



COMPANY POLICY

DISCIPLINARY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to establish a fair, impartial, transparent and accountable process for receiving, investigating, determining and resolving complaints, disputes and appeals relating to the professional conduct of ACRP affiliates and designation holders while protecting the public, maintaining professional standards and safeguarding the integrity of the Christian ministry profession.

2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to:

- All affiliates in good standing who are registered with ACRP;
- Holders of ACRP professional designations;
- Former affiliates or designation holders in respect of conduct that occurred while they were affiliated, active, and in good standing with ACRP.

This Policy applies exclusively to ACRP affiliates and designation holders and does not extend to applicants whose applications have not yet been approved. Any conduct, omission, or information arising during the application process that may affect an applicant's eligibility or suitability for registration or designation will be addressed in accordance with the applicable ACRP application procedures.

Termination of affiliation or resignation from ACRP shall not prevent the continuation of disciplinary proceedings where the alleged misconduct occurred during the period of affiliation.

3. LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

This Policy shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000 (PAJA);
- The ACRP Memorandum of Incorporation;
- ACRP Governance Rules;
- The ACRP Code of Ethics;
- The ACRP Scope of Practice;
- SAQA's Policy and Criteria for Recognising Professional Bodies and Registering Professional Designations; and
- Any other applicable legislation governing professional conduct and disciplinary proceedings.

4. PRINCIPLES

All disciplinary matters shall be conducted in accordance with the principles of natural justice, procedural fairness, impartiality and independence, confidentiality, transparency, accountability, and the balance of probabilities as the applicable standard of proof.

No person may participate in a disciplinary matter where an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest exists.

5. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this Policy:

- **“ACRP (Association of Christian Religious Practitioners)”** – a professional body recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), comprising expert practitioners within the field of Christian religious practice.
- **“Affiliate”** – an individual registered with ACRP, typically through admission, registration, or acceptance into a relevant ACRP Council. **Affiliation** signifies participation, identification, and a recognised relationship with the organisation, often involving adherence to its rules, standards, or values, and may confer certain responsibilities or privileges within that body. An affiliate can either be a designated affiliate or a non-designated affiliate.
- **“Appeal”** – a formal request for the review of a finding, disciplinary measures or decision made in terms of this Policy.
- **“Applicant”** – a person that has submitted an application to ACRP for registration as an affiliate, but whose application has not yet been formally approved by ACRP.
- **“Balance of Probabilities”** – the standard of proof applicable in disciplinary proceedings whereby a fact or allegation is regarded as proven if the evidence shows that it is more likely than not that the fact or allegation is true.
- **“Board”** – the Board of Directors of ACRP.
- **“Complainant”** – any person or body lodging a complaint.
- **“Designated Affiliate”** – an affiliate who has satisfied the prescribed requirements for an ACRP professional designation and has been formally awarded such a designation.
- **“Non-Designated Affiliate”** – an affiliate who has been accepted for affiliation, but who has not been awarded an ACRP professional designation.
- **“Disciplinary Committee”** – a committee established by ACRP to conduct formal disciplinary hearings and determine allegations of misconduct against affiliates and designation holders in accordance with this Policy. The Disciplinary Committee shall consider the evidence presented, determine whether misconduct has been established on a balance of probabilities, and impose an appropriate disciplinary measure where applicable.
- **“Disciplinary Panel”** – a panel appointed to hear and determine a disciplinary matter.
- **“Dispute”** – a disagreement regarding a procedural or administrative decision taken during the disciplinary process.
- **“Ethics Committee”** – the committee established by each ACRP Council to receive and conduct the preliminary assessment of complaints concerning the ethical or professional conduct of affiliates and designation holders registered under that Council, and to determine whether a matter should be resolved, referred for investigation, or submitted to the Disciplinary Committee for formal disciplinary proceedings in accordance with this Policy.
- **“Misconduct”** – any act or omission that breaches the ACRP Code of Professional Ethics, Scope of Practice, Policies, Rules or Conditions of Professional registration, other applicable legislation or conduct that may bring the ministry profession or ACRP into disrepute.
- **“Respondent”** – the affiliate against whom a complaint has been lodged.

6. TYPES OF COMPLAINTS

Complaints may include:

6.1 Affiliation Complaints

Complaints may relate to compliance with ACRP affiliation requirements, Governance Rules, Scope of Practice, registration obligations, CPD requirements, and designation requirements.

6.2 Professional Practice Complaints

Complaints may concern professional ministry/counselling conduct, ethical misconduct, abuse of authority or position, misrepresentation of qualifications or designation, conduct that brings the profession into disrepute, and violations of the ACRP Code of Professional Ethics.

7. WHO MAY LODGE A COMPLAINT

7.1 Eligible Complainants

A complaint may be lodged by any person or organisation that has reasonable grounds to believe that an ACRP affiliate, designation holder, or former affiliate has engaged in misconduct within the jurisdiction of ACRP.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Members of the public;
- Any individual or group receiving professional services from an ACRP affiliate in good standing—including education, counselling, pastoral care, advice, leadership, or support services—such as congregants, clients, and church or ministry leaders and governing bodies.
- Employers, supervisors or ministry oversight structures;
- ACRP affiliates and designation holders;
- The ACRP Board, Ethics and Disciplinary Committee, or any other authorised ACRP structure acting on information received;
- Any organisation or person with a legitimate interest in the matter.

Before lodging a formal complaint with ACRP, complainants are encouraged, where reasonably practicable and appropriate, to first raise their concerns directly with the affiliate, designation holder, church, ministry, pastoral counsellor or organisation concerned. This may provide an opportunity for the matter to be resolved promptly and constructively without the need for formal disciplinary proceedings.

7.2 Complaints Initiated by ACRP

The Board, Ethics and Disciplinary Committee, Chief Executive Officer or any person authorised by the Board may initiate a complaint or disciplinary proceedings where information comes to the attention of ACRP indicating possible misconduct, regardless of whether a formal complaint has been received.

7.3 Complaints by Anonymous Persons

Anonymous complaints will not ordinarily be investigated. However, ACRP may, at its discretion, consider an anonymous complaint where:

- The allegations are serious;

- Credible supporting evidence is provided; and
- The matter concerns the protection of the public, safeguarding of vulnerable persons, or the integrity of the profession.

7.4 No Retaliation

No affiliate, designation holder, employee, church member or other person may be victimised, intimidated or disadvantaged for lodging a complaint in good faith or participating in a disciplinary investigation or hearing.

8. LODGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS

8.1 Submission

Complaints must:

- Be submitted in writing on the prescribed **Complaint Form (DP01)** – available from the ACRP office) to the relevant ACRP Council. The form can be completed by typing, or handwriting as long as it is legible and the submission should be in English.
- Clearly identify the complainant;
- Identify the respondent;
- Identify witnesses (if any);
- State the facts relied upon clearly and concisely;
- Clearly indicate the places, date(s) and time(s) of incidents;
- Identify the alleged breach; and
- Include supporting evidence where available – written documents must be in PDF format to preserve the original content.
- Include a copy of the complainant's ID.

Anonymous complaints will generally not be accepted unless supported by compelling evidence and approved by the Ethics and Disciplinary Committee.

8.2 Incomplete Complaints

Where a complaint is incomplete or lacks sufficient information to enable a proper preliminary assessment, ACRP may request the complainant to provide additional information or supporting documentation within a specified period of 14 calendar days.

If the complainant fails to provide the requested information within the prescribed timeframe, and no reasonable explanation is provided, ACRP may:

- Decline to proceed with the complaint;
- Close the matter without prejudice, allowing the complainant to resubmit the complaint at a later date with the required information; or
- Proceed with the preliminary assessment where sufficient information is available and it is in the public interest to do so.

Where a complaint alleges serious misconduct or raises concerns regarding public safety, safeguarding, fraud, corruption or other matters of significant public interest, ACRP may, at its discretion, proceed with a

preliminary assessment notwithstanding that the complaint is incomplete.

8.3 Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

Complaints must be lodged in good faith and for a proper purpose. ACRP may decline to investigate complaints that are frivolous, vexatious, malicious, intended to harass another person, or that are unsupported by sufficient information or evidence, or outside its jurisdiction.

9. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

9.1 Initial Review

Upon receipt of a complaint, the relevant ACRP Council Office shall conduct a preliminary assessment to determine whether:

- The respondent falls within the jurisdiction of ACRP, including whether the respondent is an affiliate or designation holder, or was registered with ACRP at the time of the alleged misconduct;
- The complaint has been submitted in the prescribed form and contains sufficient information to enable a proper assessment;
- The complaint falls within the scope of the **ACRP Disciplinary Policy and Procedure**;
- There is sufficient information or evidence to indicate that misconduct may have occurred, and that further investigation or disciplinary proceedings may be warranted; and
- Any immediate action is required to protect the public, the integrity of the profession, or the interests of ACRP.

9.2 Church or Ministry Processes

Where a complaint relates primarily to ministry practice, doctrine, pastoral conduct or internal church governance, ACRP may require the complainant to demonstrate that the appropriate disciplinary or grievance procedures of the relevant church, ministry or organisation have first been followed, where this is reasonable and appropriate.

ACRP may then accept the outcome of that process, request additional information or documentation, or proceed with its own disciplinary process where this is necessary to protect the public interest, maintain professional standards, or where the matter falls within ACRP's jurisdiction.

9.3 Matters outside ACRP Jurisdiction

Where the complaint does not fall within the jurisdiction of ACRP, the complainant shall be informed accordingly and, where appropriate, the matter may be referred to the relevant church authority, employer, regulatory body, statutory authority or other appropriate organisation.

9.4 Outcome of the Preliminary Assessment

Following the preliminary assessment, the ACRP Council Office may:

- Dismiss the complaint where it falls outside ACRP's jurisdiction or lacks sufficient information;
- Request further information from the complainant or respondent;
- Refer the matter to another appropriate authority;
- Resolve the matter through an alternative process where appropriate; or

- Refer the complaint for a formal investigation.

10. INVESTIGATION

10.1 Notification of the Respondent

Where the preliminary assessment determines that a complaint falls within ACRP's jurisdiction and warrants further investigation and be submitted to the **Ethics and Disciplinary Committees**. The respondent shall be notified in writing as soon as reasonably practicable. The respondent shall be provided with:

- A Notice of Complaint (**DP01A**);
- A copy of the complaint (or a summary where confidentiality or safety requires);
- Copies of supporting evidence that may reasonably be disclosed;
- An explanation of the process;
- A deadline to submit **Form DP02 – Response to Complaint**.

ACRP may delay notification where immediate disclosure may prejudice the investigation, compromise evidence, or place any person at risk. In such cases, the respondent shall be notified as soon as the reason for the delay no longer exists.

10.2 Appointment of Investigator

Where a formal investigation is required, the **Ethics and Disciplinary Committees** may appoint an internal investigator, independent external investigator or investigation team.

10.3 Powers of the Investigator

The investigator may, where necessary:

- Request relevant documents and records;
- Obtain written statements;
- Interview the complainant, respondent and witnesses;
- Obtain expert opinions or specialist advice; and
- Gather any other evidence relevant to the complaint.

10.4 Investigation Report

Upon completion of the investigation, the investigator shall submit a written report to the **Ethics and Disciplinary Committee**. The report shall include a summary of the complaint, the evidence considered, the findings of the investigation, and a recommendation as to whether there is sufficient evidence for the matter to proceed to a disciplinary hearing or whether the complaint should be dismissed or otherwise resolved.

11. REFERRAL TO DISCIPLINARY PANEL

Where sufficient evidence exists, the **Ethics and Disciplinary Committee** shall refer the matter to a Disciplinary Panel.

The respondent shall receive a Notice of Hearing, details of the charges including supporting documentation, and a notice of rights and procedures.

The respondent shall have at least 21 business days to submit a written response.

11.1 Disciplinary Panel Composition

The Panel shall consist of at least three persons, including:

- A Chairperson;
- A person experienced in ministry/counselling practice;
- A person experienced in governance, ethics, legal matters or professional regulation.

At least one member may be external to ACRP.

Panel members shall disclose conflicts of interest and recuse themselves where necessary.

12. DISCIPLINARY HEARING

12.1 Rights of the Parties

The parties shall have the right to receive 30-day notice, where appropriate and safe to do so, to present evidence, call witnesses, question evidence, make submissions, and be accompanied by a representative. Legal representation may be permitted where the complexity of the matter or considerations of fairness require it. The Panel shall determine matters on a balance of probabilities.

12.2 Proceedings

The Chairperson shall determine the procedure provided that both parties are heard, proceedings remain fair and relevant evidence is considered.

Formal court procedures shall not apply.

13. FINDINGS

The Panel may:

- Dismiss the complaint;
- Find the respondent not guilty;
- Find the respondent guilty of misconduct.

Written reasons shall accompany all findings.

14. DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

Where misconduct is established, one or more disciplinary measures may be imposed.

Educational and corrective measures may include counselling, additional supervision or practicing under supervision for a specific amount of time, mentorship, additional continuing professional development (CPD), ethics training, or a written apology.

Disciplinary measures may include a written warning, reprimand, final written warning, suspension of affiliation or designation, restriction of professional activities under ACRP, or the imposition of conditions attached to continued registration.

In cases warranting more **serious disciplinary measures**, the Panel may revoke or cancel a professional designation, remove an affiliate from the ACRP Register and database, disqualify an individual from future registration for a specified period, or permanently exclude the individual from ACRP.

The Panel may also recommend that reasonable costs associated with the disciplinary process be recovered from the respondent where appropriate.

15. CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS AND EXTERNAL FINDINGS

Where an affiliate has been convicted by a court of law, found guilty by another professional body, or sanctioned by a regulatory authority, the **Ethics and Disciplinary Committees** may institute an expedited disciplinary process based on that finding. Before any disciplinary measure is imposed, the affiliate shall be notified in writing of the finding and afforded 60 calendar days from receipt of such notice to submit written representations concerning the finding, any pending appeal or review, relevant mitigating circumstances and the appropriate disciplinary measure. The Committee shall consider these representations before reaching its decision.

16. REFERRAL TO OTHER AUTHORITIES

The ACRP disciplinary process is independent of any criminal, civil, employment, ecclesiastical or regulatory proceedings. Where information received by ACRP indicates that a matter may involve the commission of a criminal offence or a reportable matter in terms of applicable legislation, ACRP may, and where required by law shall, report or refer the matter to the appropriate authority.

Such matters may include, but are not limited to:

- Fraud, financial misconduct, theft, misappropriation of funds, corruption or bribery;
- Sexual offences;
- Child abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- Human trafficking;
- Serious assaults or threats of violence; or gender-based violence; or
- Any other matter that is required by law to be reported.

Referral of a matter to another authority shall not necessarily prevent ACRP from conducting its own investigation or disciplinary proceedings, provided that doing so does not prejudice any criminal investigation or legal proceedings.

Where appropriate and legally permissible, ACRP shall inform the complainant and the respondent that the matter has been referred to the relevant authority

17. APPEALS

17.1 Right of Appeal

A complainant or respondent who is aggrieved by a decision of the **Disciplinary Panel** may appeal the finding, the disciplinary measure imposed, or both. Receive affiliation benefits.

17.2 Grounds of Appeal

An appeal may only be lodged on one or more of the following grounds:

- A material procedural irregularity that affected the fairness of the proceedings;
- A material error in the interpretation or application of this Policy;
- The emergence of **new evidence***;
- The disciplinary measure imposed is unreasonable or disproportionate to the misconduct.

*Appeals shall normally be determined on the documentary record of the original proceedings. **New evidence** shall only be admitted where the appellant demonstrates that such evidence was not reasonably available during the original hearing and may materially affect the outcome.

17.3 Lodging an Appeal

An appeal must be submitted in writing on the prescribed Appeal Form, clearly state the grounds for appeal, and include any supporting documentation.

An appeal must be lodged within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the written notification of the disciplinary decision:

17.4 Appeal Panel

The Board shall appoint an independent Appeal Panel consisting of at least three suitably qualified persons who were not involved in the original investigation or disciplinary hearing.

17.5 Appeal Process

The Appeal Panel shall review the record of the disciplinary proceedings and any supporting documentation submitted with the appeal. The Panel may request further written submissions or, where necessary, convene an appeal hearing.

17.6 Appeal Outcome

The Appeal Panel may:

- Confirm the original finding and disciplinary measure;
- Amend the finding or disciplinary measure;
- Set aside the original decision;
- Refer the matter back to a newly constituted Disciplinary Panel for reconsideration; or
- Make any other decision that is fair and appropriate in the circumstances.

The Appeal Panel shall provide written reasons for its decision.

The decision of the Appeal Panel shall be final and binding within the internal governance processes of ACRP.

17.7 Appeal Outcome

Timeframe summarised:

- Notice/lodging of appeal: within 21 calendar days of receiving the written decision.
- Appeal Record Compiled: within 30 days thereafter.
- Appeal Hearing or Determination: within 60 days, where reasonably practicable.
- Final Appeal Outcome: communicated within 14 days after determination.

18. PUBLICATION OF FINDINGS

ACRP may publish disciplinary findings where publication is necessary for the protection of the public, where registration or a professional designation has been revoked or cancelled, where affiliation has been terminated, or where publication is required by law or SAQA requirements. Publication shall occur only after all appeal processes have been exhausted.

19. RECORD KEEPING

ACRP shall maintain a confidential Complaints and Disciplinary Register containing complaint details, investigation records, hearing records, findings, disciplinary measures, and appeal outcomes.

All records shall be retained for a minimum period of five years following the finalisation of the matter.

20. CONFIDENTIALITY

All persons involved in disciplinary proceedings shall maintain confidentiality except where disclosure is required by law, necessary for the disciplinary process, or publication is authorised under this Policy.

21. REVIEW OF POLICY

This Policy shall be reviewed at least every three years, or earlier where necessitated by legislative changes, SAQA requirements, changes in ACRP structures or operations, or by resolution of the Board.

22. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Policy becomes effective on the date approved by the ACRP Board and replaces all previous versions of the policy.

Approved:

Chief Executive Officer	Signature	Date:
Dr Gerhard Botha		4 September 2026

This Policy was drafted and refined with the assistance of AI tools. All content was reviewed, edited and approved by the author to ensure compliance with applicable laws and the company's standards.