**Guidelines for Dealing with Grievances**

Grievances should be dealt with sympathetically and promptly. The aim is to resolve the grievance with the minimum of fuss and at the lowest possible level.

All discussions, whether informal or formal, should give the employee sufficient time to state his or her case. In some circumstances, simply giving the employee the opportunity to air the grievance will take most of the heat out of it. It is crucial that line managers are seen to listen and understand the grievance, even if no further action is taken. Always discuss with the employee how they think their grievance should be resolved.

In all instances follow your procedure in terms of process and timescales.

**Dealing with Grievances Informally**

Grievances can often be resolved informally, through face-to-face discussion between the employee and his or her line manager, without the parties having to resort to a formal grievance procedure.

It is always advisable to consider whether the grievance can be resolved informally before a formal grievance procedure is invoked. An informal meeting between the line manager and the employee can often resolve a grievance or, at the very least, clarify its scope and seriousness.

You may wish to consider using an independent third party (such as a mediator) to help to resolve disputes in the workplace and may wish to incorporate reference to such a possibility in any grievance procedure.

**Dealing with Grievances Formally**

The formal grievance procedure should be used whenever an employee has raised a problem or concern about:

* work
* the working environment
* terms and conditions of employment
* working relationships
* and it has not proved possible to resolve the matter informally

On receiving a formal grievance, invite the employee to a grievance meeting/hearing. Remind the employee of their right to be accompanied at this meeting by a colleague or trade union representative.

In formal discussions or hearings, it is advisable for managers to arrange for notes to be taken. If the grievance is serious and could give rise to legal proceedings, it is advisable to invite an impartial witness to the hearing to take notes that can be agreed by both parties after the hearing.

After the meeting write to the employee with your decision and what action will be taken. If no action is to be taken, the employee should still be notified of this and the reason(s) for this.

The letter should remind the employee of their right to appeal against the decision and who they should send the appeal to and the timescale for submitting.

**Appeal**

If an employee appeals they should be invited to an appeal meeting. The appeal needs to be heard by a more senior manager and someone who was not involved at the previous grievance hearing. Again, the employee has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative at this meeting.

After the meeting the write to the employee with the decision, the appeal hearing decision is final.

**Overlapping Grievance and Disciplinary**

In principle, grievance and disciplinary issues can be dealt with concurrently. In many cases, however, employers may choose to deal with the two issues separately. This is often the best practice approach.

The code states that where an employee raises a grievance during a disciplinary process, the employer may temporarily suspend the disciplinary process in order to deal with the grievance. The code goes on to say that where the grievance and disciplinary issues are related, it may be appropriate to deal with them concurrently.

Employers should, however, be careful about combining the two issues. If, for example, an employee raises an allegation of discrimination after the disciplinary process has been invoked, then the disciplinary issue and the discrimination allegation should be dealt with separately - and by different managers, wherever possible, in order to avoid allegations of bias.

**For more information:** [**https://www.acas.org.uk/grievance-procedure-step-by-step**](https://www.acas.org.uk/grievance-procedure-step-by-step)