

# URBAN THEOLOGY UNIT

## STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Issued 10 April 2008

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of Student Disciplinary Procedures at Urban Theology Unit is to provide a fair and systematic approach to the enforcement of standards of conduct and performance affecting all students at UTU. The objective of the disciplinary policy is:

- To ensure a fair and consistent practice for dealing with breaches of discipline and sub-standard performance.
- To provide guidance to the UTU Management Committee, the Methodist Oversight Committee and the Director on best practice in disciplinary matters.

This procedure sets out the action that will normally be taken when UTU rules are breached but it is only a guide and UTU reserves the right to alter the procedure and/or miss out certain steps from time to time in accordance with the particular circumstances in question.

### 2. PRINCIPLES

If a student is subject to disciplinary action:

- The procedure is designed to establish the facts as quickly as possible and to deal fairly and consistently with disciplinary issues. No disciplinary action will be taken until the matter has been investigated.
- At every stage the student will be advised of the nature of the complaint and be given the opportunity to state his or her case.
- At the formal stage in the procedure the student will have the right to be accompanied by a fellow student or, if a Methodist Initial Training Student, by a member of their local Circuit.
- A student will not be removed from training for a first breach of discipline except:
  1. in the case of gross misconduct (see Section 4)  
or, for a Methodist Initial Training Student,
  2. (i) any breach of the discipline of the Church, as contained in the Deed of Union, Standing Orders or the usage of the Church;  
(ii) any words, acts or omissions which are incompatible with the office or standing of the person complained against in relation to the Church or which otherwise constitute a failure in the conduct to be expected of the person complained against;  
(iii) any conviction or formal police caution which, whether previously known or otherwise, would be a bar to appointment to office under Standing Order 010(2)(ii).<sup>1</sup>
- In the case of 1. above, UTU, in consultation with the relevant university, has the right to terminate training without notice.
- In the case of 2. above, in consultation with Formation in Ministry (or their successor), the Oversight Committee has the right to recommend suspension from training, and to recommend to MCPOC that ministerial training be terminated with immediate effect.
- The student has the right to appeal against any disciplinary action taken against him or her.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, Volume 2, 2006, p.293

### **3. BREACHES OF GENERAL DISCIPLINE**

#### **Informal Stage**

Where a student falls below an acceptable standard of conduct or performance then a Tutor or, for Methodist Initial Training Students, a Tutor or a member of the Oversight Committee, should attempt to encourage improvement through personal interview. Evidence of poor conduct or performance should be provided to the student, who in turn should be given the opportunity to put his or her side of the matter. Interviews may occur more than once before the formal stages of the procedure and brief notes should be kept in the individual's personal file for reference purposes. The student should be made aware of what action will be taken if he or she fails to improve either his or her performance or conduct. A review date will be set by UTU or, in the case of Methodist Initial Training Students, the Oversight Committee.

#### **Formal Stage**

The individual should be invited to attend a disciplinary interview or, in the case of Methodist Initial Training Students, a meeting of the Oversight Committee, and should be informed of his or her rights at least 24 hours before the interview is convened.

To be effective, disciplinary action should always be exercised as soon as possible after the event in question.

Depending on the outcome of the procedure some form of disciplinary action may be taken as follows:

- **Verbal Warning**

In cases of unsatisfactory performance or misconduct, a student will initially be given a formal verbal warning by a Tutor or, in the case of Methodist Initial Training Students, the Oversight Committee. The student will be informed of:

- The reason for the warning and of the consequences of any repetition or failure to improve to acceptable standards
- That this warning is the first stage of the disciplinary procedure
- That he or she has a right of appeal

A note of the warning will be entered on the student's personal file and UTU or, in the case of Methodist Initial Training Students, the Oversight Committee will set a review date.

- **Written Warning**

In the event of more serious or further misconduct, or a failure to improve, a written warning will be given. This will state the reason for the warning and a note that if there is no improvement after a given time, then a final written warning will be given.

The written warning will also include:

- The level of improvement required
- The date by which it is to be achieved
- What will happen if it is not
- How to appeal

A copy of this first written warning will be entered on the student's personal record (but the warning will lapse after 12 months, subject to satisfactory conduct and/or performance).

- **Final Written Warning**

In the event of:

- More serious or further misconduct, or failure to improve standards, or
- Serious misconduct or poor performance which warrants only one written warning prior to dismissal

A final written warning will be given to the student. This will give details of the complaint, and warn that any further misconduct or continued failure to improve performance to acceptable standards within a given time will result in dismissal.

A copy of this final warning will be entered on the student's personal record (but the warning will lapse after 12 months, subject to satisfactory conduct and/or performance).

- **Termination of Training**

If there is no satisfactory improvement or if further serious misconduct occurs, the student's training at UTU will be terminated.

#### **4. GROSS MISCONDUCT**

If after investigation it is deemed that the student has committed an offence of the following nature (the list is not exhaustive), the normal consequence will be termination of training:

- Theft, fraud, deliberate falsification of student documents
- Violent behaviour, physical assault, fighting, bullying
- Deliberate damage to UTU property
- Sexual, racial or disability harassment and/or abuse
- Being unfit to be able to study through alcohol or illegal drugs
- Gross negligence
- Gross insubordination
- Breach of confidentiality
- In the case of Methodist Initial Training Students, any breach of discipline of the Church as set out in section **2. PRINCIPLES** [ref: *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, Volume 2, 2006, p.293].

Whilst the alleged gross misconduct is being investigated, the student may be suspended from all teaching sessions and tutorials. Such suspension is not regarded as a form of disciplinary action and will be for as short a period as possible.

Any decision to terminate training will only be taken after full investigation.

If the student is found to have committed an act of gross misconduct, UTU has the right to terminate the student's training without notice.

#### **5. APPEALS**

If the student wishes to appeal against any disciplinary action, he or she should inform the Chair of Trustees or, in the case of Methodist Initial Training Students, the Chair of the Oversight Committee, in writing, of the reasons for the appeal within seven days of receiving formal notification of the disciplinary decision. All appeals will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible in the circumstances.

Wherever practicable the appeal will normally be heard at the highest senior level within UTU. The decision will be final. UTU will promptly confirm to the student in writing the results of the appeal, and outline the reasons for the decision reached.