

Formal grievance procedure: step by step

If an employee has a problem ('grievance') at work it's usually a good idea for them to [raise it informally first](#).

The employer should [respond even if the problem's raised informally](#).

A grievance procedure is a formal way for an employee to raise a problem or complaint to their employer.

The employee can raise a grievance if:

- they feel raising it informally has not worked
- they do not want it dealt with informally
- it's a very serious issue, for example sexual harassment or '[whistleblowing](#)'

1. Following a formal procedure

When an employee raises a formal grievance, their employer should follow a formal procedure.

Your workplace should have its own grievance procedure, otherwise you must follow the steps in this guide and the [Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures](#).

If your workplace has its own grievance procedure, it should:

- follow the Acas Code, as a minimum
- be in writing and easy to find

[Download an example of a grievance procedure](#).

The Acas Code and the law

You must follow a full and fair procedure in line with the Acas Code for any discipline or grievance case. The procedure you've followed will be taken into account if the case reaches an employment tribunal.

The size of the business or organisation

Regardless of the size of your business or organisation, all employers should follow a full and fair grievance procedure as set out in this guide.

They should:

- make clear they'll deal with grievances fairly and consistently
- [investigate](#) to get as much information as possible
- allow the employee to bring a relevant person to a grievance meeting
- give everyone a chance to have their say before making a decision
- take actions and make decisions as soon as they can
- allow the employee to [appeal](#) against the grievance outcome

The procedure can be adjusted depending on size. For example, a manager of a small business with one or 2 employees might need to manage the grievance procedure on their own.

The employee should always:

- raise the grievance as soon as they can
- take any actions expected of them as soon as they can

If there are related grievances

If there are 2 or more related grievances, the employer should:

- still follow the formal procedure, for all the grievances
- keep information confidential
- consider what each employee wants
- explain to the employees how it is dealing with the grievances

There is some flexibility in how to run the grievance procedure in these situations. For example, the employer could decide to have a single [meeting](#) to cover all the grievances, if the employees agree.

Each employee still has the right to their own grievance meeting in which employees who are part of the grievance are not present.

Using mediation

You can use mediation at any stage. Mediation involves an independent, impartial person working with both sides to find a solution.

The mediator can be someone from inside or outside your business. If they're from outside your business, you might need to pay.

Both sides will need to agree to mediation.

You can find out more about mediation in the [Acas guide to discipline and grievances at work](#).