

Grievance procedure policy

Introduction

We believe that all employees should be treated fairly and with respect. If you are unhappy about treatment that you have received or about any aspect of your work, you should discuss this with your line manager in the first instance, who will attempt to resolve the situation on an informal basis.

If you feel unable to approach your manager, you should approach the Head of Legal who will discuss ways of dealing or resolving the matter with you.

Where attempts to resolve the matter amicably and informally do not work, it may be appropriate for you to raise a formal grievance under this procedure.

A formal grievance should be referred to the Head of HR explaining the nature and concerns of your complaint in respect to the way in which you have been treated by us or anybody acting on our behalf. If your complaint relates to bullying or harassment, the matter should be dealt with under the dignity at work policy.

Grievances may be concerned with a wide range of issues, including the allocation of work, your working environment or conditions, the opportunities that you have been given for career development or the way in which you have been managed.

Complaints that you may have about any disciplinary procedure or action taken against you should be dealt with as an appeal under the disciplinary procedure.

Grievances raised while you are subject to disciplinary proceedings will usually be heard only when the disciplinary process has been completed. However, depending upon the gravity and relevance to the disciplinary proceedings, we reserve the right to suspend any impending disciplinary investigation or action until the grievance you raise has been properly dealt with informally or formally through this procedure.

The right to be accompanied

You have the right to be accompanied by a fellow worker or trade union representative at any grievance meeting or subsequent appeal. The choice of companion is a matter for you, but we reserve the right to refuse to accept a companion whose presence would undermine the grievance process. Please note that you are not obliged to be accompanied by someone.

If your companion is one of our employees, he or she will be given appropriate paid time off to allow him/her to accompany you at a grievance hearing or appeal hearing.

At any hearing or appeal hearing, your chosen companion will be allowed to address the meeting, to respond on your behalf to any view expressed in the hearing, and to sum up the case on your behalf.

However, both the hearing and appeal hearing are essentially meetings between you and us, so any questions put directly to you should be dealt with by you and not by your companion.

Where the chosen companion is unavailable on the day scheduled for the meeting or appeal, the meeting will be rescheduled, provided that you can propose an alternative time within five working days of the scheduled date.

Accessibility

If any aspect of the grievance procedure causes you difficulty on account of a disability that you may have, you should raise this issue with us and we will make appropriate arrangements.

Conducting the grievance procedure

We recognise that a formal grievance procedure can be a stressful and upsetting experience for all parties involved. Everyone involved in the process is entitled to be treated calmly and with respect.

We will not tolerate any abusive or insulting behaviour from you during the conduct of our grievance procedures and we will treat any such behaviour as misconduct under our disciplinary and dismissal procedure.

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Formal grievance procedure

Making the complaint

The first stage of the grievance procedure is for you to put your complaint in writing. This written statement will form the basis of your subsequent hearing and any investigations, so it is important that you set out clearly the nature of your grievance and indicate the outcome that you are seeking.

If your grievance is unclear, you may be asked to clarify your complaint before any meeting takes place with you.

Your complaint should be headed "formal grievance" and sent to your line manager. If your complaint relates to the way in which your line manager is treating you, the complaint should be sent to another member of senior management.

We may make further attempts to resolve the matter informally with you, depending on the nature of your complaint. However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may insist on the matter proceeding to a full grievance hearing.

Before proceeding to a full grievance hearing, it may be necessary to carry out investigations of any allegations made by you, although the confidentiality of the grievance procedure will be respected.

If any evidence is gathered in the course of these investigations, you will be given a copy long enough in advance of the hearing for you to consider such evidence properly.

In exceptional circumstances, the evidence given by individuals may have to remain confidential. Where confidentiality is necessary, this will be explained to you and an appropriate summary of the evidence gathered will be given to you.

The grievance hearing

The hearing will be held as soon as is reasonably practicable and, subject to any need to carry out preliminary investigations, within ten working days on receipt of your written complaint.

You should ensure that you attend the meeting at the specified time. If you are unable to attend because of circumstances beyond your control, you should inform the person conducting the grievance hearing as soon as possible.

If you fail to attend without explanation, or if it appears that you have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the hearing may be conducted in your absence.

At the meeting, you will be asked to explain the nature of your complaint and what action you feel would be appropriate to resolve the matter. The meeting may be adjourned to allow further investigations to take place.

While you will be given every opportunity to explain your case fully, you should confine your explanation to matters that are directly relevant to your complaint. Concentrating on irrelevant issues or incidents that took place long before the matters in hand is not helpful and can hinder the effective handling of your complaint.

The person conducting the hearing will intervene if the discussion is straying too far from the key issue/s. He or she may also intervene to ensure that the meeting can be completed within a reasonable timeframe, depending on the nature and complexity of your complaint.

Following the meeting, you will be informed in writing of the outcome within five working days and told of any action that we propose to take as a result of your complaint. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may make a formal appeal.

Appeal

Your appeal should be made in writing to a member of the Executive Committee. You should clearly state the grounds of your appeal, i.e. the basis on why you believe the outcome of the grievance hearing was wrong or inappropriate.

Your appeal should be submitted within five working days of your receipt of our written grievance decision. An appeal meeting will then be arranged for you within ten working days of the submission of your formal appeal.

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You should ensure that you attend the meeting at the specified time. If you are unable to attend because of circumstances beyond your control, you should inform the person conducting the appeal hearing of this as soon as possible.

If you fail to attend without explanation, or if it appears that you have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the hearing may be conducted in your absence.

The person conducting the appeal hearing will consider the grounds that you have put forward and assess whether or not the outcome reached in the original grievance hearing was fair and appropriate.

The appeal will be a reconsideration of the specific areas with which you were dissatisfied in relation to the original grievance.

Following the appeal meeting, you will be informed of the outcome within five working days. The outcome of this meeting will be final.

Port-termination grievances

Should you wish to raise a grievance after your employment has ended, you should submit your grievance in writing to the Chief Executive.

By agreement, the need for a grievance hearing may be dispensed with and we may deal with the matters raised in your grievance letter in writing.

A formal outcome in response to your grievance will be confirmed in writing and sent to you in due course.

Review and amendment

This procedure will be periodically reviewed. Any amendment to it will be notified to you in writing and such written advice will inform you as to the date when any amendment comes into effect.

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