



## ***Student Complaints' Policy***

<i>Approved by Academic Cte : April 22, 2020</i>	<i>Approved by MST Board: September 21,2020</i>
<i>Added to MST website: October 1, 2020</i>	<i>See also: Interim Sexual Abuse and Harassment Policy, "Academic Integrity and the Ethics of Preparation for Ministry"</i>
<i>Applies to: M.Div, Dip Min. students</i>	<i>Effective: October 1, 2020</i>
<i>Summary: Provides clear procedures where a student lodges a complaint against the Montreal School of Theology.</i>	

### **1. Preamble**

- 1.1. The Montreal School of Theology is an educational consortium made up of three colleges, each with a denominational affiliation, who deliver their academic programs jointly with the School of Religious Studies of McGill University.
- 1.2. Depending on their enrollments, students in the Montreal School of Theology seeking to lodge a complaint may be guided by:
  - 1.2.1. the complaint protocol of McGill University as set out in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights;
  - 1.2.2. the complaint protocol, if there is one, of the college in which they are enrolled;
  - 1.2.3. the complaint protocol of the Montreal School of Theology, as set out in this policy.

### **2. Policy**

- 2.1. The Montreal School of Theology strives to be a welcoming, respectful, and supportive community for all its members. However, we recognize that students may become sufficiently dissatisfied with some aspect of their experience in MST to lodge a complaint and seek remedy for their concerns.
- 2.2. The Montreal School of Theology commits to investigate in a just and timely fashion all student complaints that are formally submitted using the procedures outlined within this policy. MST believes it is in the interests of all parties to resolve complaints as soon as possible and at the lowest possible level. When receiving a complaint, MST will seek to clarify and explain its policies, procedures, or actions, and to review and modify its practices as necessary.

### **3. Scope**

- 3.1. Complaints to MST must relate to matters that are under the authority and remit of MST. These may include, but are not limited to teaching, instruction, curriculum, library resources, governance, programs, policies, or experiences of the Montreal School of Theology (other than those relating to harassment and sexual misconduct).
- 3.2. Complaints relating to harassment and sexual misconduct are covered in the Interim Sexual Abuse and Harassment Policy and are not addressed in this policy.

### **4. Definitions**

- 4.1. This policy understands a “complaint” to be an expression of dissatisfaction or concern with matters that are under MST authority and remit that has not been disposed of by a College or McGill procedure.
- 4.2. This policy understands a “student” to be a present or past enrollee in a program of study offered under MST oversight.

### **5. Procedure for addressing a complaint in MST**

- 5.1. Students who experience dissatisfaction with some matter under MST authority and remit are encouraged first to address the issue in a conversation with a member of the MST faculty or staff within 30 days of the original occurrence. This may be the student’s principal, director of pastoral studies, chaplain, or other appropriate personnel. MST faculty are routinely available to students and may be able to help explain the situation or work with the student towards informal resolution of the issue. The MST faculty member will ensure that the student is aware of and provided with a copy of this policy.
- 5.2. If the student feels that an issue has not been satisfactorily addressed, the student (henceforth the “complainant”) may make a written complaint either to the Director of MST or, if this is not possible to the Principal of one of the member colleges (henceforth the “recipient”). Written complaints will state the nature of the complaint, prior efforts to resolve the complaint, and the desired outcome.
- 5.3. The recipient will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint no later than 5 business days (not including holidays) from the date of receipt. This acknowledgement may include an invitation to meet in person with the complainant, an indication of how the recipient intends to address the matter, and when the complainant can expect further communication from the recipient. This acknowledgement may also advise the complainant that the issue is not under the authority and remit of MST and is best addressed in another venue.
- 5.4. The recipient will review to the extent possible the circumstances, procedures, individuals, and prior efforts to resolve the complaint and will determine how to address the complaint. This process may include interviews with those involved, consultation with other persons relevant to the complaint, or other efforts to investigate and resolve the complaint. The recipient’s response may also include addressing the matter with an individual faculty

member and their supervisor; bringing the matter for discussion to the MST Academic Committee; consulting with external expertise. The recipient will be guided by the principles of discretion and confidentiality, for example, not revealing the identity of the complainant when conducting interviews with persons relevant to the complaint.

- 5.5. A complaint is considered resolved when the recipient responds with a clear, written communication to the complainant indicating what steps have been taken and what decisions (if any) taken as a result of the complaint.

## **6. Appeals**

- 6.1. A complainant who is dissatisfied with the resolution communicated under 5.5 may appeal in writing to the Chair of the MST Board. When the recipient of a complaint responds to the complainant, the recipient will indicate the name and contact details of the Chair of the MST Board. This appeal must be made within 10 business days of receipt of the communication from the recipient.
- 6.2. The Chair of the MST Board will review appeals to ensure that this policy was correctly implemented, and that principles of fairness and justice were upheld.

## **7. Record Keeping**

- 7.1. Complaints as well as a record of any action taken as a result, will be logged, monitored and stored in a confidential file under the supervision of the = Chair of the MST Board.

## **8. False or Frivolous Complaints**

- 8.1. If the complaint is deemed to be false, frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith, the matter will be referred to the Principal of the complainant's college, to determine whether his or her actions have been in contravention of the policy "Academic Integrity and the Ethics of Preparation for Ministry."

## **9. Related Policies**

- 9.1. Interim Sexual Abuse and Harassment Policy
- 9.2. "Academic Integrity and the Ethics of Preparation for Ministry."