

Procedures on: DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE ISSUES

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The following general principles will apply to both the disciplinary and grievance procedures

- Each step and action will be taken without unreasonable delay.
- Whenever the employee is invited by the company to attend a meeting, the employee must take all reasonable steps to attend.
- At all stages of the procedure the employee will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague of your choice. If your companion is unable to attend any such meeting you may suggest an alternative date, provided it is within 5 working days of the original date.
- Timing and location of meetings must be reasonable.
- Meetings will be conducted in a manner that enables both the company and employee to explain their case.
- For appeal hearings following a decision, the company will, as far as reasonably practicable, be represented by a more senior manager than attended the first meeting (unless the most senior manager attended that meeting).
- Whenever the company or employee is required to send the other a statement, the original or a copy will suffice.

1) DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

PURPOSE

The Disciplinary Procedures are designed to help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain standards of conduct, attendance and job performance. The company rules and these procedures apply to all employees. The aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all in the organisation.

PRINCIPLES

- No disciplinary action will be taken against an employee until the case has been fully investigated
- The Company may suspend you with or without pay while an investigation takes place. Such a suspension will be reviewed as soon as possible and will not normally exceed 20 working days.
- An employee will not be dismissed for a first breach of discipline except in the case of gross misconduct (when the penalty may be dismissal without either notice or payment in lieu of notice).
- Misconduct will generally fall into two categories, namely "general" misconduct (in respect of which the general disciplinary action procedure described below applies) and "gross" misconduct, which is of so serious a nature that it justifies instant dismissal for a first offence. Listed below are examples which would normally be considered to be either general misconduct or gross misconduct. However, it should be recognised that neither list can be regarded as complete to meet every case, and also that action described as general misconduct may amount to and be treated as gross misconduct if the circumstances or the manner of the misconduct are such as to warrant serious disciplinary action. These lists should be regarded therefore as being illustrative rather than exhaustive.

- Examples of “gross” misconduct:**

Summary dismissal (dismissal without notice or pay in lieu of notice) may be necessary in cases of gross misconduct. For guidance, the following are examples of the offences which may be regarded as gross misconduct and will normally result in summary dismissal. It is emphasised that this is not an exhaustive list.

 - Unauthorised use or disclosure of confidential information or business matters relating to the company, its clients, temporary workers or applicants.
 - Acts of violence, including physical assault; unlawful discrimination; drunkenness; taking of non-prescribed drugs in such a way as to impair the ability to carry out work; conduct of any kind which endangers the health and safety of others.
 - A criminal offence committed at work other than a minor road traffic offence committed in the course of the employment, or an offence committed outside work which is incompatible with the employee remaining in employment.
 - Falsification of information or references on appointment.
 - Theft or fraudulent activity.
 - Unauthorised absence or gross negligence in the performance of duties.
 - Acceptance of any bribe, secret profit or unauthorised commission.
 - Any conduct tending to bring the company, or the employee, into disrepute or which results in the loss of custom of a client or applicant, or a loss of business.
 - Working for or assisting a competitor of the company or seeking to establish a business which is likely to compete with the company or divulging confidential information concerning the company and its business.
 - Refusal to obey a lawful instruction in connection with the employment.
- Examples of “general” misconduct**

The following may be regarded as reasons for disciplinary action in that they deviate from accepted standards and constitute general misconduct. The employee’s first offence will usually result in a verbal or written warning as appropriate. Repetition of offences following a warning could lead to a written warning or a final written warning as appropriate. Thereafter any repetition will result in dismissal. It is again emphasised that this is not an exhaustive list.

 - Poor job performance.
 - Poor time-keeping.
 - Failure to comply with the conditions of your employment contract.
 - Unseemly or disruptive conduct.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

The following is the disciplinary action that may be taken against an employee in cases of misconduct or unsatisfactory performance:

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL ACTION: ORAL WARNING

If an employee’s conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, they will be given an informal oral warning. However this will be recorded in writing on their personnel file. The warning will be disregarded after 6 months’ satisfactory service.

STAGE 2 – FORMAL WRITTEN WARNING

If the offence is serious, or if there is no improvement in standards after informal action has been taken in cases of minor misconduct or unsatisfactory performance or there has been further misconduct within 6 months of any informal action, a written warning will be given. This written warning will include the reason for the warning and a note that, if there is no improvement after a specified period, a final written warning will be given. A copy of the written warning will be given to the employee and a copy will be placed on their personnel file. The warning will be disregarded after 6 months satisfactory service.

STAGE 3 – FORMAL FINAL WRITTEN WARNING

If following a written warning, conduct or performance remains unsatisfactory, or if a serious incident occurs, a final written warning will be given making it clear that any recurrence of the offence or other

serious misconduct within a specified period will result in dismissal. A copy of the written warning will be given to the employee and a copy will be placed on their personnel file. The warning will then be disregarded after 12 months satisfactory service.

STAGE 4 – DISMISSAL OR OTHER SANCTION

If there is no satisfactory improvement or if further serious misconduct occurs within 12 months, the final step in the procedure may be dismissal, either with or without notice or payment in lieu of notice, or some other action short of dismissal such as disciplinary suspension or transfer.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Informal Discussion

1. Minor breaches of discipline, misconduct, poor time-keeping, etc may result in an informal discussion with the employee's immediate superior.
2. Although an informal warning will not form part of the formal disciplinary procedure, it will be recorded.
3. It is expected that in most cases an informal discussion will resolve most difficulties. Where an employee commits a more serious act of misconduct or fails to improve and maintain that improvement with regard to conduct, behaviour or job performance, the formal steps detailed below may be taken.

Formal Discussion

Step 1 - Written Statement

The company will inform the employee of the alleged conduct or characteristics, or other circumstances, which lead the company to contemplate dismissing or taking disciplinary action against the employee. This shall be done promptly after becoming aware of the circumstances, and the employee shall be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the matter, once any necessary investigations have been conducted to establish the facts of the matter.

Step 2 - Meeting

- 1) The meeting will take place before any action is taken, except in the case where the disciplinary action consists of a suspension on full pay, in order to investigate the allegation.
- 2) The meeting will not take place unless:
 - the company has informed the employee of the ground or grounds for contemplating disciplinary action or dismissal
 - the employee has had a reasonable opportunity to consider his response to that information
- 3) The employee has the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or a Trade Union representative.
- 4) After the meeting, the company will inform the employee in writing of its decision and notify him of the right to appeal against the decision if he is not satisfied with it.

Step 3 - Appeal

- 1) If the employee does wish to appeal, he must inform the company by writing (to the specific Manager stated on the disciplinary/grievance outcome letter) within 5 working days of the date of the outcome letter, and on doing so the company will invite him to attend a further meeting.
- 2) The appeal meeting may not necessarily take place before the dismissal or disciplinary action takes effect but it will be arranged within a reasonable period of time.
- 3) An appeal cannot be used to re-open a case unless there is new material that was not available previously or was overlooked when making the original decision.
- 4) The appeal will be dealt with by a more senior manager than at the Step 2 meeting and who has not been involved in the initial decision. Where this is not practicable, the company will hear the appeal and decide the case as impartially as possible.
- 5) The employee has the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a fellow employee or an employed official of an independent trade union.

- 6) After the appeal meeting, the company will inform the employee of its final decision.

2) GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

If an employee has a problem or concern about their work, working conditions or relationships with colleagues, they should aim to settle their grievance informally with their line manager.

If an employee's grievance cannot be settled informally, or a formal approach is preferable, the employee should raise it formally with management by following the procedure below.

Step 1 - Written statement

The employee must set out their grievance in writing and send this statement to the company

Step 2 - Meeting

- 1) The company will invite the employee to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance, normally within 5 days, but longer where it is necessary to undertake an investigation to establish the facts or it is otherwise impracticable.
- 2) The meeting will not take place unless:
 - the employee has informed the company of the basis for the grievance in writing
 - the company has had a reasonable opportunity to consider its response to that information
- 3) After the meeting the company will inform the employee of its decision, as soon as practicable, and the company will notify the employee of his right to appeal if he is not satisfied with it.

Step 3 – Appeal

- 1) If the employee does wish to appeal, he must inform the company in writing within 5 working days of the date of the Step 2 meeting, and on doing so the company will invite him to attend a further meeting.
- 2) The appeal meeting will be arranged within a reasonable period of time.
- 3) An appeal cannot be used to re-open a case unless there is new material that was not available previously or was overlooked when making the original decision.
- 4) The appeal will be dealt with by a more senior manager than at the Step 2 meeting and who has not been involved in the initial decision. Where this is not practicable, the company will hear the appeal and decide the case as impartially as possible.
- 5) The employee has the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a fellow employee or an employed official of an independent trade union.
- 6) After the appeal meeting, the company will inform the employee of its final decision.