

Grievance procedure template

A grievance procedure earns its keep at the moment somebody is upset and nobody is sure what happens next. This template sets out the route, the timescales, the statutory right to be accompanied, and the appeal - and names an alternative contact so a complaint about a manager has somewhere to go. Timescales in [brackets] are suggestions; what matters is that you set them and keep to them.

The template

Replace each [bracketed placeholder]. Copy it straight from this page, or download the PDF above.

1. Purpose and scope

This procedure explains how to raise a concern about your work, working conditions, or your treatment by someone at [Company name], and how we will deal with it. It applies to all employees and workers from their first day. It does not form part of your contract of employment. Complaints of harassment or bullying may be raised under this procedure or under the anti-harassment policy - either route reaches the same place.

2. Informal resolution

Many concerns are resolved quickest by raising them directly with your line manager, and we encourage that where you feel able to. Informal resolution is an option available to you, not a stage you must complete first: you can raise a formal grievance at any point, and you never have to speak to the person concerned before doing so.

3. Raising a formal grievance

Put your grievance in writing to your line manager, setting out what has happened, when, who was involved, and what you would like to see happen. If your grievance concerns your line manager - or you would simply rather not go to them - send it instead to [alternative named contact or role]. If you need help putting it in writing, or would prefer to explain it verbally first, tell [role] and we will make a written record with you and confirm it back.

4. What happens next

We will acknowledge your grievance within [5] working days and tell you who will be handling it. We will hold a meeting with you without unreasonable delay, normally within [10] working days of receiving it, and we will give you enough notice to prepare. If we need longer - because of an investigation, availability or complexity - we will tell you why and give you a new date rather than letting it go quiet.

5. Your right to be accompanied

You may bring one companion to any formal grievance meeting: a trade union official, a union representative certified as trained or experienced in accompanying, or a colleague employed by the Company. Your companion may put your case, sum it up, and respond on your behalf to anything said, and may talk with you during the meeting. They cannot answer questions for you. If your chosen companion cannot attend the time we propose, you may suggest an alternative time within five working days of it and we will move the meeting.

6. Investigation

We will carry out any investigation that is needed, proportionate to what has been raised. This may involve speaking to other people and reviewing documents or records. Where the grievance is serious, the investigation will be carried out by someone not involved in the matters complained about. We will keep the process as confidential as investigating it allows, and we will tell you if we need to share your complaint with someone in order to look into it.

7. The outcome

We will write to you with the outcome, normally within [5] working days of the meeting or of completing any investigation. The letter will explain what we found, what we have decided, what action we are taking, and how to appeal. If we cannot uphold your grievance we will explain why rather than simply saying no.

8. Appeal

If you are unhappy with the outcome you may appeal in writing to [role] within [5] working days of receiving it, saying why. The appeal will be heard by someone who was not involved in the original decision wherever possible, you have the same right to be accompanied, and we will write to you with the appeal outcome. The appeal decision is final within the Company.

9. Overlap with a disciplinary process

If you raise a grievance while you are subject to a disciplinary process, we will consider whether to pause the disciplinary while the grievance is dealt with, or - where the two are closely related - deal with them together. We will tell you which we are doing and why.

10. No detriment, and records

Nobody will be treated less favourably for raising a grievance in good faith, for supporting someone else's, or for giving evidence - including where the grievance is not upheld. A complaint made honestly that turns out to be mistaken is not a false complaint. Records of grievances are kept securely for [period] in line with our retention schedule, and access is limited to those who need it.

Adapting it

- Fill in clause 3's alternative contact with a name, not "HR". In a small company, "HR" may be the person the grievance is about. This is the clause that decides whether a complaint about a senior manager ever gets raised at all.

- Set timescales you can actually meet. Five working days is fine if you can do it; a policy promising 48 hours and routinely taking three weeks is worse than one promising ten days and hitting it.
- Decide the appeal route now. "Someone not involved" needs to be a real person in a company of twelve. If genuinely nobody qualifies, say who will hear it and how you will keep it fair - an honest answer beats an impossible promise.

This is a starting point for a general UK employer and is not legal advice. Following a fair procedure matters beyond the policy itself: a tribunal can adjust an award by up to 25% where a party unreasonably failed to follow the relevant Acas Code.

A free template from CoDash - codash.co.uk/templates. Edit it to match how your company actually works, and take advice on anything unusual.