



# Good Practice Guide



Factory Improvement Programme

## GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Grievance procedures are the procedures by which workers' grievances are dealt with or resolved. They also serve as a system of communication between workers and managers, inform managers of potential trouble, provide an outlet for complaints, and avoid slowdowns, absenteeism, strikes and damage.

### PROSPECTIVE USERS:

Grievance procedures can be put in place in any kind of factory. However the type of grievance procedures applied will vary from factory to factory according to the size of the organisation, its management structure and resources available. The Human Resources Department implements this practice.

### PROBLEM ADDRESSED

Grievance procedures can help to resolve a wide variety of problems faced by workers in the workplace. Some of the more common issues include:

- Lack of proper implementation of terms and conditions of employment
- Health and safety
- New working practices
- Organisational change
- Equal opportunities
- Sexual or moral harassment

### PROCESS

Whenever possible, a worker's grievance should be dealt with as rapidly as possible and at the lowest possible level within the organisation. Such grievances may be *resolved informally* in a discussion between the worker and the line manager or supervisor. If the grievance cannot be dealt with by informal discussion, it should go to a more *formal procedure*.

### Steps in implementation

One-off events can be corrected quickly and easily if mechanisms are in place to communicate openly with workers. It is important to have formal procedures in place to ensure this happens, so that potentially small problems do not develop into large scale labour disputes. The following steps indicate briefly what is involved in adopting formal grievance procedures:

#### Stage 1:

- Worker addresses the grievance, often verbally, to their immediate supervisor or line manager.
- If the grievance is against this line manager, then the matter should be brought to the attention of a more senior supervisor.

- The worker should have, at any stage of the grievance procedure, the right to be accompanied by a union representative, or even legal counsel if he or she so desires.
- Management should respond to the worker within 10 days of the first meeting.

### Stage 2:

- If the issue is not resolved during Stage 1, the worker should be permitted to raise the matter, generally in writing to a more senior level of management.
- The manager should then investigate the matter thoroughly, generally by speaking with any possible witnesses and taking statements from anyone else who may have been involved. The manager should respond to the worker within 10 working days. At this stage it is useful for the manager to really listen to the worker.
- Grievances that reach this stage are unlikely to just go away, and if they can be

dealt with relatively early there is likely to be less disruption and bad publicity than if the grievance carries on to Stage 3.

- If the grievance is contested, the worker should be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance.
- This meeting might involve appearing before a joint committee or panel made up of equal representation of workers, managers and independent union representatives.
- Following the meeting, and incorporating the recommendations of the joint committee, the manager should reply to the worker in writing within 10 working days.

### Stage 3:

- At this stage internal procedures have been generally exhausted. The worker generally has formal legal options available by law such as arbitration.

## GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES – TIPS FOR MANAGERS

For managers dealing with grievance procedures it is important to understand the entire process and the responsibilities of each party involved so that the grievance is handled properly. It is useful to keep the following points in mind:

- Be familiar with your enterprise's grievance policy and all the grievance steps.
- Keep a separate, written fact sheet on each grievance – this will help to keep you organized and able to follow the grievance through each step.
- Know the results of each step of the grievance.
- Respond to grievances in a logical and detailed manner – if necessary seek legal advice, such as a lawyer, to help with your response to the grievance.
- Know articles and sections in the employment contract.
- Apply the contract provisions and rules consistently to all employees – make sure grievance procedures are free of discrimination.
- Know the amount of time it takes to respond to each grievance step – tell the worker how long he/she can expect to wait before receiving an answer to their grievance.
- Make sure senior management supports the proposed resolution to the grievance – hold regular meetings with management to discuss grievance procedures and outcomes.
- Ask local labour experts to clarify any doubts or hesitations you may have – these experts are there to help you. Don't wait for the grievance procedure to become complicated or cumbersome before seeking outside advice.
- Stay current. Be up to date on grievance procedures and what is happening in your enterprise.
- Stay calm and objective and don't let emotion get in the way of orderly resolution.

### RESOURCES REQUIRED

To ensure that formal grievance procedures are in place it is vital they are in writing. Therefore resources required include a team able to establish such procedures in writing which would be open and accessible to all workers. Grievance procedures also require adequate time and effort to be devoted to resolving issues by the parties involved.

### POSITIVE IMPACT

Having formal grievance procedures in place helps to:

- Address complaints quickly and systematically
- Prevent minor issues from becoming major ones
- Minimize disruptions to production
- Resolve problems within the enterprise without government intervention
- Build trust and confidence between workers and managers.

### CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS

One of the basic principles of grievance procedures should be that they are based on good faith, meaning that both parties will make every effort to resolve the complaint without delay and with respect for each other's position.

Workers should also be guaranteed that they will in no way be disadvantaged for addressing a grievance. Similarly, anything dealt with through the grievance procedure should be kept entirely confidential by those attending the meeting, unless the worker's express permission is given - where in order to obtain action or a decision a manager may need to explain the contents of the grievance to others.

### INDICATORS FOR MONITORING

Indicators that adequate and appropriate grievance procedures are working effectively include the number of grievances addressed, the number of grievances resolved as well as the amount of time it has taken to resolve them.

#### Further Information Available:

FIP References:

Module 7 - Workplace Relations

*Funding for the Factory Improvement Programme is provided by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs and the United States Department of Labor.*