

## SEMINARY APPEALS POLICY

Columbia Theological Seminary's students, faculty, staff, and administration have the right to appeal certain processes. The Seminary Appeal process reviews appeals of matters adjudicated by the Seminary's [Complaint Policy](#), [Grievance Policy](#), and [Anti-Discrimination Policy](#).<sup>1</sup>

### **Co-Conveners of Appeal Panel**

The Appeal Panel ("Panel") will be co-convened by the following:

- **Associate Dean for Academic Administration**, or designee of the Dean of Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs, who will serve as convener for appeals related to academic matters.
- **Assistant Dean for Student Life and Formation**, or designee of the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Affairs, who will serve as convener for appeals related to student complaints and social policy violations.
- **Director of Human Resources**, or designee of the Vice President for Business and Finance, who will serve as a convener for administration or staff-related complaints or grievances.

The co-conveners are non-voting members of the Appeal Panel. It is the responsibility of the co-conveners to identify the make-up of the Panel in terms of its representation of various contingencies and to ensure that appointment to the representative slots is made by the persons below.

### **Appeal Panel**

The members of the Appeal Panel will be appointed as follows:

- **Members of Faculty**, appointed by the Dean of Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- **Members of Staff**, appointed by the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Affairs.
- **Members of Board of Trustees**, appointed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- **Members of EDI Council** who have no prior involvement with previously completed adjudicatory processes.

Co-conveners may also choose to appoint students to a Panel. If a student is called on to serve, it will typically be the President of the Student Government Association or another member of the SGA executive council, only serving one at a time. Students will under no circumstance serve on a Panel for matters involving faculty, staff, or administrators.

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<sup>1</sup> Until further notice, appeals of decisions made by the Judicial Commission or the Academic Standing Commission will be adjudicated via the appeal process outlined in those policies.

## **Responsibilities**

As needed, a Panel will be assembled and convened to consider appeals of decisions regarding violations of academic, social, and diversity, equity, and inclusion policies. The Panel will review written appeals from the Seminary's Complaint Policy, Grievance Policy, and Anti-Discrimination Policy to consider the merits of the information in the case file and the appeal request to determine if they meet the grounds for appeal based on the established grounds for appeal outlined below.

The Panel will make final decisions about prior determinations for policy violations and any sanctions, including the possibility of suspension or termination.

## **Grounds for Appeal**

At the conclusion of any process adjudicated by the Seminary's Complaint Policy, Grievance Policy, or Anti-Discrimination Policy, a party may appeal the decision on the following grounds:

- There was a procedural error, irregularity, or other inaccuracy on the part of the Seminary of such a nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result would have been different had there not been such an irregularity;
- There exists evidence of discrimination, prejudice, or bias on the part of the adjudicatory body making the recommendation or any members thereof;
- The existence of extenuating circumstances affecting the reporting or responding party's performance of which the initial adjudicatory body in question was not aware at the time the recommendation was made and which could not reasonably have been presented at the time.

**Dissatisfaction with the decision or determination of the initial adjudicatory body alone is not valid grounds for an appeal.** Upon receipt of a written appeal, the co-conveners will meet to determine the validity of the appeal based on the criteria outlined above.

An appeal with appropriate evidence should be submitted to one of the co-conveners of the Appeal Panel. The appeal must be submitted in writing within fourteen (14) business days of the initial determination. Appeals can be submitted to:

### *Academic Concerns*

#### **Ann Clay Adams**

Associate Dean for Academic Administration  
404.687.4524 | [adamsa@ctsnet.edu](mailto:adamsa@ctsnet.edu)

### *Student Concerns*

#### **Katie T. Ricks**

Assistant Dean for Student Life & Formation  
404.687.4664 | [ricksk@ctsnet.edu](mailto:ricksk@ctsnet.edu)

### *Employee Concerns*

#### **Jody D. Sauls**

Director of Human Resources/Title IX Coordinator  
404.687.4654 | [saulsj@ctsnet.edu](mailto:saulsj@ctsnet.edu)

## **Appeal Procedures**

1. The Appeal Panel will meet before reviewing a decision for the orientation and training of its members.

2. An assembled Panel will consider all aspects of reports heard by the Seminary's Complaint Policy, Grievance Policy, or Anti-Discrimination Policy. When it does so, it may review the case and the written appeal.
3. Following review, the Appeal Panel may:
  - a. Uphold the original decision of the adjudicating body;
  - b. Uphold the original decision of the adjudicating body but change the sanction (more or less severe);
  - c. Change the merit vs. no merit decision, which will return the case to the appropriate adjudicatory process and/or administrator of that process.
4. The decision of the Appeal Panel is final and cannot be appealed or challenged.

### **Matters Involving the President**

Appeals for grievances or complaints involving the President of the Seminary will be determined by the Chair of the Board of Trustees ("Chair"), in consultation with members of the executive committee of the Board as the Chair deems appropriate. At their own discretion, the Chair may accept or reject the recommendation of the Appeal Panel in whole or part. The Chair's determination will be communicated to the reporting and responding parties. The Chair's determination will be communicated within fourteen (14) business days of the Chair's receipt of the appeal. If the Chair cannot communicate their determination within fourteen (14) business days, the Chair will update the reporting and responding parties and provide a clear timeline for communication. The Chair's determination will be final and not subject to further appeal.

*Approved by the Faculty at its meeting on May 7, 2015. Revised and approved by Faculty at its meeting on January 31, 2019.*