

Section IX

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

(Revised Jun 2018)

A. INTRODUCTION (revised Jun 2018)

Disputes and conflicts are inevitable in any large organisation and it is important to have a procedure for dealing with them. From the outset a clear distinction must be made between general complaints and employment related complaints. General complaints are dealt with according to the procedure outlined below, whereas complaints by an employee relating to their own employment are dealt with according to the grievance procedure in the employee's Employee Handbook.

B. JURISDICTION (revised Jun 2018)

Complaints should be dealt with at the level where they arise, recognising the different levels of church organisation. These are: Local Church, Mission or Conference, Union Conference, and Division of the General Conference.

C. PROCESS (revised Jun 2018)

Complaints should be dealt with informally in the first instance, following the counsel given in the Church Manual. If this fails to resolve the situation then the following formal process should be followed:

1. The complaint should be submitted in writing to the appropriate responsible person. This could be the pastor in the case of a local church, or the Executive Secretary in the case of a Conference or Union. The letter should state clearly that the complainant is making a formal complaint. Sufficient detail should be included to allow at least a preliminary investigation to be carried out. This might include a timeline of events, relevant correspondence, and other backing materials.
2. The responsible person should respond in writing within a reasonable time period, acknowledging the complaint and outlining what action, if any, will be taken. They may ask for more information or for additional measures to be taken by the complainant. If no action is to be taken, a reasonable explanation should be given.
3. When the matter has been adequately considered the responsible person will communicate the outcome to the complainant.

D. RIGHT OF APPEAL (revised Jun 2018)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response they receive, they have the right to appeal to the next level of church organisation. However, this right extends only to the way in which their original complaint has been dealt with, not the substance of the complaint itself. The process is as follows:

1. The appeal should be submitted in writing to the Executive Secretary and the letter should state clearly that the individual is exercising their right of appeal. Sufficient detail should be included to indicate how the original complaint process was inadequate.
2. The Executive Secretary should respond in writing within a reasonable time period, acknowledging the appeal and outlining what action will be taken. This action will depend on the nature of the original complaint but may include assigning an individual or small group to manage the process.
3. When the matter has been adequately considered the Executive Secretary will communicate the outcome to the appellant.

E. Arbitration (revised Jun 2018)

There may be some circumstances in which the above process fails to bring about a resolution. In such cases the parties may wish to request a binding arbitration process, managed by the BUC. For such an approach to succeed the following conditions must be met:

1. Both parties must agree to the process
2. Both parties must agree to the composition of the arbitration team
3. Both parties must agree to withdraw or suspend any legal action during the process

The BUC reserves the right to suspend or terminate the arbitration process at any point, should it feel the need to do so.