

Student's Appeal Policy and Procedure

1. Who the policy applies to

- 1.1 This policy and procedure applies to all students of Westminster College, whether or not sent by the United Reformed Church.
- 1.2 *(It should be noted that the Cambridge Theological Federation (CTF) has its own Complaints Procedure which should be used in relation to Federation staff or supervisors outside Westminster. Attention is also drawn to the policies on student appeals, including examination appeals, prepared by the universities whose degrees Westminster students may be enrolled upon. The Principal (or in his/her absence the Vice Principal) in consultation with Westminster and/or CTF teaching and award administration staff will identify if a CTF or university policy should be a route for dealing with a grievance, or if the matter should be handled through this Westminster Student Grievance Policy and Procedure).*

2. Why the policy is needed

Westminster College recognises the need for good practice and natural justice when resolving student complaints against decisions that might affect a student's progress. This Student's Appeal Policy is specifically available to deal with appeals arising from cases brought under the Westminster College Student Disciplinary Policy or, in the case of those students covered by it, cases brought under the initial stages of the Amber Light Policy as indicated by that policy. The college will make every effort to deal with appeals with care.

3. The policy principles

- 3.1 The aim of this Appeal Policy and Procedure is to settle appeals fairly, swiftly and as near as possible to the source of the decision or process being appealed.
- 3.2 Details of local URC ministers with experience of Westminster, who are available for pastoral support from outside the college, are available on request to the Principal (or in his/her absence the Vice Principal). S/he would not normally be involved in any formal appeal procedure, but would remain outside such procedures in order to offer pastoral support.
- 3.3 The student has the right to be accompanied by a fellow student or other individual offering pastoral support. Such pastoral support could be offered by a Trade Union representative if the student belongs to a Trade Union.
- 3.4 Any appeal under this policy must be notified to the Clerk to the Governors of Westminster College within 10 days of an individual being informed of a decision against which they wish to appeal.

4. The definition of terms used in the document

Governors' Appeal Panel:

The panel established by the Board of Governors of Westminster College to hear a specific student appeal against a decision or process covered by either the Westminster College Student Disciplinary Policy or, where applicable, the Westminster Amber Light Policy (Stage 1).

Student Body:

All EM1 students elect students to represent the council to serve as Senior Student, Chapel Clerk, and Social secretary.

5. How the policy will be applied

5.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be respected, as far as the law permits. The person with whom an appeal is lodged should make clear to a student lodging an appeal if it is going to be necessary for the matter not to remain confidential. Students should also understand that in some circumstances a demand for confidentiality may make it difficult for the college to assist with their grievance.

5.2 The Formal Procedure

5.2.1 Where a student is appealing against a decision or formal process of the Westminster Student Disciplinary Policy or, if applicable, the Amber Light Policy (Stage 1) a student may bring an appeal to the Governors. A letter setting out details of the appeal should be addressed to the Clerk of the Governors. The Clerk may ask a student lodging an appeal to set out in writing further details, making clear the exact nature of the appeal.

5.2.2 On receipt of a formal appeal the Governors will normally take preliminary advice from the Principal (except in cases where the Principal might be the subject of the appeal) and, where appropriate, may then appoint a Panel to consider the issues in detail. The Governors are likely to establish a panel where they believe that there is substance to the appeal. The Panel hearing the appeal will normally consist of three members of the Board of Governors, one of whom will act as Chair. The members of the Panel should not have been involved in the process about which the appeal is being made. The Clerk to the Governors normally serves to administer and clerk the process.

5.3 Detailed Procedure of a Governors' Appeal Panel

5.3.1 The procedure of a Governors' Appeal Panel will be as informal as possible, consistent with a proper consideration of the issues. The Clerk of the Board of Governors will act as clerk to the panel and may be contacted by the student bringing the appeal for information and advice on procedures.

5.3.2 The responsibility for presenting witness statements or for calling witnesses to attend will lie with the person lodging the appeal and those responding to an appeal. Requests for additional material may arise when the initial documentation has been received and either party should have the right to submit further documents that may not have been available when the initial documentation was prepared. Both the student and anyone who is the focus of the appeal will be entitled to see all statements and documents seen by the Panel at least 48 hours before the Panel meets.

5.3.3 The student is entitled to be present at hearings of the Panel and to be accompanied by a friend or representative, who may speak at the invitation of the Chair of the Panel. If an appeal is being made against a particular person he or she is also entitled to attend hearings, see documents and to be accompanied by a friend or representative, who may speak at the invitation of the Chair of the Panel.

5.3.4 The questioning, either by the student lodging the appeal or by anyone from the college, should be limited to one hour (this period not to include questions raised by members of the Panel).

5.3.5 The order of any hearing will be at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel. The Panel may ask questions of anyone present. The student will be given a full opportunity to state his or her case, as will any against whom an appeal has been lodged. The clerk to the Panel will keep a careful record of the Panel's discussion, as well as a clear record of any decision.

5.3.6 The findings of the Panel will be communicated verbally to the student concerned and to anyone who is the subject of the appeal, as soon as possible. They will in all cases be communicated in writing as soon as possible after the conclusion of the meeting. A record of the discussion will be agreed by the members of the Panel within 48 hours.

5.3.7 The decision of the Governors' Appeal Panel will be final.

- 6. 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
- 7. When it was last revised, when it will next be revised**
August 2024
August 2027
- 8. The date from which it applies**
May 2014
- 9. Statutory regulations and good practice guidance**
The college is bound by the United Reformed Church's policies on equal opportunities and sexual harassment. The college will take steps to protect staff and students from harassment, bullying or victimisation. Further guidance is provided in the college's Statement and Affirmation of Equal Opportunities.