

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Spiritual Life

Spiritual growth is essential in the life of every student. Leland provides foundational support through class, community worship, covenant groups, and student activities. Each student is responsible for his/her own Christian growth. At Leland, we encourage personal daily prayer and Bible study. It is expected that all students participate weekly in corporate worship and service with a local Christian congregation. Throughout the year, Leland hosts community life events for students, faculty, and staff that help build individual and corporate spiritual growth. The Spiritual Formation and Community Life section of the *Catalog* at <https://www.leland.edu/catalog> describes community life events hosted by Leland. The academic calendar at <https://www.leland.edu/calendar> lists community life events scheduled for the particular school year. Upcoming events are also listed on this webpage.

Code of Ethics

The John Leland Center affirms the worth of every individual. In order to be a Christian community, each student is expected to maintain exemplary behavior with moral, ethical, and academic integrity. Self-discipline and mutual respect are regarded as fair principles of conduct.

Plagiarism or using another's ideas or words without proper acknowledgement is a violation of Leland's Code of Ethics. A student's own thinking and reflection are required in Leland classes. Students are reminded of the sanctity in their callings and thoughts. They should own and not outsource their theological education and walk with God to others or a computer. Theological education is a personal process, and the student's work must speak to the particular student and congregation.

Students may consult Turabian's *Manual for Writers* for helpful research and writing aids against inadvertent plagiarism. Plagiarism includes the following actions:

- You quote, paraphrase, or summarize a source but fail to cite it.
- You use ideas or methods from a source but fail to cite it.
- You use the exact words of a source and you do cite it, but you fail to put those words in quotation marks or in a

block quotation.

- You paraphrase a source and cite it, but paraphrase too closely. (Turabian, *Manual for Writers*, § 7.9, p. 81)

In addition, a student may not duplicate a previously submitted paper.

Students are only permitted to use artificial intelligence tools (AI) with the express prior permission of their professor. Course syllabi will address whether the use of AI is allowed in a course or for a particular assignment. Improper use of AI is a spiritual and moral issue. While AI may have proper use in certain circumstances, it is subject to abuse and danger, including a lack of citation of sources for verification purposes and generation of fabricated and/or biased information. If a professor allows the use of AI in a particular course or for a particular assignment, students must cite or otherwise acknowledge the use of AI in submission of their assignments.

A student's participation in the Leland Center may be subject to formal review if any of the above expectations are not met. A student may request a formal review and action by the academic dean concerning issues of conduct or academic integrity. If upon formal review, a student's conduct is found to be in violation of the above stated expectations, the student may be subject to probation, suspension, or dismissal. A student may request that the matter be referred to an appeals committee, whose decision is final.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The John Leland Center for Theological Studies is committed to providing equal opportunity for all student applicants, enrolled students, employees, and faculty without discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

Student Record Rights

Leland requires expressed written permission from the student before releasing student data absent exceptions in the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, such as disclosures to school officials with legitimate educational interest, accreditors, specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes, appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student, or appropriate officials in cases of health or safety emergencies; or for compliance with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena.

Students may inspect their education records and request corrections of information they believe inaccurate or misleading.

Resolution of Unacceptable Conduct

Individuals who believe there has been a breach in conduct by someone in the Leland community should follow the process outlined in the Conflict Resolution and Grievance Process, which is printed in full in this *Student Handbook*.

Academic Complaints

Any student who has a concern about his/her program of study should address these concerns in writing to the academic dean for consideration and remedy. If the student disagrees with the remedy provided by the academic dean, the student may follow the grievance procedure outlined in the Conflict Resolution and Grievance Process published in this Student Handbook.

Complaints Related to ATS Standards

The John Leland Center for Theological Studies is accredited through the Commission on Accrediting of The Association of Theological Schools and operates according to its published standards. These standards are available in the Alma Hunt Library, online at <https://www.ats.edu>, or by contacting ATS at:

The Commission on Accrediting of The Association of
Theological Schools in the United States and Canada
10 Summit Park Dr.
Pittsburgh, PA 15275
(412) 788-6505

In the event any person believes that The John Leland Center is not meeting the standards required by ATS, the person is encouraged to address concerns in writing to Leland's president or the chair of its board of trustees. The president or the board chair will determine an appropriate means to investigate the concern, judge its validity, and provide remedial action if warranted. The president and the board chair will keep records of all correspondence and subsequent actions related to any ATS concern.

Complaint Process for Maryland Students

After exhausting the complaint and grievance procedures in this Leland *Student Handbook*, students residing in Maryland may

submit complaints alleging violations of the Maryland Education Article or the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) Title 13B to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) according to the student complaint process published at https://mhec.maryland.gov/institutions_training/Pages/career/pcs/complaint.aspx. As outlined in the MHEC complaint process, certain specific types of complaints should be submitted to other agencies or organizations, which include consumer protection complaints and discrimination complaints directed to the following respective offices:

Consumer Protection Division
Office of the Attorney General
200 Saint Paul Place
Baltimore, MD 21202
Telephone: 410-528-8662/toll free 1-888-743-0023
<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/CPD/Complaint.aspx>

Office for Civil Rights, Philadelphia Office
U.S. Department of Education
100 Penn Square East, Suite 515
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3323
Telephone: 215-656-8541
https://ocrcas.ed.gov/contact-ocr?field_state_value=659

Complaint Process for North Carolina Students

The State Authorization Unit of the University of North Carolina System Office serves as the official state entity to receive complaints concerning post-secondary institutions that are authorized to operate in North Carolina. If students are unable to resolve a complaint through the institution's grievance procedures, they can review the [Student Complaint Policy \(PDF\)](#) and submit their complaint using the online complaint form at <https://studentcomplaints.northcarolina.edu/form>.

For more information contact:

North Carolina Post-Secondary Education Complaints
223 S. West Street, Suite 1800
Raleigh, NC 27603
(919) 962-4550

To file a complaint with the Consumer Protection Division of the North Carolina Department of Justice, please visit The State

Attorney General's web page at:
<https://www.ncdoj.gov/file-a-complaint>.

North Carolina residents may call (877) 566-7226. Outside of North Carolina, please call (919) 716-6000. En Espanol (919) 716-0058. If you choose to mail a complaint, please use the following address:

Consumer Protection Division
Attorney General's Office
Mail Service Center 9001
Raleigh, NC 27699-9001

GI Bill® Beneficiaries Who Received Benefits Prior to January 1, 2023

The John Leland Center no longer participates in GI Bill® educational benefits and instead offers a full-tuition scholarship for qualifying veterans. For information about this scholarship, contact registrar@leland.edu. Students with complaints who received GI Bill® educational benefits at Leland prior to Leland's January 1, 2023 withdrawal from this benefits program and who have maintained continuous enrollment at Leland should initially follow the school grievance policy. If the situation cannot be resolved at the school, the beneficiary should contact saa@dvs.virginia.gov, which investigates complaints of GI Bill® beneficiaries in Virginia. GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Harassment Policy

Prohibition of Harassment

The John Leland Center for Theological Studies is a graduate theological school. As such it has adopted a statement of mission which gives expression to the institution's understanding of its purpose, its commitments, and its approach to embodying those commitments. As acknowledged in Leland's Mission Statement, Leland seeks to "serve in the Kingdom of God through accessible, accredited theological education that equips its students to become transformational leaders in the global ministry of Jesus Christ." In support of this mission, The John Leland Center for Theological Studies is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which administrators, faculty, staff, and students can work, study, and live together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Specifically, all persons associated with the school should be aware that the Leland Center condemns harassment of any kind including sexual harassment or harassment predicated on race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, age, or gender. Such behavior is an affront to God and to human dignity, is contrary to Christian Scripture, is prohibited both by law and by existing school policies, and cannot be permitted within the community. It is the intention and responsibility of the school to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy and to work positively to ensure an environment and a process which upholds the requirements of basic human justice.

The grievance procedures are available for any individual who believes that he or she has been subject to any harassment. The Leland Center will investigate fully any such grievance and will take prompt corrective action if a determination is made that harassment has occurred.

What Constitutes Harassment?

Harassment constitutes conduct that is unwelcome or offensive to a reasonable person or conduct that creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment, and that is based on any of the characteristics set forth above. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when (1) submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment or academic standing; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct

by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions or for academic evaluation, grades, or advancement; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or academic environment.

Conduct that occurs in the process of selection for employment or for admission to an academic program is covered by this policy, as well as conduct directed toward students, faculty, or staff members.

Sexual harassment includes any unwanted sexual attention, including:

- Visual conduct such as staring, leering, or making sexual gestures;
- Verbal conduct such as sexually-oriented teasing or joking, making sexually demeaning comments, using sexual epithets, slurs, or nicknames, whistling or catcalls, and repeated and unwelcome comments about another's appearance or clothing;
- Discussion of one's own sexual problems or experiences, or questions about another's sexual experiences;
- Repeated unwanted asking for dates;
- Inappropriate touching, such as caresses, attempts to kiss or fondle, and any other physical conduct offensive to another;
- Pressure for sex; and
- Display or transmission (electronic or otherwise) of obscene or sexually-oriented objects, photographs, or messages.

Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature or consensual personal and social relationships without employment or academic effect. It refers to behavior which is not welcome and which is personally intimidating, hostile, or offensive. In addition to being personally offensive, the behavior must be severe or pervasive enough to create an environment that a reasonable person would find unacceptable.

Process and Reporting

If you believe that you are the subject of harassment of any sort, you should not assume that the faculty or administration is aware of what is happening. If harassment continues after you have asked someone to stop, or if you feel uncomfortable talking to that person directly, you should follow the grievance

procedures established by the school. The first step in that process is immediate reporting of the matter in writing to the dean. Complaints of harassment will be investigated promptly. Investigations will be conducted with discretion, and confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible, consistent with the needs of the investigation. If prohibited or unlawful harassment is found to have occurred, prompt corrective action will be taken.

No one will be retaliated against for making a harassment complaint in good faith even if a determination is made that no harassment has occurred. However, anyone who knowingly makes a false claim or knowingly provides false information in the course of an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action. Anyone who retaliates against someone for making a harassment complaint or providing information during a harassment investigation will also be subject to disciplinary action.

Disciplinary Procedure

If an investigation of a reported occurrence of harassment reveals that an employee, faculty member, or student has engaged in harassment, the appropriate adjudicatory body as defined by the Conflict Resolution and Grievance Process will assess the totality of the circumstances and the seriousness of the violation. In the case of an employee or faculty member, the adjudicatory body will either (a) warn such employee or faculty member that additional acts of harassment will result in further disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, or (b) where there is an extremely serious violation of this policy, suspend or terminate the employment of the offender. The adjudicatory body may also recommend, in addition to (a) or (b), sensitivity training, counseling, and appropriate leave of absence. In the case of a student, the adjudicatory body will either (a) warn such student that additional acts of harassment will result in further disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion, or (b) where there is an extremely serious violation of this policy, suspend or expel the student from the school.

Policy Dissemination and Education

This policy shall be printed in all school policy manuals (Faculty, Employment, Student, and Trustee); publicized initially in the community with articles and policy announcements; reviewed annually with all supervisory personnel and all persons in leadership positions; reviewed specifically with all persons

entering the school as new employees, both faculty and staff; specifically referenced in new student orientations; and explained thoroughly in all counseling situations in which the provisions of the policy have been invoked. Support for the victims and offenders should be provided by the school as the school deems appropriate. The office of the president shall be responsible for the implementation and dissemination of this policy.

Conflict Resolution and Grievance Process

As a seminary community, we approach disputes or conflicts from the perspective of God's Word and the traditions and principles expressed by the school's theological principles. We will endeavor to settle our differences with others in a Christian manner (Gal 6:1), amicably, and with prayer, and if at all possible avoid resorting to adversarial proceedings (Matt 18:15-17).

We interpret Jesus' words in Matthew that disagreements between individuals should first be addressed by meeting with one another in mutual love, humility, and respect, acknowledging that each is a committed follower of Christ and seeking to learn from one another.

We do acknowledge that there might be cases that warrant entering into a formal grievance process without attempting to meet with the other person first (e.g., a case of violence or sexual harassment). In that case, the formal process itself explores a variety of measures for reaching resolution. Typically, however, we would expect that informal attempts to reach resolution will precede any formal process.

In that spirit, the formal process that follows should be used only as a last resort after sincere efforts to resolve differences by dialogue and by praying with and for one another have been exhausted. This process should take place as quickly as possible, keep all persons' confidentiality in mind, and be conducted in accord with other applicable seminary policies and procedures. If a grievance cannot be resolved through informal means, one should follow the formal process outlined in the seven steps below.

- 1. A grievance is communicated to the dean in person or in writing by the complainant.**
 - If the complainant or the accused is the dean, then the president will assume all duties of the dean in the grievance process as prescribed below. If the complainant or the accused is the president, then the chair of the board of trustees will assume all duties of the dean or president in the grievance process as prescribed below.

2. **The complainant and accused are first invited to meet together to reconcile the grievance.**
 - The dean shall refer the matter directly to the Grievance Panel (see step #5) if the nature of the grievance makes successful mediation unlikely or inappropriate.
 - Throughout the grievance process, appropriate confidentiality must be maintained to protect both the complainant and the accused. This commitment to confidentiality concerning all matters pertinent to the case is expected for all parties involved (including complainant, accused, witnesses, advocate, and adjudicator).
 - It is understood that the contents of student records cannot be described or discussed without the written consent of the student.

3. **Should the matter fail to be reconciled privately, the complainant and the accused are invited to meet with a mediator as assigned by the dean for the purpose of conflict analysis and resolution.**
 - Should either complainant or accused desire not to enter into this mediation process, a written request to omit this process may be submitted to the dean.
 - The dean will review any such requests, and at his/her discretion, refer the matter back into mediation or directly to a Grievance Panel. (see step #5)

4. **Should the matter fail to be reconciled through mediation, the following written reports are to be submitted to the dean within 7 days of the end of the mediation process:**
 - Mediation report by the appointed mediator
 - Summary of the grievance by the complainant
 - Response by the accused

5. **The dean will convene a Grievance Panel who will hear and investigate further the grievance from the complainant and the response of the accused.**
 - The membership of the Grievance Panel will be defined by a rotational formula, as well as by the nature of the grievance. To satisfy all FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) requirements, students will be exempt from serving on the Grievance Panel for grievances relating to academic performance or evaluation. An 'academic grievance' will be defined as a

complaint related to course work, performance, or evaluation, requiring the review of a student's present or past academic record.

- Both the complainant and the accused will be invited to have one advocate present with them during the hearing if they so desire.
- The Grievance Panel may desire to investigate the matter further through interviews with witnesses or other individuals who may be a resource in discerning the matter.

6. A judgment will be made by the Grievance Panel and communicated in writing to the complainant and the accused by the dean.

- If the judgment recognizes the validity of the grievance, then the accused will be referred to the dean for appropriate disciplinary action.
- The accused has the option of accepting the ruling of the Grievance Panel or appealing to the president of the seminary.
- If the grievance is dismissed, then the complainant has the option of accepting the ruling of the Grievance Panel or submitting a written appeal to the president of the seminary.
- All appeals must be submitted to the appropriate entity (as defined below) in writing within 21 days of the judgment of the Grievance Panel. The appeal must state all bases for the appeal.

7. Should an appeal be lodged by the complainant or the accused, the matter will be adjudicated by the president of the seminary.

- The president has the option of either granting or denying the appeal. If the president believes the hearing was procedurally flawed, he or she can also refer the matter back to the dean for a new hearing.
- If the president grants the appeal of the complainant and recognizes the validity of the grievance, then the matter will be referred to the dean for appropriate disciplinary action.
- If the president grants the appeal of the accused and overturns the ruling of the Grievance Panel, then the matter is considered resolved by the institution.
- If the president dismisses or denies the appeal of either the complainant or the accused, then the matter is

considered resolved by the institution.

- In the event the president is either the complainant or the accused, the chair of the board of trustees will serve the role outlined for the president.

Composition of Academic Grievance Panel

There will be a constant pool of trained faculty members, including full-time and adjunct, available to serve on a grievance panel. Faculty members will serve on panels, based on a set rotation, and will be alerted of the need to serve by the dean.

The panel will consist of two full-time faculty members and one adjunct faculty member. The three names will be presented to the parties involved in the hearing. Either party may request a change of up to one faculty member if he/she feels that there is a conflict of interest or that the fairness of the hearing might be compromised. In this case, the dean will appoint the next faculty member from the rotation. Likewise, each faculty member appointed should decline from serving if a conflict of interest exists.

Composition of Non-Academic Grievance Panel

There will be a constant pool of trained people, including full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, administrators, and students available to serve on a grievance panel. Students serving in this pool will be appointed by the chair of the Student Association (limited to students *not* currently serving on the SEC) and be representative of the three degree programs.

The panel will consist of one faculty member, one administrator, and one student. The three names will be presented to the parties involved in the hearing. Either party may request a change of up to one panel member if he/she feels that there is a conflict of interest or that the fairness of the hearing might be compromised. In this case, the dean will appoint the next person from the rotation. Likewise, each panel member appointed should decline from serving if a conflict of interest exists.

Role of an Advocate

Once the grievance has been formally filed and mediation has either been deferred or has not led to a reconciliation, the grievance panel will be convened. At this time, all parties in the grievance will be given the option of asking an advocate to

accompany him or her when the grievance panel meets. The advocate can be a person with connection to the institution (e.g., a student, faculty, or staff), or not.

The role of the advocate is as follows:

- The advocate will provide moral support for persons engaged in the grievance process.
- The advocate is not a witness and will not be addressed during the panel. The advocate is purely a witness to the process, but not an actual member of the process itself.
- The advocate will be expected to comply with the confidentiality clause. (See step #2)
- During a panel meeting, an advocate may address the chair to express the opinion that the Grievance Policy has not been followed or has been inappropriately applied. In order for an issue raised to be addressed, the advocate must raise that issue before a decision is made.

Once the decision is made, the process is complete, and a final appeal may be made to the president.