



<b>Complaint Management</b>	<b>Policy Name:</b>	Complaint Management
	<b>Policy Reference</b>	Gov06
	<b>Applies To:</b>	AoG Inc.
	<b>Approved By:</b>	Board Chair/Board of Directors
	<b>Approval Date:</b>	18/09/20
	<b>Next review Date:</b>	September 2023
	<b>Policy Lead:</b>	Operations Manager
	<b>Policy Contact:</b>	policy@aog.org.uk

<b>PART 1 – Policy Statement:</b>
AoG Inc. is committed to the highest standards of governance through policy and procedural management to meet the needs of the organisation and support the outworking of the National Leadership Team’s Vision.
<b>Background/Introduction/Statement/Preamble</b>
<p>The Charity Commission report “Cause for Complaint” states: “an effective complaints management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships with the people on whom the charity depends. Handling complaints well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demonstrates commitment to clients and other stakeholders</li> <li>● Demonstrates commitment to providing the best possible service</li> <li>● Helps to find out about things that have gone wrong so they can be fixed</li> <li>● Helps prevent things going wrong again in future</li> </ul> <p>The Board of Assemblies of God Incorporated has formed a complaint management process to be operationally outworked by senior leadership teams which will pursue our risk management goals and objectives.</p>
<b>Definitions</b>
<p>Complaint: a complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Assemblies of God Incorporated (AoG Inc).</p> <p>Functionary: "any person carrying out an agreed function for or on behalf of AoG Inc or whose actions will reflect on AoG Inc including without limitation all employees of AoG Inc, any self-employed person or person supplying services to AoG Inc under a contract for services, any other person engaged for any purpose connected with AoG Inc whether on a paid or voluntary basis”.</p>
<b>Scope (if relevant)</b>
<p>Complaints may come from members of the public or from individuals and organisations given Status by AoG Inc. This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use AoG Inc’s Discipline and Grievance policies. This policy does not cover complaints relating to General Council or Company Membership matters, which are covered within the Company Articles.</p> <p>Complaints should be made within 12 months of the incident that caused the problem, or of you realising there is a problem. We can extend this if circumstances show it would have been difficult for the complaint to have been made earlier, as long as it is still possible to investigate the facts of the case.</p>

Should the nature of the complaint relate to any Safeguarding, Criminal or Civil Proceedings or Statutory requirements the 12 month complaint deadline will be exempt.

### Objectives/Purpose

AoG Inc views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to try to put things right for the person [or organisation] that made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at AoG Inc knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and relationships repaired
- To gather information that helps us to improve what we do
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint

Our policy covers complaints about:

- the quality of service we provide through AoG Inc staff
- the behaviour of our staff (AoG Inc employees or volunteers)
- any action or lack of action by staff affecting an individual or group
- major concerns that may impact on the accreditation of AoG Ministers and Churches by AoG Incorporated, such as gross misconduct.

Our policy does **NOT** cover:

- complaints which should be directed to the local church governing body or external agency (eg Charity Commission, Action Fraud, Police etc);
- anonymous complaints or complaints that do not specify whom the complaint is about or give contact details of the complainant;
- complaints about access to information where procedures and remedies are set out in legislation, e.g., Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act;
- matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure.

Complaints about employees or volunteers in AoG Churches who are part of the AoG Fellowship should be directed in the first instance to the Trustees/Directors of that church. Complainants may also be informed of the Charity Commission referral process, details of which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>.

### Roles & Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Directors.

The Office of General Manager will be responsible for the operational processes when dealing with complaints other than College Complaints (see Appendix 2).

### PART 2 – Version History of the Policy:

Policy Author	Version #	Summary of Changes
Operations Mngr	1.0	New Document

## **PART 3 – General Procedures**

### **3.1 Complaints**

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email, or in writing. However, there will usually need to be a written complaint for it to be further considered.

All complaints will result in an outcome, whether held or upheld and whether no further action or a series of recommendations will be made in an attempt to resolve the matter.

All complaint information will be handled sensitively. Only those who need to know will be told, and any relevant data protection requirements will be followed.

A complainant may be asked to give consent to personal data being shared with a third party when we are required to do so by law or to protect members of the public from serious harm.

**Note:** AoG Churches are independent charitable organisations employing an AoG Minister, and therefore by definition third parties.

### **3.2 Data Protection**

AoG Inc takes privacy concerns seriously. If anyone has any concerns about the way their information is being handled, they should contact the Data Controller without delay. They can be contacted as follows:

**Phone number: 01777 817663**

**Email address: [goffice@aog.org.uk](mailto:goffice@aog.org.uk)**

AoG Inc will carefully investigate and review all data protection complaints and take appropriate action in accordance with data protection legislation. AoG Inc will keep the complainant informed of major changes during the progress of our investigation and the outcome. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may wish to contact the Information Commissioner's Office at <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>.

Any complaint received by us must be referred to the Operations Team, who will arrange for an investigation as follows:

- A record will be made of the details of the complaint.
- Consideration will be given as to whether the circumstances amount to a breach of data protection legislation and action taken in accordance with the Data Breach Procedure.
- The complainant will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint and of the outcome of the investigation.
- At the conclusion of the investigation, the Operations Team may lead a review of the circumstances and recommend any improvements to systems or procedures.

## **PART 4 – Linked Policies:**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Number #</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Data Protection	Gov02	Data Protection

**PART 5 – Appendices:**

Number #	Appendix Name
1	Complaints Procedures
2	College Complaints Procedures

## APPENDIX 1 - PROCEDURES

### Our Standards for Handling Complaints

- We treat all complaints seriously, whether they are made by telephone, by letter, or by email.
- Any verbal complaints will be required to be put in writing.
- You will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times - we would hope, too, that you will be courteous and fair in your dealings with our staff and volunteers at all times.
- We will treat your complaint in confidence.
- We will deal with your complaint promptly - we will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within 5 working days and we will aim to send you a full reply within 20 working days of receipt.
- If we cannot send a full reply within 20 working days of receipt, we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full.

### Confidentiality

- All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

### How to Complain

#### General Complaints

- You can make a formal complaint about AoG Incorporated (National Ministry Centre) by email or post.
- Complaints about AoG Churches who are part of the AoG Fellowship should be directed in the first instance to the Trustees/Directors of that church. You can also find information about the Charity Commission referral process here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>
- You can send an email to [info@aog.org.uk](mailto:info@aog.org.uk) or in writing to National Ministry Centre, Mattersey Hall, Retford Road, Mattersey, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN10 5HD.

#### Data Protection Complaints

- AoG Inc takes privacy concerns seriously. If you have any concerns about the way your information is being handled by AoG Inc, you should contact the Data Controller without delay. They can be contacted by phone (01777 817663) or email ([operations@aog.org.uk](mailto:operations@aog.org.uk))

### Complaints Procedure

- We have a 3-stage complaints procedure. At each stage, it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including any documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint in line with

our procedure and against AoG Inc (and not a locally autonomous, independent charity AoG church).

#### Stage One

- It is worth noting that you should seek to address the nature of the complaint directly with the individual as means of resolving the issue before initiating the complaint procedure. If this is unsuccessful and the matter has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, it is recommended that mediation is considered in an attempt to resolve the matter BEFORE a formal complaint is progressed.
- The complaint will be assessed at the National Ministry Centre to confirm it is a matter of complaint that falls within the AoG Complaints Policy, or needs to be referred back to the complainant to address through the local church or other external agency such as Charity Commission/OSCR, Action Fraud, Local Authority Designated Officer, Police etc.

#### Stage Two

- If it is a valid AoG Inc complaint (i.e. meets policy clause 3.2), this becomes the first opportunity for the internal National Ministry Centre department to resolve the dissatisfaction, and the majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage. The complaint will be assessed by National Ministry Centre management and delegated to the most suitable team (or teams), subject to the nature of the complaint. Communication with the complainant shall usually be co-ordinated through the National Ministry Centre.

#### Stage Three

- Once the complaint has been investigated and a response made, if you remain dissatisfied, you may request a final review by the General Manager with responsibility for the National Ministry Centre. Your request should be sent to the above address and marked for the attention of the General Manager..

#### Timescales

##### Stage 1 - Maximum 5 working days

- acknowledgement within 5 working days
- full response within 5 working days

##### Stage 2 - Maximum 20 working days

- acknowledgement within 5 working days
- full response within 20 working days

##### Stage 3 - Maximum 20 working days

- acknowledgement within 5 working days
- full response within 20 working days

#### Extending Time Limits

- We aim to complete all complaints within the timescales above; however, if a complaint is very complex it may occasionally be necessary to extend the time limit. If this is the case, we will keep the complainant informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and the new deadline.
- Following any stage of the procedure, a complainant has a maximum of 7 calendar days from the date of the final response to request that their complaint be progressed to the next stage.

#### If you remain dissatisfied

- If, having followed the 3 stages of our complaints procedure, you still remain dissatisfied, you are advised to make a referral to the Charity Commission:  
<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

#### The Process for Complaint Investigation

##### **Acknowledgement**

- A written response will be sent acknowledging receipt of the complaint, enclosing a copy of this procedure, and informing who the Investigating Officer(s) will be.
- At Stage 2 of the procedure, a person (or persons) will be appointed to investigate the complaint.
- If the complaint is against an employee, contractor, or functionary, they cannot be part of any investigating team.
- If there is a complaint against a member of the investigating team, that complaint shall be assessed by the General Manager as to whether a replacement is required. If the complaint is against the General Manager, that complaint shall be assessed by the Professional Standards Team Leader.

##### **Investigation**

- The nominated Investigating Officer(s) will aim to conduct their review within 20 working days of the complaint being received (unless an extension is agreed to by the National Leadership Team or their delegated sub-committee). Any extension rationale must be documented in the Investigation Report.
- The investigation will be conducted impartially and any conflict of interest must be declared, with the Investigating Officer(s) standing down from the investigation.
- Any formal meeting arranged with a complainant will usually be conducted by at least two responsible officers.

##### **Findings**

- The completed Investigation Report should contain the following content as a minimum:
  - Summary of complaint
  - Scope of investigation
  - Timeline (if deemed required)
  - Investigation findings

- Outcome(s)
- Recommendations / Actions

- Additional detail may be added to the investigation report if deemed necessary by the Investigating Officer(s).
- The Investigating Officer(s) will produce an Investigation Report and a copy will be retained by AoG Inc. The complainant has the right to request a summary. Any summary given must ensure compliance with data protection and employment laws.

### **Outcomes**

- The Investigation Report shall be considered by the appropriate team within AoG Inc who will consider what actions it may take. Subject to the findings and recommendations, actions may include (but are not limited to):
  - Referral of the complaint to the church management (e.g., Trustees) or another external authority (e.g., LADO, Charity Commission)
  - Disciplinary or intervention process, but only in accordance with AoG Inc's constitutional remit
- All copies of correspondence with all parties concerning the investigation will be held in compliance with the data protection regulations.

## APPENDIX 2 - COLLEGE PROCEDURES

<u>Student Complaints and Academic Appeals Procedure</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This procedure needs to be taken in conjunction with standard complaints and appeals procedures of University of Chester. We affirm that there will be no discrimination in the case of students who make a complaint or mount an appeal.</li></ul>
<u>Definitions</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By 'complaint' we understand 'an expression of specific concern raised by one or more students about the standard of the provision provided by the College, in relating both to the service it offers and to student learning opportunities'. See further, <a href="http://www.oiahe.org.uk/good-practice-framework/contents/complaints-and-academic-appeals.aspx">http://www.oiahe.org.uk/good-practice-framework/contents/complaints-and-academic-appeals.aspx</a> (10); <a href="http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/uk-quality-code-for-higher-education-chapter-b9-academic-appeals-and-student-complaints#.VmguloR3X8s">http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/uk-quality-code-for-higher-education-chapter-b9-academic-appeals-and-student-complaints#.VmguloR3X8s</a>, p. 4.</li><li>• An 'academic appeal' in this context is a request by a student, or group of students, to review a decision relating to a mark or set of marks awarded, progression, or awards.</li></ul>
<u>Complaints</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As a Christian institution that takes its commitment to its students very seriously, we are quick to respond to concerns raised by students and expect that, in the large majority of cases, complaints can be dealt with amicably and in a spirit of fellowship and cooperation.</li><li>• Minor complaints and suggestions for general improvements would normally come through the Student Representatives, who have regular Student Faculty meetings and bi-annual 'eBoS' (extended Board of Studies) with the Principal, Vice-Principal and Academic Dean.</li><li>• Where there are causes of concern that cannot be dealt with adequately or appropriately through Student Representatives, we ask students to raise those concerns informally, as soon as possible, with either the Vice-Principal (primarily for issues relating to the campus and to student life more generally) or the Academic Dean (primarily for academic related issues, including complaints about members of faculty). The Vice-Principal and Academic Dean will do all they can to resolve the issues of concern – in consultation with each other and with the Principal.</li><li>• NB. If the complaint involves either the Vice-Principal or Academic Dean, the initial complaint may be made to the other, whatever the subject.</li></ul>
<u>Complaints Procedure</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If concerns remain, then a student may make a formal complaint, in writing, to the Board of Governors (BG), giving as much detail as possible about the issue(s). The complaint will be discussed by them, who will contact the student within two weeks of the receipt of the complaint, to discuss the matter further. A formal response, outlining proposed action, will be given to the student within two weeks, from the time of that second contact between the BG and the student. Where appropriate the BG will consult with, and if necessary refer the complaint on to, relevant outside bodies.</li></ul>

- If the student is still not satisfied, the members of the BG who represent the Board of Directors will nominate an appropriately qualified independent adjudicator to investigate the complaint(s) further. The adjudicator will contact the student within two weeks, and, if necessary, arrange a meeting. The adjudicator will also talk to the BG and relevant College personnel. Within one week of those discussions, the adjudicator will give a verdict, in writing, to the student and to the BG, as to whether or not the complaint was justified, and what further action should be taken.
- Please note that in any meetings with the student to discuss matters further, formal or informal, the student is welcome to have a friend present. Whilst we hope it will not be necessary, if at any stage the student wants to seek legal representation (and particularly if the student wants to have a legal representative present at any meetings), the College needs to be informed so as to be able, if necessary, to seek its own legal representation.
- Full written records will be kept at each of the formal stages. They will be kept confidential.
- Once the complaints procedure has been completed, the BG will send a Completion of Procedures letter to the student. This letter will confirm that all complaints procedures have been correctly followed, and will indicate what action is to be taken, or why the complaint has been rejected.
- Where a student feels unable to make the complaint directly, he or she may nominate a representative.
- Where several students are bringing a complaint, the group, too, should nominate a representative. The above procedure, including the time frame will apply to representatives.
- If all attempts to resolve the matter internally are still deemed unsatisfactory, a student may appeal directly to the University of Chester. The University's primary role in these cases is to check that [the College has followed correct procedures](#). Further details are available via the [Chester Portal](#).

#### Academic Appeals

- Any student who is concerned about his or her initial grade may discuss this with their tutor. If it is found that there has been an irregularity, which may include ambiguity in the assessment instructions or tutorial guidance, then this may be communicated, with the tutor's agreement, to the Academic Dean and then, where appropriate, to the staff member performing the moderation of the module. This may occasionally lead to the raising or lowering of marks. Though this will often affect the whole class rather than an individual.
- Please note, though, that there is not ground for appeal against a marker's academic judgement. If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome, he or she may lodge an official complaint (see above).
- Once a mark has been finalised, any appeal must take place in line with the appeals procedure of the University of Chester. Again, though, appeals are possible only on the basis of procedural errors, such as incorrect assessment information being provided, administrative errors such as incorrect calculation of results, or extenuating circumstance that for some reason could not be declared in advance in the usual way.
- If marks have not yet been agreed by a Module Assessment Board (MAB), it may be possible to settle these matters internally; if the marks have been agreed at a MAB, students must

use the formal Appeals Procedure must be used. Guidance notes are provided in [Section 7 of the Quality and Standards Manual, Handbook F, available on the Chester Portal](#).

- Issues relating to progression and awards need to be taken up in an appeal directly to the University of Chester.

#### Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

- Mattersey Hall subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of our internal procedure, students may be able to apply for a review to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). Further details will be included in the Completion of Procedures letter. For further information, see <http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/how-to-make-a-complaint.aspx>