

Grievance Procedure

1. Purpose and Scope

The Church realises the importance of good working relationships. It therefore tries to establish an atmosphere in which problems can be discussed and resolved and its aim is to encourage open communication. The Church also believes that it is in everyone's best interest to ensure that employees' grievances are dealt with quickly and fairly and that a grievance procedure enables individuals to raise issues with management that affect them in the workplace.

2. Policy

The Church will try to resolve, as quickly as possible, any grievance which an employee may have about his or her work or about actions of the Church, the Church's members or the employee's colleagues. The procedure is non-contractual but applies to all employees who should familiarise themselves with its provisions.

3. Concurrent Procedures

In the event that an employee submits a grievance during a disciplinary procedure, the Church may at its discretion, decide whether to suspend the disciplinary procedure in order to fully consider the grievance, or to deal with both procedures concurrently, where the issues are related.

4. Mediation

In appropriate circumstances, the Church may suggest mediation as a means of addressing a grievance. Mediation may take the form of a neutral mediator, assisting parties to reach an amicable outcome to a grievance. Mediation will usually take the form of an open session between all affected parties and the mediator at which each party will state its case, followed by a series of meetings between each party and the mediator.

5. Procedure

The employee should firstly raise any grievance informally with the person to whom he or she immediately reports, who in most cases, will be best placed to respond to his or her complaint. If the employee's grievance concerns their supervisor, they should instead raise their grievance with the Church Secretary.

Step 1

If, however, the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, the employee should raise the matter formally, in writing, giving full details of the nature of his or her grievance, with his or her supervisor (or the Church Secretary if his/her grievance is against his/her supervisor). Where

an employee has difficulty expressing themselves because of language or other difficulties, they may seek help from their manager or the Church Secretary.

When stating their grievance, an employee should focus on preparing a factual account of their grievance.

Step 2: Meeting

The supervisor will invite the employee to a hearing in order to discuss the grievance as soon as reasonably practicable. The supervisor will ensure that the meeting will be held in private and the employee should make every effort to attend. The employee has the right to be accompanied by either a colleague or a trade union representative.

Right to be accompanied at hearings

You may bring a companion to any capability hearing or appeal hearing under this procedure. The companion may be either a trade union official or a fellow employee. You must tell the manager conducting the hearing who your chosen companion is, in good time before the hearing.

Employees are allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay to act as a companion. There is no duty on employees to act as a companion if they do not wish to do so.

If the chosen companion will not be available at the time proposed for the hearing the employee may request that the hearing be postponed to a day not more than five working days after the day proposed by the Church. If the time proposed is reasonable, and the employee representative is able to attend, the hearing will be postponed until that time.

Whilst the companion may address the hearing and confer with the individual during the hearing, they do not have the right to answer questions on the part of the individual.

If your choice of companion is unreasonable we may require you to choose someone else, for example:

- If in our opinion your companion may have a conflict of interest or may prejudice the hearing; or
- If your companion works at another site and someone reasonably suitable is available at the site at which you work; or
- If your companion is unavailable at the time a hearing is scheduled and will not be available for more than five working days.

We may, at our discretion, allow you to bring a companion who is not an employee or union official (for example, a member of your family) where this will help overcome a particular difficulty caused by a disability, or where you have difficulty understanding English.

At the meeting the supervisor will invite the employee to detail their grounds of grievance and consult with them on how it may be resolved.

We may adjourn the meeting if we need to carry out further investigations, after which the meeting will usually be reconvened.

The supervisor will adjourn the meeting before any decision is taken about how to deal with an employee's grievance. The supervisor will tell the employee when they can reasonably expect a response, if one cannot be made at the time. Usually, the [supervisor] will confirm any decision or proposed action to the employee in writing within 10 working days of the hearing. If it is not possible to respond within the specified time period the employee will be given an explanation for the delay and told when a response can be expected. The supervisor will set out clearly in writing any action that is to be taken and the employee's right of appeal. Where an employee's grievance is not upheld, the supervisor will explain the reasons.

Step 3

If the employee is dissatisfied with the outcome of the first meeting, the employee should appeal in writing to the Church Secretary stating his/her full grounds of appeal, within one week of the date on which the decision was sent or given to him/her. The Church Secretary will arrange a further meeting with deacons who have not previously been involved in the case.

The employee has the right to be accompanied by either a colleague or a trade union representative.

Following the hearing, the employee will be informed of the decision or proposed action. This decision will be final subject to any overriding decision by the Church Meeting. If it is not possible to respond within the specified time period the employee should be given an explanation and told when a response can be expected. There is no further right of appeal.