

GRIEVANCE POLICY

PURPOSE

This policy describes how people can raise any problems, concerns or complaints they have with their working environment or relationships. It highlights our commitment to addressing and resolving them quickly and fairly.

POLICY

Introduction

There may be times when people wish to raise a concern or complaint about their working environment or relationships. The policy describes the process we will go through if this happens and the range of possible outcomes.

We will act promptly, consistently and fairly in these situations. Whenever possible, we will try to resolve matters informally in a way that builds mutual understanding, ensures the effective running of the Union and supports positive working relationships. If this isn't possible and agreement between people can't be reached or the concern is more serious, then the formal Grievance Procedure will be used.

This policy applies to all employees including staff and student staff and full time Officers (as it relates to their employment status). Where the line manager is referred to, or matters are initiated by the President, CEO or Senior Leader, this may involve external Trustees at the most appropriate level to support the resolution of the concerns raised.

We recognize that people have different working patterns. For some staff a working week may include weekend days, for example, or they may work fewer than 5 days. As a result any time scales advised in the procedure are based on UoNSU non-closure days, rather than an individual's working pattern. For example "within 7 days" means within 7 days including Saturday and Sunday, where the Union is not closed. It does not vary according to the particular days on which a member of staff would normally be working.

Issues appropriate for this procedure

The following are examples of the issues that might be addressed via the Grievance Procedure:

- Working relationships
- Health and safety issues or practices
- A change that UoNSU or your line manager intends to make to working arrangements, systems or environment
- Broader organisational change
- Terms and conditions

There are circumstances where the Grievance Procedure isn't suitable and other policies apply.

These include:

- Complaints about elected officers.
- Allegations of discrimination, bullying and harassment. This should be addressed via the Dignity at Work Policy. This may in turn lead to action under the terms of the Disciplinary Policy.
- Situations where there is a clear case for investigation and action under the Disciplinary Policy, e.g. abuse of property or flouting of health and safety rules.
- Allegations of illegal, corrupt or dangerous conduct which are in the public interest and which should be raised via the Whistleblowing Policy.
- If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a Disciplinary Meeting. This should be addressed via the relevant appeals process.

Informal approach

If possible, we encourage matters to be addressed informally and at the earliest opportunity. The intention here is to build mutual understanding between people and promote positive working relationships. You should speak to your line manager in the first instance and explain your concern. Depending on the issue, it may be resolved quickly in this way. Other possible solutions include a facilitated meeting or mediation.

A facilitated meeting can be helpful for resolving disagreements between people or differences in style and approach (so called 'personality clashes'). It's an informal, confidential meeting between you and the person who is causing you concern. It will be run by a line manager or a member of the HR team, with the agreement of both people involved. The idea is to have a 'safe' space where the issues can be aired, and both sides can explain their views and feelings. The idea is not to apportion blame or to have a 'winner' and a 'loser', but to explore the situation and the difficulties in the relationship, find common ground and agree a constructive way of working together in the future.

More formal mediation may also be considered involving a suitable mediator from outside the organisation if necessary.

We do encourage those involved to maintain confidentiality around the details of the concerns especially whilst the matter is in the process of being resolved, only for the aim of managing an efficient process.

Formal approach

You may raise a grievance formally after you have tried to deal with things informally or if you feel the concern is so serious that an informal approach isn't sufficient. We encourage you to do this at the earliest opportunity so we can deal with the matter promptly.

You should write to your line manager (or your line manager's manager, if the complaint concerns your line manager) explaining the issue and the impact it has. If relevant, you should describe what has already happened to resolve the issue informally or why you don't believe this is possible. You should also clarify what you would like to happen. If the complaint is about the CEO, you should write to the Union President, who will address your concerns with an External Trustee.

An Officer raising a complaint regarding employment matters should do so to the Union President who will be supported by a member of the Senior Leadership Team to facilitate the resolution of the concern. You will be invited to a meeting by the person you have raised your complaint with to explain your concern and the outcome you wish to see. We will aim to do this as soon as practicably possible. You have the right to have a companion to support you at this meeting. This may be a colleague or a Trade Union representative, but not an elected officer. It is good practice for you to let us know the name of your companion and whether they are a colleague or Trade Union representative. The companion may discuss things with you, present or sum up your position, but they may not answer questions on your behalf or prevent the meeting from progressing.

If necessary the meeting will adjourn so that the issues can be investigated, or to seek advice or information from HR. This will be as soon as possible but within 7 days of the meeting. When it reconvenes, the manager will let you know the decision or outcome.

If you or your companion are unable to make the meeting date you should propose an alternative date within 7 days of the original meeting date. However because we have a duty to avoid undue delays, we may decide to advise you of the decision in writing instead of meeting if you fail to attend a rearranged meeting or if you are absent due to ill health and unable to attend a meeting in the near future.

Appeal

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the Grievance Meeting or procedure, or believe that new information needs to be considered, you may appeal in writing within 7 days of being told of the decision.

You will have the right to an Appeal Meeting. This will, where possible, be held by someone senior to the person who held the original meeting. You have the right to bring a companion to the meeting to support you. The same conditions relating to the companion outlined above apply to the appeal meeting.

The appeal can result in the outcome being confirmed or changed in some way. We will inform you in writing of our final decision as soon as possible, usually within one week of the Appeal Meeting.

There is no further right of appeal once this decision is made.

Collective Grievances

There may be circumstances where a group of staff wish to raise a grievance - a so-called 'collective grievance'. In this case, the process works in exactly the same way as for individual grievances outlined above, covering the informal, formal and appeals processes. The difference is that one person goes through the process as the nominated, agreed representative of the group.

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