

Grievance and dispute policy

Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide employees with a readily accessible procedure for addressing any problems or concerns they may have at work. This procedure should not replace normal employee–manager dialogue. However, where such informal dialogue has failed to resolve an issue of concern, then an employee may utilise this procedure in an effort to have an issue resolved to their satisfaction.

It is accepted that when people work together there will inevitably be situations where misunderstandings, problems or concerns need to be resolved. It is the policy of the Company that a culture of good communication, openness and a willingness to co-operate and listen will exist. Therefore, it is envisaged that the majority of these issues or misunderstandings will be able to be addressed informally in an efficient and effective manner. However, where such issues are unresolved, they may become grievances. Employees are encouraged to seek resolution of an issue by utilising this procedure.

At each grievance meeting held under the formal procedure, the employee has a right to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union official.

The grievance procedure should not be used to lodge appeals against disciplinary sanctions. The Company's disciplinary procedure contains sufficient process for dealing with an employee's dissatisfaction at a disciplinary sanction applied to them.

The Company reserves the right to engage external third-party assistance at any stage of the grievance process. In addition, a representative from the Company's HR department will be present at all formal grievance hearings.

This procedure does not constitute contractual terms and conditions. The Company reserves the right to amend any provision of this procedure subsequent to appropriate consultation.

Procedure

To provide an effective and timely resolution of employee concerns, the following procedure will be followed to ensure that employee complaints or problems receive full and careful attention.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to the procedure where required. Any employee who experiences difficulty with the procedure for any reason should seek assistance from the HR department.

Informal discussion

You are encouraged to approach your line manager, or another appropriate manager if the concern is due to your line manager, in the first instance to discuss issues and attempt to informally resolve them. Informal discussion can frequently solve problems without the need for written record. However, if you do not feel an informal discussion has resolved the situation and/or are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may invoke the formal grievance procedure.

Similarly, if you feel the issue is too severe to be dealt with via informal discussion, please speak to the HR department for advice on whether you are able to commence with the formal procedure as the first step.

Formal procedure

Initiating the grievance procedure

You should raise the grievance in writing with your line manager. This should explain the nature and extent of the grievance and indicate the outcome you are looking for.

If your grievance relates to concerns regarding your line manager or you are uncomfortable raising it with your line manager, you should contact the HR department for an alternative manager to whom your grievance can be raised.

Concerns regarding any matter which would fall within the scope of legislation on public interest disclosures (otherwise known as whistleblowing) must be raised under the whistleblowing policy.

Grievance hearing

A meeting will be arranged between you and your line manager. A minute taker will also be present. You may be accompanied by a fellow colleague or trade union official. The meeting will be held to discuss the grievance in detail and you should take any documents or evidence you have regarding the grievance to the meeting.

The line manager will complete a full investigation into the matter. This may involve holding investigation meetings with witnesses, requiring witness statements to be produced and reviewing written evidence.

A decision will be taken by the line manager following the investigation and the grievance will be responded to, in writing, within 10 working days of the meeting being held, however if the grievance chair should determine this is not possible, the reasons for this and estimated length of delay will be communicated to you. You will be informed of actions to take if they wish to appeal the outcome.

Minutes of the meeting will be taken and copies will be made available to you. A copy of the minutes will be stored by the HR department.

Appeal

Where you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the grievance, the matter will progress to be heard by an employee senior to the grievance chair as an appeal hearing. You should write to the appeal chair setting out the reasons for your dissatisfaction. The appeal will involve the same procedural steps as the grievance and the outcome will be provided to you within 5 working days of the appeal being held, however if the appeal chair should determine this is not possible, the reasons for this and estimated length of delay will be communicated to you.

There will be no further stage of appeal. The decision on the grievance will be final.

Simultaneous grievance and disciplinary matters

The Company will make a decision on how to progress matters when an employee raises a grievance about a disciplinary procedure involving them. The Company will assess the exact nature of the grievance and will have the final say over suspension of a disciplinary procedure.

Extending timescales under the procedure

The timescales outlined in this procedure will be adhered to whenever this is reasonably practicable. There may be extenuating circumstances that are outside of either parties' control, for example, where a key witness is unavailable, or the grievance requires extensive investigation.

Where it is not reasonably practicable to adhere to the deadlines, both parties will discuss any

extension to the timelines.

Mediation

The Company reserve the right to seek assistance from external mediators at any stage in the grievance procedure. Where both parties agree to undertake mediation, the grievance process will be suspended whilst this is ongoing.

Protection against detriment

Nothing in this procedure is intended to prevent the employee from raising any concerns they have. Employees who raise concerns under this procedure will not be subject to any detrimental or less favourable treatment as a result of doing so.

Where the grievance is made with malicious intent, the employee will be subject to the Company's disciplinary procedure.

Ex-employees

Should a grievance be raised by an employee leaving the Company, where possible the grievance procedure will be concluded whilst they remain in employment. If it is not possible to conclude the process prior to their exit from the business, then it may be necessary to modify the procedure to complete it.

Should an ex-employee raise a grievance under this procedure, the Company reserves the right to modify the procedure outlined above. This includes, but is not limited to, providing a written response.