

Grievance Policy and Procedure



The United Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

December 2025

Our Values

The United Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia (UCASA) values all personnel who contribute to the work of UCASA, and recognises that all interactions should be approached through a lens of justice and fairness, care and safety, intentional growth and encouragement and accountability. In this way, the United Church strives for excellence in its stewardship of its people and seeks to value each individual and the unique skills, gifts and talents they possess.

Overview

This policy and procedure provides an equitable framework to submit, manage and resolve employee grievances.

Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all personnel of the United Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia.

This policy and procedure does not replace any United Church Regulations or Policies, including but not limited to - Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders or any other policy or procedure brought into effect by the Church. Any breach of the Church's Regulations or Policies may be pursued in parallel or subsequent to the procedures outlined in this or a related UCASA workplace policy.

This policy and procedure replaces all previous versions.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Church Body	As per the definition of Body in the Uniting Church's Constitution, includes council, committee, department, college, board, agency or other institution within the bounds of UCASA, which means: - Synod (Pirie St Office); Yarthu Apinthe (Synod Brooklyn Park College Campus), Uniting Venues SA; Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC); - Presbyteries, Congregations and Faith Communities.
Complainant	A person who raises a grievance or makes a complaint against another party, alleging harm by that person.
Contractor	Individuals paid to provide services to UCASA, or to the Church body, who are not engaged or employed as Ministry Agents or Employees and are not a Volunteer.
Employee	These are people who are directly employed by the UCASA, or employed by a Church body on behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia, and are remunerated for the work they undertake for their employer.
Executive Officer	An individual who is appointed to lead a UCASA ministry centre by the Synod or its Standing Committee, usually a person who has been delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the UCASA, and is accountable for the delivery of outcomes for a department, function or program within their ministry centre, and reports to the General Secretary.
Grievance	Any concern or complaint related to UCASA's operations, policies, practices or behaviours of its employees or members. Grievances may include but not limited to, discrimination, harassment, ethical concerns, workplace issues or violations of applicable laws and regulations.
Manager	Any individual appointed by an employer or governing council of a Church body, temporarily or permanently, to a supervisory role i.e. has work performance and workplace behaviour oversight of other personnel.
Member	For the purposes of this policy, includes any Member, Confirmed Member, Member in Association, or Adherent as defined in the Uniting Church 'Constitution' and 'Regulations'.
Ministry Agent	These are people engaged in specified ministries within the bounds of UCASA - includes (as referenced in the Uniting Church's 'Regulations' and the 'Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice') Candidates, Community Ministers and Chaplains, Deacons, Deaconesses, Interns, Lay Pastors, Ministers of the Word, Ministry of Pastors, Accredited Youth Workers, and Ministers from other denominations serving in approved placements in the UCASA.
Personnel	Any person commissioned, employed and or engaged in, or contributes towards the planning/management/delivery of, and or are involved or participates in any functions, programs or activities associated with a Church body (includes Ministry Agent, Employee, Volunteer, Contractor, Member, Visitor, and Guest).
Respondent	A person called upon to issue a response to a communication made by another, such as a complaint.
Uniting Church (the Church)	The Uniting Church in Australia
UCASA (the Synod)	Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia

Term	Meaning
Volunteer	Either a formal or informal volunteer.
Formal Volunteer	A formal volunteer, an individual recognised by the governing council of a Church body, who has actual capacity to influence and control, and who willingly provides work or performs a service to benefit the mission and objectives of the Church or Church body and receives no payment as a result of their work.
Informal Volunteer	An informal volunteer may not necessarily fit the definition of 'worker' (but rather 'other person') under the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA) as they may not be performing the work of the Church body but rather working for their own religious purposes or values and for the good of the Church body. Meaning an informal volunteer donates their time to support the activities of their Church body through voluntary acts of helping and kindness in local communities.
Worker	As per the definition in WHS Act 2012 (SA), a worker is a person who carries out work for the Church body, including work as an employee, a contractor, a subcontractor, a self-employed person, an outworker, an apprentice or trainee, a work experience student, an employee of a labour hire company placed with a 'host employer', or as a (formal) volunteer. The term 'work' is not defined in WHS Act 2012 (SA) and has its ordinary meaning.
Workplace	A workplace is a place where work is carried out for the Church body and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work. Generally this means in the context of the Church body, but may not be restricted to: • any place of worship within the bounds of UCASA • any UCASA property used by the Church body • any other property owned by The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (S.A.) • any other location or workplace (as defined by Section 8 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2012 – SA) where approved Church body work, activities or functions are being conducted.

Policy Principles

The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia (UCASA) is committed to fostering a positive and productive workplace and recognises that from time-to-time individual concerns will arise and that it is necessary to resolve these matters promptly in a fair, consistent and transparent manner.

UCASA acknowledges that if grievance issues are not adequately addressed in a timely manner, there is WHS risk and as a result may impact on the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of those involved.

UCASA commits to ensuring that procedures are in place to:

- Manage hazards associated with grievances and complaints in the workplace.
- Implement control measures to manage these risks.
- Take a proactive approach in identifying unreasonable behaviour and situations that are likely to increase the risk of complaints or grievances occurring.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of these measures.

UCASA encourages all personnel to:

- Raise their grievance without fear of victimisation or disadvantage.
- Promote the timely resolution of complaints.
- Ensure there is a fair process in resolving complaints.

All complaints and grievances will be treated seriously, and principles of procedural fairness will apply. Discrimination or retaliation against personnel who has raised an issue will not be tolerated.

Matters related to this policy and procedure are considered sensitive and highly confidential. The parties involved shall observe confidentiality and discretion at all times, and any person that behave in breach of these considerations may be subject to disciplinary action.

UCASA is firmly committed to ensuring that this policy and procedure will provide for orderly, fair and speedy means of resolving issues without disruption to work and without prejudice to final settlement. Accordingly, where appropriate, normal work should continue in good faith.

Responsibilities

The **Executive Officer, Resources** is responsible for:

- approval of, and amending, this policy and procedure, in consultation with the Manager, Human Resources and Executive Officers;
- ensuring that this policy and procedure will be constantly reviewed to maintain their relevance and integrity in line with appropriate legislation;
- ensuring that the contents of this policy and procedure are understood and applied by all personnel.

Manager, Human Resources (MHR) is responsible for:

- supporting and providing advice to parties raising or responding to a grievance. Complainants and Respondents may request the assistance of Human Resources any time. The assistance from the MHR (or delegate) may include, but is not limited to:
 - Decision making about pursuing grievance resolution under this policy.
 - Generating written documentation.
 - Attendance and support at meetings.
 - Ensuring that the Complainant or Respondent understands the steps and stages of the resolution procedure and why decisions have been made.
 - Ensuring impartiality.
- provide all relevant information to the Investigator.
- periodically assessing compliance with this policy and procedure to ensure consistency of application across all ministry centres.

Executive Officer – including personnel in senior roles such as, but not limited to - the Moderator, General Secretary, the Chairperson of a Presbytery or other Church body governing council, or at Synod a ministry centre Executive Officer, or the Manager, Human Resources, etc. - is responsible for:

- ensuring all reported grievances or formal complaints are investigated in a thorough and timely manner, and that all parties concerned receive natural justice;

- maintaining appropriate confidentiality; advising on appropriate outcomes (including possible disciplinary action);
- ensuring all relevant information is appropriately documented, maintained and kept secure.

Managers are responsible for:

- ensuring they and personnel for whom they are responsible are aware of and comply with this policy and procedure;
- ensuring all grievances raised with them are addressed in a timely, confidential and appropriate manner;
- participating in investigations as required;
- maintaining appropriate confidentiality;
- monitoring any resolutions to ensure outcomes are adhered to;
- securely maintaining notes/records and providing all relevant documentation to the Human Resources representative or relevant Executive Officer.

Employees and Personnel are responsible for:

- following the outlined grievance process when raising concerns;
- participating in investigations as required;
- maintaining confidentiality at all times.

Failure to comply with the policy

Personnel should be aware that a failure to comply with the policy and procedure, including any arrangements which are put in place under it, will be investigated and may lead to disciplinary action.

Dissemination of Policy and Procedure

A copy of this policy and procedure will be made available to all personnel. The intent of this policy and procedure will be explained to each new employee or personnel at their workplace induction.

Monitoring and Review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed in accordance with legislation changes and UCASA review procedures.

Related Legislation and Documents

- UCASA Code of Conduct Policy
- UCASA Confidentiality Policy
- UCASA Equal Opportunity Policy
- UCASA Sexual Harassment and Sex-Based Harassment Policy
- UCASA WHS Policy
- UCASA Workplace Harassment & Bullying Policy
- Work, Health & Safety Act 2012 (SA)
- Fair Work Act 2009

Procedures

Privacy and confidentiality – Every effort will be made to ensure that grievances are addressed confidentially, to the extent permitted by law and the need to conduct an adequate investigation. Personnel involved within the grievance should not discuss the matter with any other person subject to any legal requirements for disclosure.

Fairness – All parties to the complaint will have the opportunity to present their side of the matter. No assumptions will be made or action taken until all relevant information has been collected and considered. All parties will have access to support if required.

Freedom of victimisation – All necessary steps will be taken to ensure that those involved in a grievance are not victimised by anyone for coming forward with the grievance or for helping to manage it. Any victimisation will lead to disciplinary action.

Timely – UCASA aims to manage all grievances within an appropriate and realistic timeframe, depending on the circumstances of the matter.

Process – Personnel have the option of raising any concern and seeking a resolution to any grievance formally or informally as per the below.

Support Person – Both the Complainant and the Respondent may have a Support Person in attendance for all parts of this procedure.

For an overview refer to the [Grievance Resolution Process Flowchart](#) (Appendix).

1. Address the issue (informal)

Personnel who have a grievance should first attempt to resolve the concern informally, if possible, by discussing it with the person/s (respondent) involved.

2. Report the issue to your manager (informal)

If the complainant does not feel comfortable approaching the respondent directly, or they are unable to resolve it informally, the next step is to raise and discuss the concern with their immediate manager.

If it is not appropriate for the grievance to be raised with the immediate manager, then the grievance should be raised with the next level manager or a neutral third party such as a UCASA Human Resources representative or appropriate Executive Officer.

The manager or other personnel, following consultation with the Manager, Human resources (MHR) may take reasonable steps to resolve the issue between the complainant and respondent either through mediation or other measures, if it is safe and appropriate to do so.

3. Make a formal complaint

Personnel wishing to file a formal grievance should submit a written complaint to the MHR or their delegate. The written complaint should include the following.

- nature of the grievance;
- time and date of the incident(s) giving rise to the grievance;

- names and if possible contact details of any witnesses;
- date of the lodgement of the grievance; and
- the complaint must be signed by the aggrieved person.

The MHR or their delegate will conduct an initial review to determine the merits of the complaint. Following this review, the MHR or appropriate person will, if necessary, arrange for a formal investigation to be undertaken to ascertain facts. This may be delegated to an internal or external investigator. When the respondent is an ordained Minister or Deacon, Manager or Executive Officer, an external investigation provider will usually be engaged.

3.1 Formal Investigation

An investigation may include some or all of the following actions:

- Putting any allegations to the individual/s concerned;
- Interviewing any witnesses;
- Obtaining all relevant documentation.

Once the investigation is complete, the investigator will provide recommendations to UCASA, who will decide on an appropriate course of action or if any action is to be taken at all.

All investigation findings will be confidentially and securely recorded and maintained.

UCASA will communicate the outcome of the grievance process to the parties involved while still respecting the parties' privacy.

Appeal Process

If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the way in which the grievance was handled, or disagrees with the outcome, they may refer the matter to

- the most senior Executive Officer for their Church body (for example the General Secretary, or Chairperson of a Presbytery or other Church body governing council etc.) or where appropriate to the relevant committee of its governing council;
- if the grievance is of an industrial nature (e.g. employment related) and remains unresolved, the complainant may seek to have the matter referred to the Fair Work Commission or South Australian Employment Tribunal, as is appropriate.

3.2 Resolution

The manager, in consultation with UCASA Human Resources representative and/or relevant Executive Officer, will decide on an appropriate course of action or if any action is to be taken at all. The manager will then discuss the outcome with the complainant.

Agreed outcomes should be documented and copies provided to all parties.

3.3 Ongoing Follow Up

The manager will monitor the outcome to ensure all parties involved in the grievance adhere to the resolution.

Approval Authority

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Executive Officer, Resources
Advisory Committee to Approval Authority	Human Resources and Remuneration Committee
Administrator	Manager, Human Resources
Next Review Date	2027 (2-years)

Feedback

Staff and personnel may provide feedback about this policy and procedure by emailing resources@sa.uca.org.au or humanresources@sa.uca.org.au

Appendix

For an overview of this policy and procedure, including escalation path, refer to the [Grievance Resolution Process Flowchart](#).

Current Policy Approved: December 2025

Replaces: July 2016

First Issued: March 2009

Grievance Resolution Process Flowchart

