

Staff Grievance Policy

UPR HR03 version 05.0

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces version 04.0 of this policy, effective from 26 February 2026.

Summary of significant changes to the previous version

This document has been updated to ensure it is up-to-date with current legislation and best practice, and consistent with other UH policies.

Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

Table of contents

1	Purpose and Scope	1
2	Definition of Terms Used	3
3	General Principles	3
4	Mediation.....	5
5	Stages in the Procedure (see flowchart at Appendix A).....	5
5.1	STAGE 1 – INFORMAL PROCEDURE	5
5.2	STAGE 2 – FORMAL PROCEDURE	6
5.3	STAGE 3 - APPEAL.....	8
	APPENDIX A - PROGRESSION THROUGH THE STAFF GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE (FLOWCHART)	10
	APPENDIX B - FORMAL GRIEVANCE NOTIFICATION.....	11
	APPENDIX C – Grievance Investigations	13
	APPENDIX D – Grievance Hearings.....	14

1 Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 Grievances are concerns, or complaints which employees raise with their employer regarding their terms and conditions of employment and issues relating to health and safety, working relationships, new working practices, working environment and organisational change.
- 1.2 The Employment Act 2002 sets out statutory grievance procedures which employers and employees must follow. This UPR complies with these and with the ACAS Code

of Practice.

- 1.3 The aim of this UPR is to resolve individual grievances promptly, fairly and consistently. Its existence is not to be interpreted as inhibiting the right of an employee to request to see, on an informal basis, their manager or an official of their trade union, to discuss personal problems.
- 1.4 In circumstances where a grievance applies to more than one employee and where one of the University's recognised trade unions represents at least one of those employees, it may be appropriate for the matter to be dealt with through a collective grievance raised by a recognised trade union (with the consent of those staff) using this procedure. In such circumstances, the grievance may be submitted in writing by the Trade Union Representative on behalf of the aggrieved parties, but only where each of those parties are also named in the grievance submission, as they will be expected to participate in the process.
- 1.5 Complaints of Bullying and/or Harassment are not considered under this UPR and are instead considered under UPR EQ10 Bullying and Harassment.
- 1.6 This procedure applies to all staff except Appointees of the Board of Governors, such as the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Director of Finance, and Secretary and Registrar, for whom separate procedures operate.
- 1.7 This policy will not apply:
- to collective disputes covered by the University's Policy on Information, Consultation and Collective Bargaining nor to disputes between employees as private individuals outside their employment;
 - where the employee is subject to proceedings under the University's UPRs including those related to probation, disciplinary procedures, attendance and sickness, performance management or redundancy and is aggrieved by actions/processes/outcomes related to these proceedings and where the employee has a right of appeal under the appropriate employee relations process;
 - where the employee has a complaint relating to a recruitment process in which they are involved;
 - where the grievance relates to Freedom of Speech. In such circumstances, the complaint will be raised under UPR FS02 Freedom of Speech Complaints Procedure.
 - Where, on initial review of the grievance submission, the University determines that a grievance investigation is not required. Under such circumstances, the employee will be informed of the reasons in writing. (see 5.2.2 for further information)
 - where the employee raises a concern as a 'protected disclosure' in compliance with the Public Interest Disclosure provisions in which case this matter should be raised under the [University's Whistleblowing Policy \(UPR GV16\)](#). The policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest. These concerns may include but are not limited to:
 - i financial malpractice or fraud;

- ii serious risks to health and safety of staff or students, or to the environment;
- iii a criminal offence;
- iv failure to comply with a legal requirement, or a serious breach of a University UPR;
- v academic or professional malpractice, for example research misconduct;
- vi improper or unethical behaviour, such as abuse of position within the University;
- vii general concern about a wrongdoing;
- viii dangerous or illegal activity;
- ix discriminatory behaviour in breach of the Equality Act 2010; and
- x attempts to conceal any of the above.

1.8 A grievance should be raised promptly and be received normally within 3 months of the circumstances giving rise to the grievance. (Where previous issues are cited, they may only be taken into consideration if they relate to concerns arising within 3 months of submitting a grievance). Grievances should normally be raised before an employee leaves their employment with the University.

1.9 If an employee raises a grievance prior to leaving employment, HR will undertake an initial review of the grievance to determine whether or not an investigation is necessary. In such circumstances, the University may determine that an investigation is not required and will write to the complainant with that outcome. Where an investigation is required, such an investigation, (which may be a paper-based review), will be conducted to the end of the stage started prior to the employee leaving employment and a written response will be provided to the complainant.

2 Definition of Terms Used

2.1 For Teaching/Research staff:

“Line Manager” is the person designated by the Dean of School as being responsible for academic leadership in an assigned area, and to whom the member of staff reports.

“Senior Manager” is a more senior manager than the line manager. For example, Head of Department, Deputy Dean, Dean of School.

2.2 For Professional staff:

“Line Manager” is the person to whom a member of staff reports.

“Senior Manager” is a more senior manager than the line manager, e.g.: Head of Section, Head of Department, Head of SBU.

2.3 “Recognised Trade Union” is a trade union formally recognised by the University for the purposes of collective bargaining (i.e.: UCU and UNISON).

3 General Principles

3.1 Individuals who are the subject of a grievance are entitled to be given sufficient details of the allegations against them such that they can respond accordingly. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for copies of any grievance statements or supporting documents to be provided to both parties, however, this may not always be appropriate, and the investigating manager and/or the Senior Manager will exercise their discretion.

- 3.2 All procedures and documents related to a grievance must be treated confidentially and information will only be shared with other parties who have a direct involvement with the grievance in accordance with UK GDPR Data Protection Principles.
- 3.3 An aggrieved employee and the person who is the subject of the grievance will be entitled to be accompanied by either a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union, at every stage of the Grievance procedure, including the investigation. The individual's representative must not be someone who may have a conflict of interest (for example someone who may need to be interviewed as a witness in their own right as part of the process). The employees must notify the HR representative of their chosen representative prior to the scheduled meeting.
- 3.4 The parties may by mutual agreement modify the time limits referred to in this procedure.
- 3.5 Where the grievance concerns an alteration in working arrangements affecting the aggrieved employee, apart from emergency situations, the status quo shall prevail until the Grievance Policy has been followed to its logical conclusion, except where it is mutually agreed that this is impracticable.
- 3.6 All parties will be treated fairly and equally, regardless of their status, and reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure these procedures are accessible for individuals with a disability.
- 3.7 The University's Human Resources Department undertakes to monitor the incidence of formal grievances. The Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion is responsible for presenting a report annually to the EDI Committee and to the University Executive Team (UET). Such grievance monitoring information will also be made available to our recognised Trade Unions.
- 3.8 An employee who makes a complaint in good faith will not suffer any detriment even if the grievance is not substantiated. Where an employee raises a grievance that is frivolous or vexatious or with the intention to deceive, or where any person involved gives deliberately misleading statements, they may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 3.9 Any grievance that the employee has regarding disciplinary action being taken against them shall be raised in response to the disciplinary action and will normally be considered within the Disciplinary procedure in accordance with clause 1.7 above, and not the grievance procedure.
- 3.10 Where a grievance has been raised prior to the date of an incident or an allegation that is to be investigated under the Disciplinary Policy, the grievance will normally be held first. There may be exceptions to this if the disciplinary allegations are sufficiently serious to be potentially considered gross misconduct or a risk regarding matters of health and safety.
- 3.11 Any grievance raised by an employee who is already subject to a disciplinary process (and which does not relate to it) will normally be heard on completion of the disciplinary procedure.
- 3.12 Two or more grievances raised which relate to each other may be dealt with together.
- 3.13 A line manager may not raise a formal grievance against an individual for whom they have line-management responsibility. Managers should instead consider the use of other HR policies to manage their concerns, such as Staff Disciplinary (HR02),

Probation (HR27 and HR31), Managing Sickness Absence and Ill Health (HR20), and Managing Poor Performance (HR19).

4 Mediation

- 4.1 The University offers a mediation service which is intended to be a fair and impartial method of resolving conflicts and disputes. Mediation assists to clarify the issues involved in the case and explore options for resolution. This process is voluntary and confidential. Neither party to a grievance is under an obligation to accept mediation, or proposed options arising from the mediation.
- 4.2 Mediation can be used at any stage of the grievance process and can be especially beneficial in problems associated with working relationships.
- 4.3 Where mediation has been agreed to by the parties, the grievance procedure will be suspended pending the outcome of the mediation process and may be withdrawn if the mediation is successful.
- 4.4 Employees should, wherever possible, try and resolve complaints and concerns using an informal approach before making a formal complaint. Mediation should therefore be considered as a potential means of resolving differences at an early stage.
- 4.5 While there are many benefits to mediation, it is acknowledged that not all circumstances are appropriate for mediation. This may include, but may not be limited to, where a decision about right or wrong is needed, e.g. where there is possible criminal activity; an individual wants a discrimination or harassment case investigated; one party is particularly vulnerable; or the parties do not have the power to resolve an issue. If either or both parties refuse to undertake mediation, this is entirely their decision, but the offer of such mediation will be noted.

5 Stages in the Procedure (see flowchart at Appendix A)

5.1 STAGE 1 – INFORMAL PROCEDURE

- 5.1.1 It is normally expected that an employee who has a grievance would initially try to resolve the matter informally before resorting to the formal stage. This may involve a direct approach to any other member(s) of staff involved, or requesting support from another individual such as the line manager or HR Business Partner in order to approach the matter informally. If the individual feels it would be inappropriate to raise the matter with their immediate manager as it relates to their manager's behaviour, they should raise the concern with their line manager's manager.
- 5.1.2 As per section 1.7 above, individuals who consider that they are experiencing harassment, bullying or victimisation should refer to UPR EQ10 Bullying and Harassment policy.

- 5.1.3 Where the matter remains unresolved, the employee should discuss it with their line manager – or that person’s manager where the complaint is against the person with whom the grievance would normally be raised. The manager who receives the complaint should investigate the facts thoroughly and speak in confidence to the parties concerned including third parties e.g. witnesses. They should offer advice and reasonable assistance to resolve the matter if possible. They also should make a note of the grievance (not to be kept on the individual’s HR file) and the steps taken so far to solve the issue. They should then reply in writing to the aggrieved employee and other directly affected parties as soon as possible after receiving the complaint. The Senior manager will update the parties in writing on their investigation progress after 5 working days with an expected timeframe for the outcome to be issued.
- 5.1.4 Once the outcome is issued, the manager and the employee should make every effort to resolve the matter of concern at this stage. Any proposed informal actions will be confirmed in writing, including any deadlines for appeal by making a formal complaint.
- 5.1.5 In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the line manager to hold an individual case conference as an alternative means of early dispute resolution. The purpose of the conference will be to bring together the parties, the line manager, a representative from HR, and a workplace colleague or trade union representative to explore how the grievance may be resolved without the need to use the formal procedure.
- 5.1.6 There is no appeal in the informal process. Where an employee continues to be aggrieved despite receiving an informal outcome, they may consider moving to Stage 2 of the process.

5.2 **STAGE 2 – FORMAL PROCEDURE**

5.2.1 In the event that:

- the matter is sufficiently serious that the informal procedure would not be appropriate;
- either party is not willing to engage in the informal procedure; or
- the employee continues to be aggrieved despite following the informal procedure

then they should set out the grievance in writing to the Senior Manager who will consult with the Human Resources Business Partner. A Formal Grievance Notification form Appendix B may be used for this purpose.

- 5.2.2 Note that where a formal grievance has been submitted where reasonable attempts to resolve informally have not taken place, then the Senior Manager may revert to the informal procedure (see section 5.1). Alternatively, where a complaint has been submitted which does not require a formal, independent investigation, (for example, where an individual writes to express dislike of another individual, is dissatisfied with an explanation provided, or is seeking clarification or understanding about a matter) the manager must obtain advice from the HR Business Partner before proceeding. If advised that a formal, independent investigation is not required, the Senior Manager shall gather the facts relating to the complaint and provide a response to this complaint in writing. (See also section 1.7).

- 5.2.3 Unless further information from the aggrieved employee is required (in which case the Senior Manager will arrange to meet with the employee within 10 working days of receiving their formal grievance submission), the Senior Manager will then commission a formal investigation to take place to establish the facts of the employee's grievance complaint. This investigation will normally be undertaken by an independent manager within the University, supported by a qualified HR Practitioner. In some cases, an external investigator may be commissioned. See Appendix C regarding investigation.
- 5.2.4 If the Senior Manager is already involved in the complaint or if it would not be appropriate for them to hear the grievance, Human Resources will appoint an independent nominee, at the same level, to hear the grievance on their behalf.
- 5.2.5 On completion of the investigation, the Senior Manager or nominee will arrange a formal hearing with the aggrieved employee, the investigating manager and the HR practitioner who supported with the investigation within 10 working days of receiving the report. A copy of the investigation report and appendices (with the exception of interview transcripts, witness statements or other sensitive data, due to GDPR) will be shared with the panel and the appellant in advance of the hearing. Note that where an independent external investigation is commissioned, the external investigator may not be present in the grievance hearing. The Senior Manager will advise the aggrieved employee of their right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union at this hearing. The aggrieved employee must take all reasonable steps to attend this hearing.
- 5.2.6 At the hearing, the employee will be invited to present their case to the Senior Manager. In response to this, the Senior Manager will consider the information provided by the investigating manager (and/or the HR Practitioner who supported the investigation as appropriate) and will ask questions of both parties as appropriate. See Appendix D regarding the hearing.
- If the Senior Manager considers that further investigation is necessary, then the hearing may be adjourned, and re-convened at the earliest possible opportunity following that further investigation. A Human Resources representative who has not previously been involved in the investigation shall be present at the hearing(s) to advise the Senior Manager and they will produce a written summary record of the proceedings which will be placed on the aggrieved employee's HR file.
- 5.2.7 The Senior Manager will give the grievance careful consideration before responding to the aggrieved employee and the person against whom a grievance has been raised. This should normally be done verbally at the hearing and followed up in writing, or, alternatively, issued in writing within 5 working days of the hearing. The aggrieved employee will be informed of his or her right of appeal.
- 5.2.8 Note that the outcome letter may include information from the investigation report, including findings and conclusions, but under UK data protection law (UK GDPR), not all the information provided by individuals during a grievance investigation is permitted to be shared.
- 5.2.9 Any Disciplinary actions against a member of staff arising as a result of a grievance being upheld will be conducted in accordance with UPR HR02. For the avoidance of doubt, the aggrieved employee cannot raise a grievance appeal against the outcome of the disciplinary process relating to another employee.

5.3 **STAGE 3 - APPEAL**

5.3.1 If the grievance is not resolved to the satisfaction of the aggrieved employee, a written appeal may be submitted to the Director of Human Resources within 10 working days of receipt of the written conclusion at Stage 2.

5.3.2 The appeal must be made in writing, outlining the specific reasons for seeking an appeal. Please note that an appeal is not a rehearing of the Stage 2 process. The grounds for appeal will be confined to:

- The procedural requirements of the grievance procedure were breached to the extent that this had a detrimental impact on the grievance outcome.
- Evidence that the outcome reached is not fair and reasonable when considering the information provided by the investigation.
- There is new evidence that was not available in the original investigation which is likely to materially change the original findings and the outcome.

Note that where an appeal submission does not provide adequate grounds as detailed above, the employee will not be entitled to an appeal hearing. In such circumstances, their concerns will be formally acknowledged in the form of a written response providing next steps and actions as appropriate.

5.3.3 The Director of Human Resources (or nominee) will advise the Stage 2 Senior Manager that an appeal has been lodged against the Stage 2 decision. They will arrange the appeal hearing giving the employee a minimum of 10 working days' notice in writing and inform them that they have the right to be accompanied. The written appeal submission, grievance investigation report and appendices (with the exception of interview transcripts, witness statements or other sensitive data, due to GDPR) will be shared with the panel and the appellant.

5.3.4 The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.

5.3.5 The Appeal will be Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor or Secretary and Registrar who may delegate this, as per the Delegated Scheme of Authority (UPR GV19, Appendix 1) to a panel of three senior managers who will form an appeal panel. At the time publication of this UPR HR03, members of the appeal panel will be either a member of the University Strategy Group (USG), or a member of either a Professional SBU Senior Leadership Team (SLT), or a member of an Academic School Senior Executive Group (SEG). The Director of Human Resources (or nominee) will also be present at the Appeal hearing.

5.3.6 The employee and the Stage 2 Senior Manager must submit evidence or statements to be reviewed at the hearing to the Director of Human Resources (or nominee) no later than 5 working days prior to the date set for the Stage 3 Appeal hearing.

5.3.7 The aggrieved employee will present their case for appeal. The senior manager who made the original decision shall respond to the case put by the aggrieved employee.

5.3.8 All parties will be provided the opportunity to ask questions. Both parties shall have the opportunity to summarise their case if they wish. The aggrieved employee being first.

5.3.9 A written summary record of the meeting will be made by the Director of Human Resources (or nominee).

5.3.10 The Chair of the Appeal hearing (or where appointed, the Appeal Panel) will review the appeal giving consideration to the grounds of appeal (see 5.3.2) with the Director of Human Resources (or nominee) before determining a final response.

5.3.11 The final decision may be given on the day to both parties or where further consideration is required will be confirmed in writing normally within 5 working days.




5.3.12 The decision is final.

Sharon Harrison-Barker
Secretary and Registrar
Signed: **26 February 2026**

Alternative format

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at governanceservices@herts.ac.uk.

APPENDIX A - PROGRESSION THROUGH THE STAFF GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE (FLOWCHART)

<p>Informal (stage1)</p>		<p>Line Manager</p>	<p>Meeting with Line Manager to discuss; manager gives written response asap, with progress update after 5 working days if not yet resolved.</p>	<p>No appeal at this stage, but if not resolved, employee may submit written grievance to Senior Manager. in Stage 2.</p>
<p>Formal (Stage 2)</p>		<p>Senior Manager</p>	<p>Independent investigation commissioned. Senior manager invites employee to a hearing with investigation manager and gives written response within 5 working days of the hearing</p>	<p>If not resolved submit formal grievance appeal to VC or Secretary & Registrar. Appeal hearing to be arranged within 10 working days</p>
<p>Appeal (Stage 3)</p>		<p>Director of Human Resources</p>	<p>Appeal hearing to be chaired by the Vice Chancellor or Secretary and Registrar or nominee who may delegate their authority to a panel of three members of the University Strategy Group or representatives (see 5.3.5). Written response given within 5 working days</p>	<p>Decision is final</p>

APPENDIX B - FORMAL GRIEVANCE NOTIFICATION

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

This form should be used for making a formal grievance. Remember to sign and date it and keep a copy for yourself. Send the completed form in a sealed envelope marked “Strictly Confidential” to the appropriate manager. Send another copy also marked “Strictly Confidential” to your Human Resources Business Partner.

Your Name
.....

Position.....

School/Strategic Business Unit
.....

Contact telephone Numbers:

Home..... Mobile.....

E-mail address.....

Preferred means of contact e.g. mobile/ home phone/email etc.....

Details of incident(s) or name of person(s) about whom you are complaining

.....
.....
.....
.....

If the complaint is about a person what position do they hold?

.....

What School/Strategic Business Unit are they in?

.....

Please give the names of any members of staff you have approached already to try to resolve this grievance.....

Please *state and* set out:

- Your complaint
- The incident(s) which gave rise to the complaint
- Times and dates
- Witness names, if relevant
- The effect this has had on you
- The steps you have taken to resolve the problem and the outcome
- Why you are making a formal complaint now
- Any other points you wish to mention

I have sent this complaint to: Manager/Senior Manager –

(name).....

I have copied this complaint to my Human Resources Business Partner

I understand that my complaint will lead to a formal hearing and that I will be asked to give evidence.

Complainant's signature.....

Date:

APPENDIX C – Grievance Investigations

1 Purpose of the Investigation:

- 1.1 To investigate the complaints submitted in the grievance submission.
- 1.2 To inform the people who are the subject of the grievance about the nature of the complaints against them and to provide an opportunity for them to respond to the allegation/s.
- 1.4 To gather the appropriate evidence, which may include interviewing witnesses and/or reviewing documentation, emails and other relevant information.
- 1.3 To take a balanced view of the evidence.
- 1.4 To determine whether the allegations are substantiated or not “on a balance of probabilities”, i.e. whether it is more likely than not that the allegations are substantiated.
- 1.5 To produce an investigation report to the Senior Manager to set out the process of investigation, the evidence gathered, findings and conclusions.

2 Who should conduct an Investigation?

- Someone who is at an appropriate level of line management, or other appropriate postholder (e.g.: Associate Dean; Head of Department/Subject Group Leader). In some circumstances an independent investigator may be appointed who is external to the University.

And

- A qualified HR Practitioner, such as an HR Business Partner or Employee Relations Advisor will actively support to the investigating manager and provide advice and guidance in the process.

APPENDIX D – Grievance Hearings

1. The Senior Manager will be supported at the hearing by a Human Resources representative who has had no previous involvement in the case.
2. The Hearing is strictly confidential and no audio recording is permitted. The HR Representative will take a note of the proceedings and these will be kept for record purposes and only circulated in the event of a subsequent appeal. It is therefore the responsibility of the employee and/or their representative to retain their own notes of the hearing.
3. The individual and their representative will present the grievance.
4. The Investigation Manager and the HR Practitioner who supported the investigation will respond to the grievance, confirming the process, findings and conclusions of the investigation. Note that where an external investigator was commissioned, the supporting HR Practitioner will present the case.
5. The individual and their representative may ask questions of the Investigator/supporting HR Practitioner.
6. The Senior Manager and/or the HR Representative supporting them, will ask questions of both parties.
7. Once questions have been answered, the Senior Manager will adjourn the hearing and both parties will withdraw, taking all belongings with them, whilst the Senior Manager and HR Representative deliberate on the proceedings. The Senior Manager will either call all parties back to announce a decision or may close the hearing and communicate their decision in writing normally within five (5) working days.
8. The individual will be advised of the Appeals process.