



Procedure for Filing a Complaint regarding Online Courses

In the case of a complaint regarding an online course offered by the Seminary, the Seminary's complaint policy is followed. A student would fill out the Online Complaint Form and check the following box on the form: Academic – Online Courses in the Department or Administrative Unit section of the form. The complaint is then sent to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, who follows the Seminary Complaint Policy listed below. In the case of an appeal, the Seminary Appeals Policy would be followed.

If the student has exhausted all remedies at Columbia Theological Seminary, the student may then file an external complaint with the agency that provides oversight of post-secondary distance education, the National Council for State Authorization of Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA), through its Georgia state portal located within the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission.

1. For more information regarding NC-SARA Student Complaint Procedures and Policies, please use this link: [SARA Student Complaint procedure and policy](#)
2. To file a complaint, please use the following link: [GA-SARA Online Student Complaint Form](#)

Both the Seminary Complaint Policy and the Seminary Appeals Policy are found in the Student Handbook on the Current and are provided below in their entirety.

Seminary Complaint Policy

Columbia Theological Seminary (henceforth, "the Seminary") welcomes open communication from students, faculty, and staff regarding its policies and practices. Feedback helps the Seminary evaluate, clarify and improve processes, policies, and procedures.

If a member of the Seminary has a complaint, the person should, first, attempt to resolve the complaint with the individual directly responsible. If direct communication is not possible and/or unsuccessful, the person should communicate with the directly responsible individual's supervisor.

If direct communication and/or supervisor communication is not possible or unsuccessful, a person may lodge a more formal complaint using the [Online Complaint Form](#), which will forward a copy of the complaint to the associate dean of student formation. Complaints may also be submitted in writing. If the complaint is with the dean of student formation, the complaint should be submitted in writing directly to the president of the Seminary (AloyoV@ctsnet.edu). Written complaints should include:

1. the name of the person(s) and/or office against whom the complaint is being filed;
2. a detailed description of the incident(s) – providing dates and times where possible;
3. a description of any attempts taken to resolve the matter informally; and
4. a clear statement of the desired outcome or remedy being sought.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the associate dean of student formation will forward the complaint to the president and vice president responsible for the area. The vice president responsible for the area will engage in an initial review of the complaint to ensure the complaint is within the scope of the Seminary Complaint Policy. Should the vice president determine further action is necessary, they will conduct a thorough and fair review of the complaint, which may include follow up conversations with parties involved. The review shall be completed within fourteen (14) business days of receipt of the complaint.

Ordinarily, the vice president will respond to complaints with a determination, copying the president and dean of students, within fourteen (14) business days of receipt of the complaint from the dean of students. The dean of students will assist with and monitor progress and response to the complaint. Copies of the complaint, response, and all related correspondences and documentation will be maintained in the office of the dean of students. If the complaint is with the dean of students, copies of the complaint and response will be maintained in the president's office.

The Seminary recognizes its obligation to ensure that students, faculty, and staff who make complaints do not suffer adverse treatment because of the complaint. If a member of the Seminary community alleges such treatment, they will be referred, as appropriate, to the Seminary Grievance Policy, Anti-Discrimination Policy, or Seminary Complaint Policy.

Seminary Appeals Policy

All appeals of grievances shall be administered by the [Seminary Appeals Policy](#), which is co-convened by the associate dean for academic administration and associate dean for student formation. Please refer to the Seminary Appeal Policy for more information, which is co-convened by the associate dean for academic administration and assistant dean for student life & formation. Please refer to the Seminary Appeal Policy for more information.

Grounds for Appeal At the conclusion of any process adjudicated by the Seminary Complaint Policy, Seminary Grievance Policy, Equity Resolution Process, or Sexual Misconduct Process, 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 a valid ground for an appeal.

The Seminary Appeals Policy in full begins on the next page.

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.¹

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.
- **Associate Dean for Student Formation**, or designee of the Vice President for Student Formation and Campus Culture, 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 Business and Finance.
- **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.

¹ 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

Student Concerns

Natasha Patterson

Associate Dean for Student Formation
404.687.4664 | pattersonn@ctsnet.edu

Employee Concerns

Jody Sauls

Director of Human Resources
Title IX Coordinator 404.687.4654
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.