

Grievance Procedure.

Net Consulting believes that all employees should be treated fairly and with respect. The grievance procedure enables the organisation to ensure that any problems, complaints or concerns raised by employees are dealt with in a fair, timely and consistent manner.

Grievances may be concerned with a wide range of issues, including:

- Your work, working conditions, pay and benefits, working hours; or
- The way in which you have been managed; or
- Treatment by colleagues, customers, contractors, or third parties including harassment and bullying; or
- The opportunities that you have been given for career development; or
- Discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, gender reassignment, marital status or ethnic origin; or
- Your health and safety or a breach of statutory employment rights; or
- Any other issue affecting your employment.

Issues that are the subject of collective negotiations or grievances will not be considered under this policy and individuals must raise their own grievance that is individual to their own circumstances.

In instances where the grievance has bearing on the disciplinary proceedings, it can be raised as a relevant issue in the course of the proceedings and disciplinary proceedings may be suspended. Where an initial investigation into the complaint finds that the grievance and disciplinary cases are related it may be appropriate to deal with both matters concurrently. If the grievance complaint is found to have no bearing on the matters being investigated under the disciplinary process the disciplinary proceedings will continue.

If a complaint relates to bullying or harassment on the part of a colleague, the matter will be dealt with in consideration to the bullying and harassment procedure. Where a grievance amounts to an allegation of misconduct on the part of another employee and this is upheld, this will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure and the employee who raised the grievance will be informed of the outcome.

The organisation recognises 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. The organisation will not tolerate abusive or insulting behaviour from anyone taking part in or conducting grievance procedures and will treat any such behaviour as serious misconduct under the disciplinary procedure.

Informal Procedure

You should, where possible, discuss the grievance or complaint with your line manager on an informal basis first. The manager will discuss any concerns with you and attempt to resolve the matter within a reasonable timescale. Where it is not possible for you to talk to your

immediate manager, or if the grievance concerns them, you should instead talk to the next most senior person.

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

Mediation

It may be appropriate for the matter to be dealt with by way of mediation, depending on the nature of your grievance. This may be by way of an informal mediated meeting facilitated by a manager or HR Representative, or may involve the appointment of a third-party mediator, who will discuss the issues raised by your grievance with all of those involved and seek to facilitate a resolution. Mediation will be used only where all parties involved in the grievance agree.

Formal grievance procedure

Making the complaint

You must first send a written statement detailing the nature of the grievance to your line manager without unreasonable delay. This written statement will form the basis of the 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 the grievance is unclear, you may be asked to clarify your complaint before any meeting takes place.

Your complaint should be headed "Formal grievance" and sent to your line manager. If the complaint relates to the way in which the line manager is treating you, the complaint may be sent to someone more senior (where possible).

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

The grievance hearing

The hearing will be held as soon as is reasonably practicable and, subject to any need to carry out prior investigations, within five working days of the receipt of your written complaint. It will usually be conducted by a manager and/or an HR representative. At the meeting, you will be asked to explain the nature of your complaint and what action you feel should be taken to resolve the matter.

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 your line manager 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 take place in your absence.

While you will be given every opportunity to explain your case fully, your explanation should be confined to matters that are directly relevant to your complaint. Focusing on irrelevant issues or incidents that took place long before the matter in hand is not helpful and can hinder the effective handling of the complaint. The manager conducting the hearing will intervene if

they think that the discussion is straying too far from the key issue. The manager may also intervene to ensure that the meeting can be completed within a reasonable timeframe, depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint.

A thorough investigation of the facts relating to any allegations may take place following the meeting before a decision is taken about how to deal with your grievance after which, you will usually be informed in writing of the outcome within ten working days and told of any action that the organisation proposes to take as a result of the complaint.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may make a formal appeal.

Appeal

Appeals should be made in writing to the manager who conducted the initial grievance hearing. You should clearly state the grounds of your appeal, i.e. the basis on which you say that the result of the grievance was wrong or that the action taken as a result was inappropriate. This should be done within five working days of the written notification of the outcome of the grievance. An appeal meeting will be arranged to take place usually within five working days of the submission of the formal appeal.

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 your line manager 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 take place in your absence.

The appeal hearing will, where possible, be held by someone other than the person who held the original hearing who will consider the grounds that you have put forward and assess whether or not the conclusion reached in the original grievance hearing was appropriate. The appeal is not a rehearing of the original grievance, but rather a consideration of the specific areas with which you are dissatisfied in relation to the original grievance. The manager conducting the appeal may therefore confine discussion to those specific areas rather than reconsider the whole matter afresh.

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

The right to be accompanied

You may, following a reasonable request, be accompanied by a colleague, or a member of the external arbitration service at any formal grievance meeting or subsequent appeal.

Your chosen companion will be able to address the meeting to put or sum up your case, as well as confer with you during the meeting. They may not, however, answer questions on your behalf, address the meeting if you do not wish them to do so or prevent the organisation from explaining their case.

The choice of companion is a matter for you. Please note that individual workers are not obliged to agree to accompany you. Companions will be given appropriate paid time off to allow them to accompany colleagues at a grievance hearing or appeal hearing. 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 any disability that you may have, or if you need assistance because English is not your first language, you should raise this issue with your line manager, who will make appropriate arrangements.

Recording of meetings

You, or any person acting on your behalf, is not normally permitted to record electronically any meeting held by the organisation as part of the grievance procedure. Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action against you, up to and including dismissal.

In certain limited circumstances, the organisation may permit the meeting to be recorded electronically. For example, if you are disabled, it may be appropriate as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010. Where the organisation permits the meeting to be recorded electronically, it will take responsibility for making the recording.

Data protection

The organisation processes personal data collected during informal complaints and the formal grievance procedure in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. In particular, data collected as part of informal complaints and the grievance procedure is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of responding to the complaints or conducting the grievance procedure. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported to the person named in the Data Protection Policy as having responsibility for data protection compliance within the organisation immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the organisation's Disciplinary Procedure.

Notes

1. You will receive a written invitation to all formal grievance and appeal meetings.
2. Outcomes of formal meetings will be confirmed to you in writing.
3. A note-taker will attend formal grievance meetings in order to act as a witness and to make a written record of the meeting.
4. The timescales listed above will be adhered to wherever possible. Each party can request an extension of the permitted timescale, however, where there are good reasons.
5. The organisation reserves the right to seek assistance from external facilitators at any stage in the grievance procedure, in the interests of seeking a satisfactory outcome for all those concerned.
6. Complaints that you may have about any disciplinary action taken against you should be dealt with as an appeal under the disciplinary procedure and not raised as a grievance.

This policy is not contractual and may be varied by the organisation at any time.