



To: All Handbook holders
From: the UEC office, Stanway

15 Aug 2023

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Dear friends,

Grievance Procedure

This letter is to explain the rationale behind the Grievance Procedure, and for you to have these pages in your Handbook in section 8.

First, because the UEC is a Christian organisation, its prime source of procedure if someone has a grievance is Scripture. In particular, look at Jesus' words in Matthew 18 v15-17 (bear in mind that "brother" includes "sister" and "he" includes "she"):

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won him over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen, tell it to the Church; and if he refuses to listen even to the Church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

There are also Jesus' words in Matthew 5 v25-26 to bear in mind. It must surely be the hope and prayer that issues between Christians can be resolved this way, leading to the restoration of good relationships.

Second, because the UEC is a charitable company, it is subject to the laws of the land – and is accountable to the Charity Commission (being a charity) and Companies House (being an incorporated company). Therefore, it is necessary to have not only a Grievance Procedure, but also a Disciplinary Procedure (page 8.2 in your Handbook) and other procedures as required.

The Grievance Procedure set out below applies to employees using the definition of "employee" as it appears in employment law (that is, a PAYE-employee contract). The term can also be used to refer to unpaid volunteers and those who are self-employed in their work for the Church (including Ministers). Where there is no PAYE-employee-employer contractual relationship, Churches should first act in accordance with Scripture, and if this is unsuccessful to then use the Grievance Procedure.

Yours sincerely in His service,

Howard R Gardner

Howard R Gardner
UEC Company Secretary

Definitions for the purposes of this procedure:

1. "Grievances" are concerns, problems or complaints that employees raise with their employers.
2. The term "employee" means either those employed by the local Church or the UEC,
3. The "local Church" means the Church, a member of the UEC, at which the grievance has been raised.
4. The "UEC Board" means the Board comprising the recognised Senior Ministers, Ministers and Associate Ministers who vote at Board meetings.
5. "Supervisor" means the person to whom the employee with the grievance is accountable.
6. This procedure does not form part of a *Terms of Employment* or *Terms of Appointment*.
7. This grievance procedure does not affect your statutory rights under Government Employment legislation.

The Four key points for a fair Grievance Procedure are:

1. Employers (the local Church or the UEC) and employees should deal with issues promptly and consistently, and employers (the local Church or the UEC) should carry out any necessary investigations.
2. The employee should have the opportunity to put their case against their employer.
3. The employee should have the opportunity to appeal against any decision/decisions.
4. The employee should have the right to be accompanied at any formal meeting if they so choose by someone who is not acting in a professional capacity.

1 Introduction

- a) The aim of this Grievance Procedure is to settle grievances or complaints fairly and it is intended to operate simply and quickly. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue at the earliest possible stage, and at each stage effort will be made in order to settle the issue amicably and thus avoid proceeding to the next stage.
- b) If an employee has a problem or difficulty with any aspect of their role, the matter should, in the first instance, be referred to his/her supervisor – most likely the Minister of their local Church. If the employee is the most senior Minister at the Church, the matter should be raised with the Church's Leadership Team. Every effort must be made to reach a solution between the parties.
- c) Often a quiet word or asking for support may be all that is needed to resolve the issue.
- d) However, if the issue cannot be resolved informally (i.e. at local Church level), the employee should follow the procedure as shown at paragraph 2 The Procedure, by contacting the UEC Deputy Chairman in writing, to raise a formal grievance.

2 The Procedure

- a) Once the grievance has been received in writing by the UEC Deputy Chairman (or by another UEC Minister appointed by the Deputy Chairman), then within one month of the grievance being raised he will investigate the grievance.
- b) The UEC makes it clear that it will treat all grievances fairly and objectively, even if the grievance is about something that the UEC (the Board or its committees or representatives) has said or done or not done.
- c) The employee must detail in writing the specific circumstance or circumstances which constitute the grievance, with dates, times, witnesses, etc, as applicable.
- d) The UEC Deputy Chairman will then conduct any necessary investigations, to establish the facts of the grievance, with consideration given as to the next course of action. The employee may be invited to a meeting with due notice and may bring a friend or colleague to the meeting for support, whose name should be advised to the meeting beforehand.
- e) Having considered the grievance, the UEC Deputy Chairman will give his decision regarding the case by writing to the employee, which will normally be within ten working days of any such investigation. If appropriate, the decision will set out what action needs to be taken to resolve the grievance, or if the grievance is not upheld, will explain the reasons. This will also include notifying the employee of his/her right of appeal, and the procedure to be followed.

3 Rights of Appeal

- a) If still unresolved, the employee may refer the matter, in writing, to the Chairman of the Board of the UEC, or if the Chairman has already been involved in an earlier stage of the procedure, or to another nominated Board member.
- b) The employee wishing to appeal against a grievance decision, must do so in writing within ten working days of receiving written notification of the grievance decision, stating the reasons for the appeal. Any documents submitted in support of the appeal must be attached.
- c) Arrangements for the appeal meeting will be made by the Chairman (or another nominated Board member if appropriate) who will ensure that a note-taker is present if possible. The appeal meeting should be held without unavoidable delay. Where possible, at least two members of the Board will constitute an Appeal Panel. The UEC Board members hearing the appeal should have had no direct involvement in the case.
- d) The employee is entitled to be accompanied at the appeal meeting by a representative who could be a friend or another Church member.
- e) The meeting may be adjourned by the Appeal Panel hearing the appeal, if it is considered necessary to undertake further investigation. The meeting will be reconvened as soon as possible.
- f) The decision of the Appeal Panel hearing the appeal shall be final.

To be reviewed by the Finance Committee, September 2023.