



The Church of Scotland

Faith Nurture Forum – Initial Ministerial Education (IME) Student Policy

Complaints

1. Introduction

The Faith Nurture Forum of the Church of Scotland (Faith Nurture Forum) is committed to ensuring that high quality learning, support, services and experiences are provided to students participating in the IME Programme. On the rare occasion that a student is not satisfied with the IME Programme, with the Faith Nurture Forum or feels aggrieved or dissatisfied, Faith Nurture Forum have provided this policy and procedure to ensure that students are able to make a complaint if they wish to do so.

Faith Nurture Forum are committed to ensuring that all complaints will be dealt with promptly, and fairly and in line with relevant IME student policies and procedures. Students will not be disadvantaged or treated less favourably by making a complaint.

Students are advised that if they have a complaint relating to services provided by the university at which they are studying, including academic matters, then they must follow university procedures. The student must also inform Faith Nurture Forum of their complaint to ensure that where possible, Faith Nurture Forum is able to work with the university, and you as the student, to resolve any complaints.

2. Complaints relating to Bullying, Harassment or Victimisation

If the complaint is about a member of Faith Nurture Forum staff, any employee of the employing bodies of the Church of Scotland, an office-bearer, a volunteer, or a fellow student and is related to bullying, harassment or victimisation the student should refer to the procedures as detailed in the Dignity at Study Policy (Appendix B).

3. Raising Concerns – Informal Complaint

If students feel that they have a concern or that they may have a complaint, other than they are asked to raise it as soon as possible and to the appropriate member of Faith Nurture Forum staff. Many complaints can be dealt with informally through discussion and explanation.

If students feel that the issue is significant and serious then they may submit a formal complaint in line with the procedure detailed in section 4. If students are unsure how to proceed then they are encouraged to speak to a Training Officer, or Pastoral Support.

It is important that students seek a resolution as soon as is reasonably practicable, and normally within 20 working days of the occurrence of the problem. This increases the possibility of sorting out the problem effectively.

Once an informal complaint is received the student as the complainant should receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days and will normally receive a response within 15 working days. If it seems possible that a response will be delayed the student will be told why, e.g. the complexity of the case, staff being unavailable through illness or professional commitments, etc. and the student will be kept informed of progress.

4. Making a Complaint

If informal resolution has not brought about the desired result, or where the issue is significantly serious that the informal stage is not appropriate, then a student can make a formal complaint. Students are encouraged to speak to a Training Officer if they do not feel that the informal complaint route has brought a satisfactory resolution. It may still be possible to resolve the issue informally.

Formal complaints should be made within 3 months of the occurrence or event. Formal complaints should be in writing and sent to the Education and Training Secretary, Faith Nurture Forum. Email is acceptable.

Students cannot make an anonymous complaint but Faith Nurture Forum will treat all complaints with appropriate sensitivity, and information will only be disclosed to those who need to see it for the purposes of dealing with your complaint.

Students should be aware that a summary of their complaint may be shared with the person (s) being complained of.

Faith Nurture Forum endeavours to answer all complaints as soon as possible. Normally the complaint process will be completed within 90 days from the date that a student submits a complaint. If a complaint is complex it may take longer than 90 days and in these circumstances the student will be advised accordingly and provided with updates on the progress of the complaint.

5. Formal Complaint – Investigation

The Education and Training Secretary will appoint an investigator for your complaint as soon as possible and the student as the complainant will be notified of this in writing. The investigator will be an appropriate senior manager within Faith Nurture Forum, and independent of the complaint or any parties involved

The investigation will include discussing the complaint with any individual directly concerned with the service or action complained of. Students will receive a full response within 20 working days of the complaint being received. If it seems possible that a response will be delayed students will be told why, for example due to the complexity of the case, staff unavailable through illness or professional commitments etc. and students will be kept informed of progress.

It is likely that as the complainant, the student will be invited to a meeting as part of the investigation. Students are entitled to be accompanied at this meeting by a companion of their choice. Students will also be asked to supply any evidence to support your complaint to the investigator.

The investigator will provide a report to the Education and Training Secretary who will consider the investigation report and along with the investigator decide on an appropriate outcome and course of action. You will be informed of the outcome of the investigation in writing by the Education and Training Secretary and what, if any, action is to be taken. You may receive an explanation, apology or a statement on improvement for the future. If Faith Nurture Forum intends to take no further action you will be informed of the reasons for this.

6. Appeal

It is possible that even after you receive a full written response to your complaint you are not satisfied with the outcome. If this is the case you should write to the Education and Training

Secretary, Faith Nurture Forum within 14 working days of receipt of the response to your complaint from the Education and Training Secretary, explaining why you remain dissatisfied and what you would consider to be a satisfactory response. You cannot simply reiterate the original formal complaint. You will receive an acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days of it being received.

The Education and Training Secretary will then review the investigation, and the reasons for the outcome. You will be invited to a meeting, at which you are entitled to be accompanied, to discuss your appeal. No further written evidence will normally be considered at that stage, although if the Education and Training Secretary considers that there is a need for further material, this may be requested from any of the parties concerned.

7. Responsibilities and Obligations

The Education and Training Secretary is responsible for ensuring that the relevant parties are made aware of complaints and students should be aware that, dependant on the nature of their complaint, the Education and Training Secretary may involve Presbytery, the Principal Clerk, the Solicitor of the Church and/or the police, if appropriate.

8. Monitoring and Review

A statistical report will be provided to the Faith Nurture Forum on an annual basis which will detail the number of complaints received, resolved, and their nature. The data will be fully anonymised and is for monitoring purposes only.

The impact of this policy will be monitored and the policy is subject to amendments as necessary. This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum.

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