's tutor. An informal warning may be accompanied by an action plan. If an action plan is considered appropriate, this should be signed by all concerned (including the student) and then progress reviewed over a specified time. Opportunities for improvement and issues of repentance and forgiveness should be explored as part of the conversation. An action plan may include: agreement to demonstrate repentance and a desire to make a new beginning; a requirement to do something in reparation for the offence: a specific piece of reflective writing; the demonstration of changed patterns of behaviour over time.

5.1.2 Both the informal warning and (where applicable) the action plan will be recorded and the record placed in the student's file. A record of an informal warning (with or without an action plan) shall be deleted six months after it is issued unless the student's behaviour has given any further cause for concern.

5.1.3 If there are further concerns about a student's behaviour, or if a student fails to abide by an agreed action plan, the Principal/Vice Principal may consult with the Convenor of the Board of Studies to decide if it is appropriate to move to the formal disciplinary procedure described below.

5.2 The Formal Disciplinary Procedure

5.2.1 The Principal/Vice Principal may recommend to the Convenor of the Board of Studies that a formal disciplinary procedure should be initiated.

5.2.2 If the Convenor of the Board of Studies agrees with this recommendation, s/he shall set up a Panel consisting of three people, drawn from among those who serve on the College's three committees; Governors, Board of Studies and the Management Committee (but not including the Convenor of Governors, or the Secretary for Education and Learning of the URC). Both genders shall be represented on the Panel, and, if appropriate, there should be a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) representative. If, for any reason, the Convenor of the Board of Studies is unable to find an appropriately balanced Panel from within those committees, then s/he has power to co-opt from outside those committees.

5.2.3 The student shall be given at least seven days' notice of the date and time that the Panel will meet and will be informed in writing of the reasons why it is to take place.

5.2.4 ***N.B. If the Police are involved in investigating matters associated with the alleged disciplinary offence(s) or the offences relate to matters before the courts or under consideration by a prosecuting authority, then the panel hearing the matter shall adjourn the hearing until all legal processes are completed. The student may be suspended from membership of the college during the time of the adjournment.***

5.2.5 The Panel, in hearing a case, shall have regard to the rules of natural justice. The student shall be given opportunity to present a written statement, to be heard at the Panel, and to be accompanied by a fellow student or other individual offering pastoral support. Any person accompanying a student can be invited to speak at the discretion of the Convenor of the Panel. All Panel members, the student, and anyone they have chosen to

accompany them, will be given any papers relating to the meeting of the Panel at least 48 hours before the hearing takes place.

5.2.6 The Panel shall first decide whether or not the alleged disciplinary offence(s) is/are proven. If they consider that one or more offence is proven, they may decide:

1. *To conclude the matter without taking any formal action*
2. *To ask the Principal to take the informal procedure (see above), including the agreement of an action plan and the placing of such a plan on the student's file*
3. *To issue a formal warning which may attach conditions for the student's continued participation in the college (and which would be placed in the student's file for 12 months, after which it would be removed)*
4. *To exclude the student for a fixed period or until necessary conditions are satisfied (this may be combined with either 2 or 3 above).*
5. *To activate Stage 1 of the Amber Light Policy (if it applies)*
6. *To terminate a student's relationship with the college in the case of a student to whom the Amber Light Policy does not apply.*

5.2.7 The decision of the Panel, together with a statement of reasons, shall be conveyed verbally to the student and shall also be provided in written form as soon as possible, but in any event within 5 working days. The student will also be made aware of his or her right to appeal (to the Clerk of Westminster College Governors) against the outcome of the hearing.

5.2.8 Where decisions of the Panel will have an impact upon a student's participation in an academic award and/or the classes and other activities of the Cambridge Theological Federation (CTF) the relevant university and/or CTF authorities will be consulted and informed. The student will be informed of the extent of any wider consequences in terms of academic awards and/or within the life of the CTF in written form within 5 working days of the decision of the Panel.

6. Appeals

The student may appeal against the decision of the Panel, but must do so within 10 working days of being notified of the decision. Appeals can only be made on the grounds of procedure, and students are referred to the Westminster Student Appeal Policy. An appeal shall be notified in writing to the Clerk to the Governors. The Appeal Committee shall normally be chaired by the Convenor of Governors. The decision of the Appeal Committee shall be final.

7. Suspension

NB. Suspension is not a form of disciplinary action and may not be used or regarded as such.

7.1 Suspension may be ordered at the discretion of the Principal/Vice Principal (in consultation with the other members of teaching staff) and may take place at any stage of the process. Where an allegation is of serious misconduct, or if there is any other urgent reason, the Principal/Vice Principal may suspend the student for the duration of the disciplinary procedure. Any suspension shall be reported at once to the Convenor of the Board of Studies.

7.2 Suspension is usually appropriate when dealing with difficult or potentially inflammatory situations or where a student's presence in college may hamper an investigation.

7.3 Suspension will be confirmed in writing to the student by the Principal/Vice Principal as soon as possible.

7.4 Suspension may include suspension from an academic award and/or Cambridge Theological Federation (CTF) classes and activities, subject to appropriate consultation with the relevant university and/or CTF staff.

- 7.5 **Examples of misconduct:**
The following non-exhaustive list gives examples of offences that the College will normally regard as misconduct:
- persistent lateness or absenteeism
 - recurring errors relating to life within the college community
 - failure to carry out lawful, reasonable and safe instructions
 - damage to college property
 - rudeness
 - conduct which is injurious to the well-being of the College community
- 7.6 **Examples of gross misconduct:**
The following non-exhaustive list gives examples of offences that the College will normally regard as gross misconduct:
- acts of dishonesty, including theft, fraud such as deliberate falsification of information
 - deliberate disregard of the college's safety precautions
 - failure to comply with rules imposed by health and safety legislation
 - bullying of an individual
 - harassment of an individual
 - malicious or deliberate discrimination against students or staff on the grounds of, but not limited to, sex, race, colour, creed, sexuality or disability
 - abuse of authority
 - substance or alcohol abuse
 - violent, abusive, physical or verbal behaviour
 - abuse of the college's computer systems e.g. e-mail
 - deliberate disclosure of confidential information
 - conduct likely to bring the College's name into disrepute
- 8. Responsibility for administering and updating the policy**
The Principal is responsible for updating this policy in consultation with the Convenor of the Board of Studies and seeking advice from United Reformed Church Human Resources Department as necessary.
- 9. When it was last revised, when it will next be revised**
August 2024
August 2027
- 10. The date from which it applies**
May 2014
- 11. Statutory regulations and good practice guidance**
Section not used