

Q: The complaints procedure

Part One: Preamble

Why a Complaints Procedure?

The United Reformed Church needs a complaints process because humans are imperfect. The Church is made up of people, and so is a fallible community, and its members on occasion behave in ways which are damaging to themselves and others, and which undermine the credibility of the Church's witness. A complaints process is one of the means by which the Church recognises that all humans are made in the image of God and are entitled to be treated as such and by which it maintains its witness to the new life in which we are called through Christ.

In the absence of a policy directing otherwise, people or councils of the Church may find themselves expected to investigate and decide upon complaints about themselves, which is unfair to all concerned. Further, Church history is littered with cases where a complaint was made, but not properly investigated. No doubt in many cases it was thought better not to 'stir things up', or we could assume that because the complainant had not repeated the complaint, it had been dropped. This seems to go against all best practice in all kinds of ways. This is why a Complaints Procedure is essential.

Through the Complaints Procedure members of the United Reformed Church are accountable to the Church in matters of faith and behaviour. The Church seeks to enable healing and reconciliation to take place through that accountability whenever possible. The Church also responds to the call through Christ for justice, openness, and honesty, and to the need for each of us to accept responsibility for our own acts.

The Complaints Procedure therefore seeks to embody the following principles:

- the initiation of complaints should not be limited to members of the Church
- there should be no difference in principle between ordained and lay people in the way in which complaints against them are dealt with
- help and support should be offered both to the person making the complaint and to the person complained against at every stage during the process
- the process should be fair, and seen to be fair
- the person or body making the decision at each stage should be competent to do so
- there should be a means of correcting any errors which may be made
- there should be a means of ensuring compliance with any decision
- there should be appropriate requirements relating to confidentiality and record keeping
- the possibility of reconciliation should be explored carefully in every case in which that is appropriate.

As the Body of Christ, the Church seeks to embody justice, and to challenge injustice. The Complaints Procedure is one means of searching for truth. Justice involves loving, honouring, and respecting others, and ensuring that processes and procedures are accessible, consistent, fair, and transparent. Justice is also dynamic, implying an active concern for those who are vulnerable, marginalised, or oppressed.

Information about making complaints

The United Reformed Church seeks to ensure that the Church is a safe, responsible, and caring environment for all. To achieve that, rules and procedures have been put in place to enable the Church to deal with any acts of inappropriate or unethical behaviour by any church minister, elder, or office bearer.

These rules differentiate between serious issues of conduct, and other acts of inappropriate behaviour. For serious issues, the Church has internal disciplinary procedures for ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers and also for Office Holders who are not ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community workers or paid employees. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to refer the matter to the police, if the complainant has not already done so.

For less serious matters, the Church has a Complaints Procedure. The aim of this procedure is neither to trivialise serious matters, nor on the other hand to treat minor matters with undue weight. In this procedure, the Church wishes to prioritise the use of mediation and conciliation, as experience suggests that this is the best way to ensure an outcome where everyone involved feels that their concerns have been appropriately heard and dealt with.

In framing its Complaints Procedure, the Church is strongly of the belief that a person with a legitimate grievance must be listened to, and that their complaint should be properly and fairly addressed.

This Complaints Procedure has three stages:

- (a) Stage One seeks to ensure that the complaint is handled by the appropriate body, is appropriate under the terms of this Complaints Procedure, and that all appropriate informal ways of trying to resolve the complaint have been tried before the complaint moves onwards.
- (b) Stage Two is a mediation stage, seeking a resolution through the offices of a mediator.
- (c) Stage Three sets down the process by which complaints are investigated when it has been deemed they are about a matter the body investigating has responsibility for, appropriate under the terms of this Complaints Procedure, and that has not been resolved by the more informal processes made available in parts one and two.

What is and what is not a complaint to be handled using this procedure?

Examples of complaints that might be handled using this procedure:

- An allegation about the minor wrongdoing of a minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church or about the way in which they have performed their duties
- An expression of dissatisfaction about the way in which a complainant has been treated by a minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church or about their attitude to the complainant
- An allegation that a minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church failed to do something in the way that should reasonably be expected
- An allegation that there has been unreasonable delay by a minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church in responding to an enquiry or request
- A breach of confidentiality by a minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the United Reformed Church

Examples of complaints that would not be handled using this procedure:

- An allegation of serious misconduct against a minister of Word and Sacraments, a Church Related Community Worker or an Office Holder. This will immediately be referred to the appropriate procedure. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate also to refer the matter to the police, if the complainant has not already done so. This will be where criminal behaviour is alleged, in particular where there are allegations of a serious sexual nature, where vulnerable groups are involved, or where allegedly there has been financial impropriety. Anyone who becomes aware of offending of this nature is urged to contact the police immediately, as well as also informing the church
- A safeguarding concern, which will be referred into the church's safeguarding guidelines through a Synod Safeguarding Officer or the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- A complaint against or by an employee, which would be handled by their line manager under the appropriate Human Resources policy of the body which employs them
- A routine request for information, or for an explanation of the way in which something is done
- An allegation that a Council of the Church has acted beyond its powers (that is a Constitutional Review), or made a decision or acted in a way that is unacceptable (that is an Appeal)
- An objection to an individual, or a group of people, implementing decisions that have been correctly reached

- A whistle blowing event, for which the Church is developing a whistle blowing policy
- An issue about selection or training of a minister of Word and Sacraments or a Church Related Community Worker: this goes to the ministries committee
- An issue about Synod decisions on scoping or deployment: this would be an Appeal or a Constitutional Review
- An issue about insurance, sale, or purchase of property: this would be dealt with by the trustees of the building or the relevant officers of the Synod
- An issue about buildings maintenance: this would be dealt with by the trustees of the building or the relevant officers of the Synod
- Insurance claims: these go to the insurance company
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint, or to have a complaint reconsidered where a final outcome has already been reached
- An issue which involves vulnerable people: this will go straight to safeguarding guidelines
- Also, while a person can complain about a matter which is already being dealt with in the civil or criminal courts, such a matter will not normally be dealt with by the Church until the civil or criminal process has been concluded
- Decisions of Trustee bodies, which are not subject to the councils of the Church

Where the complaint should be dealt with under a different process, eg, those mentioned above, the appropriate Synod Clerk or their deputy, or the General Secretary or their deputy will be able to supply you with the appropriate information about who to contact.

Part Two: Policy

Making a complaint – Stage One

Informal Assessment (triage)

The purpose of this part of the process is to ascertain three things before a complaint progresses further.

- (a) That the complaint is about something that is the responsibility of the body to whom a person is complaining.
- (b) That the complaint is an appropriate complaint to be handled under this procedure, rather than any other process indicated above.
- (c) That all appropriate forms of informal attempts to resolve the complaint (Stage Two) have been tried before the complaint moves to Stage Three.

Complaints may arise in different ways. Some issues may have been a problem for some time, and there may have been various informal attempts to resolve them before someone reaches for a formal Complaints Procedure. In which case, the appropriate person to whom the complaint is made may determine that, presuming the complaint is something the body they represent is responsible for, and the complaint is about something appropriately handled under this policy, it is appropriate for the complaint to pass quickly to Stage Three.

Sometimes a formal written complaint may be received as the very first indication that a problem has arisen. In which case the person receiving the complaint, having ascertained that it concerns a matter that the body they represent has authority over, and that the complaint is one which falls under this procedure, may wish to ascertain whether using informal processes to resolve the complaint (Stage Two) are appropriate, before progressing the complaint to Stage Three of the procedure.

Step one: Who to contact about a complaint

For complaints relating to a local church, you should contact the Church Secretary. If the complaint is about the Church Secretary, you should contact the minister of Word and Sacraments or Interim Moderator. Normally, complaints about ministers of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Workers should be referred to the Synod, as ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers serve under the oversight of the Synod not the local church. The Church Secretary, minister or Interim Moderator of the local Church is empowered to consult with any other officer of the local church (the officers are normally the minister, the Church Secretary and the Treasurer), or the Synod Moderator or their deputy or Synod Clerk or their deputy when they deem it appropriate for appropriate help and support in dealing with the complaint.

For complaints relating to a Synod, you should contact the Synod Clerk or their deputy. If the complaint is about the Synod Clerk, you should contact the Synod Moderator or their deputy. The Synod Clerk or their deputy or Synod Moderator or their deputy are empowered to consult with any other officer of the Synod or with the General Secretary or their deputy or the Clerk to Assembly or their deputy when they deem it appropriate.

The Synod Clerk or their deputy may deem it appropriate to appoint a small panel of trained individuals to one of whom they can pass a complaint for being dealt with in the manner described below.

For complaints relating to a Synod Moderator, you should contact the General Secretary or their deputy.

For complaints relating to the work of the General Assembly, you should contact the General Secretary or their deputy. If the complaint is about the General Secretary, you should contact the Clerk of the General Assembly or their deputy. The General Secretary or their deputy and Clerks are empowered to consult with any other officer of the Assembly, or staff member, that they deem appropriate.

The General Secretary or their deputy may deem it appropriate to appoint a small panel of trained individuals to one of whom they can pass a complaint for being dealt with in the manner described below.

Step two: What to include in your complaint

To be able to handle the matter appropriately the Church official named in step one must have some details from you in order for a complaint to be properly investigated. This means that you need to write to them or email them, setting out:

- who you are, plus your contact details
- whether you are a Church member, and any office you hold
- exactly what the nature of your complaint is
- exactly which persons – minister of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Worker, elder, other member, or a volunteer serving the Church – or situations you are complaining about
- specific details of the circumstances (including, where possible, names of individuals, places, dates etc), along with any supporting evidence to back up your complaint
- Information about any informal attempts that have been made to resolve the issue that has given rise to the complaint
- the outcome you are hoping for

If you need help or assistance to set out the above in writing, the person named in step one will help you with this, or invite someone else to assist you in setting out your complaint.

Details need to be given as quickly as possible and as fully as possible. The Church cannot accept complaints where there is unreasonable delay in giving details after a complaint is made, or where details are withheld and an attempt made to add further matters as the complaint progresses.

Upon receipt of your written complaint, the appropriate Church official named in step one will acknowledge this in writing, normally within a calendar week. All information which you supply in connection with your complaint will be treated sensitively. So far as is possible while still enabling your complaint to be properly dealt with, the information which you give will be treated confidentially, but a copy of your complaint will be shown to the respondent once it has been received and settled.

Step three: Ascertaining that the complaint falls within the scope of the Complaints Procedure

On receipt of a written complaint, the appropriate Church official named in step one (or their appointed deputy) must judge whether:

- (a) The complaint is about a matter that the body of the Church they represent is responsible.
- (b) That the complaint is one which falls under those handled by this policy.

Where the appropriate Church Official named in step one above does not judge that the complaint fulfils these criteria, they will inform the complainant that the matter cannot be addressed under this Complaints Procedure, often at the time they acknowledge they have received the complaint, but at least within five calendar days

of sending the initial acknowledgement. Where appropriate, they will offer advice on the appropriate place to lodge the complaint.

Where the appropriate Church Official named in step one above judges that the complaint fulfils these criteria, they will confirm as much to the complainant, and notify the respondent that the process has been initiated.

Step four: Ensuring that appropriate informal processes seeking resolution have been used

The experience of the Church and other organisations is that complaints are resolved most effectively, to everyone's satisfaction and in a timely fashion when informal process leads to resolution. It may be that the parties have already tried various informal ways to resolve the complaint, through conversation, through the informal help or mediation of other people involved in the situation, or through more formal mediation which might have been arranged by the local church or the Synod. Where this is the case, the Church Official named in step one will talk with the complainant, and where appropriate the person(s) being complained about, to ascertain that such informal processes have indeed reached a point that moving to a more formal process needs to be the next step. They will do this as quickly as possible and inform the complainant that the process will move to Stage Three, normally within one calendar week.

Where no informal attempts to resolve the complaint have been made, the Church Official will attempt to take reasonable steps to ensure that informal process is used to seek a resolution or to ascertain that such a course of action is inappropriate. This may include:

- Speaking further with the complainant and the person(s) complained about to better understand the situation, and to explore whether through conversation it is possible to come to an understanding of the issue underlying the complaint and resolve it to everyone's satisfaction
- Inviting, with the complainant's permission and the permission of the person(s) complained about, an appropriate person to offer some mediation to seek a resolution of the issue at hand
- Determining that there are good reasons why seeking an informal resolution is an inappropriate course of action in this case (for example, but not exclusively, where someone involved is a vulnerable person or the complaint concerns bullying, harassment or abusive behaviour).

Normally, it would be expected that attempts to find an informal resolution would happen within eight weeks of the start of Step four. Where, for some reason, there is a necessary delay to the start of that process (for example, by it taking time for an appropriate mediator to be found or by the unavoidable absence of people involved in the situation) it may take longer. In a situation where all concerned participating in an informal process wish it to continue for longer, and the Church Official deems that this is constructive, it shall be allowed to continue until the Church Official determines the process is no longer constructive. It will often be the case that after further

conversations initiated by the Church Officer receiving the complaint, or mediation from someone they appointed to offer it, a resolution has been arrived at to everyone's satisfaction. When this happens, the Church Official involved, having ascertained that from all parties, will let the complainant and other parties involved know in writing that the matter is now resolved, and the complaint ended.

If at the end of a process to seek an informal resolution, this has not been possible, and the complainant wishes the matter to be progressed to Stage Three of this process, the relevant Church Official will inform the complainant that Stage Three is to be initiated.

If the Church Official decides that there is no good reason not initially to seek a resolution through informal processes, and the complainant declines to take part in any such informal process, the complaint will be ended, and the relevant Church Official will inform the complainant of this in writing.

Making a complaint – Stage Two

Mediation

This stage of the process is described in Step four above and consists of an attempt by an independent third-party, not otherwise involved in the events leading to the complaint, and with no association with any of the parties, to resolve the issue through the employment of mediation techniques.

If this mediation process fails to result in resolution, the complaint passes into Stage Three.

Making a complaint – Stage Three

Formal investigation

Step one: appointment of Investigator(s)

On receipt of a written complaint, and having determined that the complaint falls within the remit of this policy and that informal attempts at resolving the issue have not been successful, the appropriate Church official named in Stage One (or their deputy) will ask an independent person or persons to consider the complaint and write a report setting out the facts, evaluating available evidence, reaching whatever conclusions are possible, and recommending an outcome. This shall be done as quickly as possible, but the Church may take whatever time is necessary to appoint such a person or persons. Where it is judged by the Church Official that the issues involved are particularly serious or complex, they are advised to appoint more than one investigator, who will work as a team.

Step two: The conduct of the investigation

The independent investigator(s) will contact the complainant to discuss their complaint and if appropriate, to arrange to meet with them.

The independent investigator(s) may similarly meet with the respondent. They shall make such enquiries as they consider appropriate, including, if appropriate, with people involved in the situation other than the complainant and the respondent. They may hold more than one meeting separately with the complainant and with the respondent. If they consider this to be appropriate and both parties consent, they may also consider possibilities of restorative justice.

On any occasion where the independent investigator(s) meets with the complainant, the complainant is entitled to have present another person, who may speak by invitation; where there is more than one meeting, it is helpful if this is the same person.

On any occasion when the independent investigator(s) meets with the respondent, the respondent shall be entitled to have present another person, who may speak by invitation; again, where there is more than one meeting, it is helpful if this is the same person.

Summary notes will be kept of all meetings throughout the process, which shall be drafted by, and remain the property of, the Church.

If at any stage during the investigation it becomes clear to the investigator(s) that the matter should more properly be considered under the auspices of the Ministerial Disciplinary or Incapacity Procedures, of the disciplinary process for Office Holders, the investigator(s) should recommend that action to the appropriate Church official.

Step three: The Investigators Report

The independent investigator(s) will write a report for the Church Official setting out the facts, evaluating available evidence, reaching whatever conclusions are possible, and recommending an outcome. A draft copy of the report will be shown to the complainant and the respondent to give both parties the opportunity to correct any errors of fact contained within the report (and only errors of fact, they may not change the stated opinions and conclusions of the investigator/s). The investigator(s) will endeavour to submit the final, checked, report to the Church Official for review within twelve calendar weeks of beginning the investigation, and will keep parties informed on progress throughout.

For particularly complex matters, or where people's availability is very limited, the process may take longer still.

The Church Official will review the report to ensure that it adequately sets out the facts of the case, evaluates the available evidence, reaches whatever conclusions are possible and recommends an appropriate outcome. When the Church Official is satisfied with the report, it will be agreed as final, and sent to both the complainant and the respondent. It is to be treated as confidential, except to the extent required to implement the findings of the report.

Step four: The outcome

Upon completion of their enquiries, the independent investigator(s) will hope to have achieved one of the following possible outcomes (although this list is not exhaustive):

- The complainant is satisfied that the matters raised in the complaint have been resolved
- The complainant and the respondent have reached a mutual agreement that the matter need go no further
- The independent investigator(s) offer(s) advice to the respondent(s) as to their future conduct
- The independent investigator(s) make any other recommendation(s) that seem(s) to them appropriate.
- The complaint has been withdrawn
- The complaint has been dismissed, or
- The complaint having been dealt with, the matter is, despite no agreement having been reached, nonetheless concluded.

Review

There are two points in the process where a review may be called for:

1. The complainant may call for a review at the end of Stage One if they feel that the relevant Church Official named in stage one of part one (or their deputy) has incorrectly determined that the process does not continue to Stage Two.
2. The complainant, or the respondent, may call for review at the end of Stage Three if either believes the investigation was not carried out appropriately, or new information or evidence which had been withheld, either intentionally or not, has come to light and should be considered.

Stage One review

If the complainant feels that Stage One was not carried out appropriately, they may call for the outcome to be reviewed. The complainant must submit their request for review in writing to the relevant Church Official (see next paragraph) within two calendar weeks of receiving notification that the complaint will not be progressed beyond Stage One.

Local Church processes will be reviewed by the Synod Clerk or their deputy of the relevant Synod, to whom the complainant should address the request for review. Synod processes will be reviewed by the General Secretary or their deputy, to whom the request for review should be addressed. For General Assembly processes, where the General Secretary or their deputy was the appropriate Church Official handling the complaint, the process will be reviewed by someone appointed by the Officers of the Assembly and the request for review should be submitted to the Clerk to the Assembly or their deputy.

The reviewer will consider the complainant's written complaint, the decision of the Church Official to whom the complaint was made, and they may choose to speak with the complainant and the relevant Church Official.

Only one review is possible. The review may determine one of two things:

1. The Stage One outcome was appropriate, in which case the complaint is ended, and the complainant will be informed in writing.
2. The Stage One outcome was inappropriate, and the complaint should be progressed to Stage Two or Stage Three. In this case, Stage Three will be handled by the appropriate Church Official of the Council of the Church that reviewed the decision (so for reviews of local church decision, the appropriate Church Official to handle Stage Three would be the Synod Clerk or their deputy, for Synod processes, the appropriate Church Official to handle Stage Three would be the General Secretary or their deputy, or for General Assembly, the Officers of Assembly would determine who handled Stage Three after a decision of the General Secretary or their deputy had been reviewed).

Stage Three review

If the complainant or the respondent are unhappy with the outcome of Stage Three, they may ask for it to be reviewed. They must submit their request for review within two calendar weeks of having received the final copy of the Stage Three report. There are only two grounds on which a review may be requested:

1. That Stage Three was not carried out appropriately.
2. That new information or evidence which had been withheld, either intentionally or not, has come to light that may change the outcome of Stage Three.

Local Church processes will be reviewed by the Synod Clerk of the relevant Synod or their deputy, to whom the request for review should be addressed. Synod processes will be reviewed by the General Secretary or their deputy, to whom the request for review should be addressed. General Assembly processes, where the General Secretary or their deputy was the appropriate Church Official handling the complaint, will be reviewed by someone appointed by the Officers of the Assembly and the request for review should be submitted to the Clerk to the Assembly or their deputy. The complainant or respondent must set out in writing the reasons why they believe Stage Three was carried out inappropriately, or the nature of the new information or evidence that has come to light that may change the outcome, and the reasons why it has not come to light until now.

The reviewer will examine the initial complaint, the report of the investigator(s) and any other paperwork they deem it appropriate to request. They may speak with the complainant and the respondent, and anyone else they deem appropriate. The purpose of the review is not to repeat wholesale the investigation, but to assess whether the investigation was appropriately carried out, and the report and any

recommendations are appropriate to the results of the investigation. Only where the reviewer has grounds to believe there was a substantial failing in the investigation, may they themselves undertake any necessary further investigation to arrive at their conclusions. Where new information or evidence has come to light, and the reviewer is satisfied that there is good reason why it was not produced, then the complaint could be referred back to the investigator(s) or it could be reconsidered in full by the reviewer with the benefit of the new evidence or information.

There are two possible outcomes of a Stage Three review:

1. It is determined that the Stage Three investigation was appropriately carried out and the report stands. In this instance the complainant and respondent will be informed in writing, and the complaint will be ended.
2. The reviewer provides an amended report with a different outcome and/or recommendations.
3. The reviewer provides an amended report with the same outcome and recommendations, but which recognises and records that significant information or evidence has come to light albeit that it does not affect the outcome and recommendations.

The Stage Three reviewer will endeavour to reach their conclusions, and inform the complainant and the respondent of them, within six weeks of the review being lodged.

Only one Stage Three review is possible. The outcome of a Stage Three review is final, cannot itself be reviewed, and the matter is ended.

General provisions

1. This policy shall only apply to Local Ecumenical Partnerships in so far as it relates to people or buildings under the oversight of the United Reformed Church.
2. Where there remains dissatisfaction following the conclusion of the complaints process:
 - (a) where the complaint concerns a local church, its minister or any of its officers, a Synod pastoral committee (or similar committee) may ask for a version of the report and its conclusions, produced in such a way as to maintain confidentiality, in order to consider whether any lessons may be learnt to aid good practice
 - (b) where the complaint concerns a synod or its officers, an appropriate committee or advisory group of the Assembly may ask for a version of the report and its conclusions, produced in such a way as to maintain confidentiality, in order to consider whether any lessons may be learnt to aid good practice

- (c) where the complaint concerns the work of the General Assembly or its post-holders, the Officers of General Assembly may ask for a version of the report and its conclusions, produced in such a way as to maintain confidentiality, in order to consider whether any lessons may be learnt to aid good practice.

Such reviews are only to consider whether lessons may be learned to aid good practice and do not constitute of re-opening of the case.

3. Where the party expressing dissatisfaction is acting vexatiously, maliciously or wilfully refusing to accept the report, the other party to the complaint should not be troubled further.
4. This discretion to follow up the outcomes of a complaint is not subject to review or appeal.

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Appendix
A GUIDE TO THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
to be read in conjunction with the Complaints Procedure (Section Q)

STAGE ONE

Stage One of the complaints procedure is the triage stage where complaints will be taken seriously, but may be redirected to other places.

Stage One seeks to ascertain three things:

- a) That the complaint is about something that is within the remit of the body receiving it.
- b) That the complaint is an appropriate complaint to be handled using the procedure (rather than another procedure).
- c) That all appropriate forms of informal attempts to resolve the complaint (Stage Two) have been tried before the complaint moves to Stage Three.

Guidance as to the appropriate recipient of a complaint is contained in step one.

Guidance as to the information needed for a complaint to be considered is contained in step two.

On receipt of a complaint the appropriate church official must ascertain that the complaint falls within the scope of the complaints procedure (see step three).

The appropriate church official will then ascertain whether informal processes have already been used to resolve the issue, or whether they might be (see step four).

STAGE TWO

Stage Two of the complaints procedure allows for the involvement of mediation as a tried and trusted means of resolving an issue without recourse to the more formal procedure that is Stage Three of the process.

STAGE THREE

Stage Three of the complaints procedure is the formal investigation of a complaint that, a) properly falls within the remit of the complaints procedure (Stage One), and b) has already sought resolution through informal processes (Stage Two).

In step one, an investigator (or investigators) is appointed by the appropriate church official (to be determined in each case) who received the complaint in Stage One.

Step two allows for the investigator(s) to meet with both the complainant and respondent(s) (ie, the person complained about). Both the complainant and respondent may be accompanied for such meetings.

In step three, the investigators draft a report, sending a draft to both complainant and respondent(s) for the correction of factual errors only.

The report will then be submitted to the appropriate church official who received the complaint in Stage One. The report will then be sent to the complainant and respondent(s).

Step four summarises the range of conclusions (outcomes) which the investigator's report might reach:

- The complainant is satisfied that the matters raised in the complaint have been resolved
- The complainant and the respondent have reached a mutual agreement that the matter need go no further
- The independent investigator(s) will offer advice to the respondent(s) as to their future conduct.
- The independent investigator(s) make any other recommendation(s) that seem(s) to them appropriate
- The complaint has been withdrawn
- The complaint has been dismissed, or
- The complaint having been dealt with, the matter is, despite no agreement having been reached, nonetheless concluded

Stage Three allows for a review after either Stage One and/or Stage Three.