**Grievances**

The purpose of these notes is to provide guidance to managers on handling grievances, including alternative means of resolving disputes, and the provision of practical tips and frequently asked questions.

**Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the manager receiving a grievance to:

* Arrange to hear the grievance as soon as possible, or if they consider they are not the most appropriate person to hear the grievance, appoint another appropriate manager.
* Consider if any reasonable adjustments are required to ensure the member of staff can contribute fully to the grievance procedure, for example, in the case of an individual with a disability.

**General Principles**

* The aim of the grievance procedure is to resolve problems at work quickly and equitably. Wherever possible, grievances should be dealt with informally, and the procedure encourages this. If a member of staff raises a formal grievance without going through the informal stage, they should be encouraged to try and resolve the grievance informally first.
* Where the matter cannot be resolved at the informal stage then the matter will proceed to the formal stages of the procedure.
* The procedure should be followed promptly and without unreasonable delay.
* Grievances should be treated as confidential. Records should be securely retained, and grievances should not be discussed with other members of staff unless they are being interviewed as part of the process.
* Human Resources will provide advice and guidance at all stages.

**Responding to the Grievance**

During the process of hearing a grievance, the following good practice elements should be considered:

**Explore** **the issue**

When the member of staff has presented their grievance, the manager should allow them to fully state their case, discuss the problem and ask for more detail if necessary. It is also good practice to explore what resolution the member of staff is seeking should the grievance be upheld. At this stage, the grievance manager should refrain from passing any judgment.

**Investigation**

Once the grievance is understood, the grievance manager can consider what investigation, if any, is required to fully consider the matter. Depending on the issue raised, this could include interviewing witnesses, reviewing documents or policies, or taking advice from relevant individuals / departments at the University. This may include meeting again with the member of staff raising the grievance to discuss the results of this investigation or any further issues that have arisen during the course of the investigation) before reaching a conclusion.

**Considering**

Following investigation, the grievance manager needs to reflect upon the matter. The manager should re-read their notes and consider whether the complaint is valid and what, if anything, can be done about it. Broader considerations such as the impact on other members of staff or previous University practice / decisions may need to be taken into account. Managers can also take advice from Human Resources.

**Potential Outcomes**

A grievance can be rejected (where the manager disagrees with the matters raised), upheld in full, or upheld in part (where the manager agrees with some aspects of the grievance, but not all).

**Responding**

The response to the grievance should be in writing, and be expressed clearly and concisely so that the member of staff is in no doubt about the outcome. A rejection of the grievance must be given directly and honestly with full reasons for the decision. Where the grievance is upheld, either in full or in part, the letter

should state the proposed resolution or recommendations. This may include referring the matter to other procedures (for example, in the event that the grievance is about behavior of another party, the matter could be referred for action under the Disciplinary Policy).

**Explain subsequent Stages**

The member of staff should be made aware of the next stage in the formal process, if applicable.

**Further Considerations**

* Where a grievance is raised during disciplinary proceedings, a decision will have to be made whether the disciplinary process should be postponed. There is no legal requirement to do so. Where the grievance is unrelated the two processes can run in parallel. Where they are related, the circumstances will need to be considered. The University is required to act reasonably. Human Resources can provide advice on this issue. The member of staff should be advised in writing of the approach the University has decided to take.
* Generally speaking, all of the information gathered during the investigation should be shared with the member of staff who raised the grievance. There may be occasions where some individuals want to provide evidence in confidence. There are limited occasions where this may be possible; please discuss with your HR Partner. Although it is rare that internal grievances become the subject of a complaint to the Employment Tribunal, all evidence would be disclosable in that event.
* There is no obligation on the University to follow the grievance procedure if a complaint is received from a former member of staff. However, it is good practice to look into such complaints as they may provide important information or the issue may impact other staff. Take advice from your HR Partner.
* The procedure sets out information regarding re-arranging meetings when either trade union representatives or staff are not available. Wherever possible, aim to be flexible as long as they delay is reasonable, in order to ensure that staff have an opportunity to have their grievance heard.

## Related Documents

Grievance Procedure