

Overview of the UUA Ministerial Misconduct Investigation Process

Revised August 2024

Intake and Notice

At the start of the process, the UUA's Complaint Intake person ("Intake") assigns an Advocate to help the Complainant navigate the complaint process. After Intake receives the formal complaint from the Complainant. The complaint is reviewed. If the complaint meets the threshold for investigative action, Intake assigns an Investigative Consultant and notifies the following people that an Investigative Consultant has been assigned: the Executive Secretary of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, the Complainant, and the Complainant's Advocate.

At this point, the Executive Secretary sends a formal notice letter to the Respondent (the person being complained about) and the Complainant and sends notice of the investigation to the board of the Respondent's current and/or former congregation. The notice letter advises that the Respondent arrange their own support from a Good Officer and also emphasizes the necessity for confidentiality and for refraining from any action that could be perceived as being retaliatory toward the Complainant. The Congregational Life Staff Regional Lead and Primary Contact will be cc'd in cases where the Respondent is serving as a congregational minister.

Outreach to Parties

The Investigative Consultant ("Consultant") will proceed with their investigation in accordance with the [MFC's Rules and Policies](#). In their initial email outreach to parties, the Consultant will ask to schedule a video or phone interview with the Complainant and their Advocate and will separately email the Respondent and their Good Officer to arrange a video or phone interview with them.

Information Gathering

In the Consultant's initial meeting with the Complainant, they will describe how the interview will go, describe next steps, answer any questions about the process, and ask investigative questions. Advocates may or may not join meetings according to the wishes of the Complainant.

In the Consultant's initial meeting with the Respondent, they will describe how the interview will go, describe next steps, and answer any questions about the process, and ask investigative questions. Good Officers may or may not join meetings according to the wishes of the Respondent.

The Consultant may ask the Complainant and/or the Respondent to provide additional documentation, contact information for witnesses, and/or statements from witnesses.

The Consultant will reach out to administrative witnesses (i.e., Congregational Life Staff) or witnesses that the parties are unable to contact themselves. The Consultant will review relevant contents of the Respondent's UUA file. As a result of this information-gathering, the Consultant may contact the Complainant or the Respondent to ask follow-up questions.

Response Period

During the investigation the Respondent and the Complainant have opportunities to respond in writing. These responses are directed and sent to the Consultant and will become part of the investigative materials. The response period begins once the Respondent and their Good Officer have been given access to the complaint and the Consultant determines with them a timeline for their formal written response (up to 4 weeks). The Consultant will notify the Complainant and their Advocate the date by which they can expect the Respondent's formal response.

When the formal response is received, the Consultant will send it to the Complainant and their Advocate with notice that they have two weeks to submit an optional reply to the response. If a reply is received, the Consultant will send it to the Respondent and their Good Officer with notice that they have two weeks to submit an optional final statement.

When the full response period (including response, reply, and final statement) has ended, the Consultant will notify the parties of a timeframe for any further research and preparation of the final report and recommendation.

Report and Recommendations

The Consultant prepares a final report and recommendation.

In cases where the investigation's findings do not meet the Threshold of an MFC review, all parties will be notified of this result.

When the investigation's findings do meet the Threshold, the Consultant will submit their final report directly to the Executive Secretary of the MFC without prior review by the parties. The Consultant will send a final email to the Complainant and Advocate, and separately to the Respondent and Good Officer, informing them that the Consultant's work is done, and that the report and recommendation have been submitted to the Executive Secretary. Any future communication regarding the investigation should go to the Advocate and Intake (for the Complainant) or the Good Officer and Executive Secretary (for the Respondent). The Executive Secretary (or a UUA staff member acting on their behalf) will send the executive summary to the Complainant (and their Advocate) and to the Respondent (and their Good Officer).

The investigative report and any subsequent actions by the MFC will follow the MFC guidelines for substantiation, findings, and recommendations (see [*Thresholds for Misconduct and Incompetence*](#)).

Referrals

Questions or concerns about the misconduct process, if not easily answered by the Consultant, can be directed to the Advocate (for the Complainant) and the Good Officer (for the Respondent), and the Advocate and Good Officer should reach out to Intake or the Executive Secretary, respectively, if they need further discussion.

Contact safecongregations@uua.org for more information.