

## Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### **Q: I'm unhappy with an aspect of my employment, how do I make a complaint?**

A: Formal complaints by employees are called 'grievances' and generally fall under the Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure. If your complaint relates to [bullying, harassment or victimisation](#) you should read the University's [Dignity at Work and Study Procedure for Staff](#). The Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure has two distinct stages; an informal process and then a formal procedure. You should carefully consider all of the options available under each of the stages before making a decision as to what you would like to do about your complaint. You can talk to a [trade union representative](#), and/or a member of the [HR Partnering team](#) if you have any questions about the routes available.

### **Q: What's new in the Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure?**

A: The new policy has a greater focus on the informal resolution of grievances. The policy highlights the role of mediation and informal resolution in supporting grievance resolution at the earliest stages, with the intention of supporting a culture whereby grievances are resolved ahead of any formal process, with improved outcomes that support better relationships for the longer term. The policy also has a more streamlined process for managing some formal grievances which may be more quickly dealt with at a hearing without the need for a time consuming investigation beforehand.

### **Q: What is mediation?**

A: Mediation is an informal and flexible process that involves a supported discussion with one or two trained mediators in a safe environment. Our trained mediators are there to guide two or more parties towards their own resolution. The mediator(s) will support the parties throughout the process and remain impartial to help both sides clearly define the issue(s). The ideal outcome is to understand each person's position and reach agreement on a way forward. To find out more about mediation please visit our dedicated [mediation webpage](#).

### **Q: What support is available to me?**

A: There are a number of sources of support which the University offers for example [counselling support](#) and dignity disclosure officers (launching Summer 2021) whom you can speak to confidentially. You may also wish to seek support and take advice from your [trade union representative](#). Detailed information of the support available is in the 'Support Contacts' section of the Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure so please do read this.

### **Q: I am concerned that if I make a complaint through the grievance process the issues I am experiencing will get worse, what should I do?**

A: It is more likely that by doing nothing the situation will become worse. There are lots of sources of support which you can access to discuss your concerns before you make a decision about what to do (see "What support is available to me?"). If you feel able to, you should speak with your line manager as they can ensure appropriate support is put in place for you and by raising the matter with them they can ensure that any unwanted behaviour stops and it is appropriately dealt with.

**Q: I have raised a formal grievance, how long will the process take?**

A: Timeframes are not generally specified as no case is standard, each case requires individual assessment and judgement. As a guide, formal grievances should take no longer than 6-8 weeks to complete, balanced by the need for a thorough investigation. However, in some cases the process may take either a longer or a shorter period of time to complete. Parties involved will be kept up to date with progress throughout the process. If the formal process takes longer than 8 weeks the employee will be informed of the reasons for this.

**Q: A formal grievance has been raised against me which I don't think has any basis – why should I take part in the process?**

A: You are strongly encouraged to participate in the process so you are able to present your version of events and to respond to any allegations made against you. Remember that inferences may be drawn from your non-attendance so it is important that you participate. The University has guidance for those accused of inappropriate behaviour such as bullying, harassment and victimisation which you should read. There are also a number of sources of support that the University offers (see “What support is available to me?”); this is available to all staff involved in a grievance process including staff against whom a grievance has been raised.

**Q: I've been asked to be a witness at a grievance hearing – what should I expect?**

A: If you are a witness to a grievance, you may be asked to attend a grievance hearing to give evidence; you may also be asked to provide a witness statement or documentary evidence (e.g. e-mails, letters etc.) prior to the hearing. Remember that you are not being asked to ‘take sides’ – merely to present evidence which might help, for example, to clarify or explain events and thereby lead to a resolution.

Try to keep your evidence as factual as possible and avoid giving your personal opinions unless specifically requested. You may be questioned at the hearing by the panel members hearing the grievance, the employee who has raised the grievance, their trade union representative or by HR representatives present. You can speak to the HR Adviser or HR Partner supporting the case for information and advice on the procedure prior to the hearing to help you understand the process.

**Q: What are the possible outcomes of a formal grievance hearing?**

A: The possible outcomes from a formal grievance hearing are that the grievance may be upheld, partly upheld or not upheld. The hearing outcome letter will provide an explanation for any decisions and will provide a suggested remedy where applicable or any recommended actions. Where working relationships have been damaged, the Chair of the grievance hearing may consider the value of recommending mediation for some or all of the parties. When a complaint of bullying, discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other inappropriate behaviour is upheld the case will normally be referred to a disciplinary hearing without the need for further investigation.

**Q: I have raised a formal grievance, what will I be told about the outcome?**

A: You will be kept regularly up to date about the progress of dealing with your grievance. You will also be advised following the investigation and / or hearing whether your grievance has been upheld or not. If there are any recommendations made as a result of your grievance you will be advised of those that relate to you. If it is decided that as a result of your grievance a disciplinary process takes place relating to employees complained about, you will not be told what action is taken as this is confidential to the individuals concerned. You will however be

given as much information as possible to assure you that your grievance has been managed in accordance with University policy and that your concerns have been listened to and given due consideration.