

Policy and Procedures for Disciplinary, Dismissal and Grievance (staff)

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Introduction

Oxford Energy Academy’s Code of Practice on discipline and grievance is set out in the Policy and Procedures on the following pages.

It provides basic practical guidance to employers, employees and their representatives and sets out principles for handling disciplinary and grievance situations in the workplace.

The Code does not apply to dismissals due to redundancy or the non-renewal of fixed term contracts on their expiry.

A failure to follow the Code does not, in itself, make a person or organisation liable to proceedings. However, employment tribunals will take the Code into account when considering relevant cases. Tribunals will also be able to adjust any awards made in relevant cases by up to 25 per cent for unreasonable failure to comply with any provision of the Code.

This means that if the tribunal feels that an employer has unreasonably failed to follow the guidance set out in the Code they can increase any award they have made by up to 25 per cent.

Conversely, if they feel an employee has unreasonably failed to follow the guidance set out in the code they can reduce any award they have made by up to 25 per cent.

Employers and employees should always seek to resolve disciplinary and grievance issues in the workplace. Where this is not possible employers and employees should consider using an independent third party to help resolve the problem.

The third party need not come from outside the organisation but could be an internal mediator, so long as they are not involved in the disciplinary or grievance issue.

Many potential disciplinary or grievance issues can be resolved informally.

A quiet word is often all that is required to resolve an issue. However, where an issue cannot be resolved informally then it may be pursued formally. This Code sets out the basic requirements of fairness that will be applicable in most cases; it is intended to provide the standard of reasonable behaviour in most instances. Oxford Energy Academy will keep a written record of any disciplinary or grievances cases we deal with. Oxford Energy Academy will consider dealing with issues involving bullying, harassment or whistleblowing under a separate procedure.

Discipline and grievances at work:

This policy contains sample disciplinary and grievance procedures. Copies of the guidance can be obtained from Oxford Energy Academy and is freely available to all staff.

This policy is designed to help Oxford Energy Academy, employees and their representatives deal with disciplinary and grievance situations in the workplace.

Disciplinary situations include misconduct and/or poor performance. Oxford Energy Academy has a separate capability procedure and may prefer to address performance issues under this procedure, however, the basic principles of fairness set out in this policy should still be followed.

Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints that employees raise with Oxford Energy Academy. The Policy does not apply to redundancy dismissals or the non-renewal of fixed term contracts on their expiry.

Fairness and transparency are promoted by Oxford Energy Academy by developing and using rules and procedures for handling disciplinary and grievance situations.

These set down in writing, specific and clear. Employees and, where appropriate, their representatives should be involved in the development of rules and procedures.

It is also important to help employees and Directors understand what the rules and procedures are, where they can be found and how they are to be used.

Where some form of formal action is needed, what action is reasonable or justified will depend on all the circumstances of the particular case.

If it ends in employment tribunals they will take the size and resources of an employer into account when deciding on relevant cases and it may sometimes not be practicable for Oxford Energy Academy to take all of the steps set out in this policy. That said, whenever a disciplinary or grievance process is being followed it is important to deal with issues fairly.

There are a number of elements to this:

Oxford Energy Academy and employees should raise and deal with issues promptly and should not unreasonably delay meetings, decisions or confirmation of those decisions.

DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Oxford Energy Academy and employees should act consistently. Oxford Energy Academy should carry out any necessary investigations, to establish the facts of the case.

Oxford Energy Academy should inform employees of the basis of the problem and give them an opportunity to put their case in response before any decisions are made.

Oxford Energy Academy should allow employees to be accompanied at any formal disciplinary or grievance meeting.

Oxford Energy Academy should allow an employee to appeal against any formal decision made.

Discipline Keys to handling disciplinary issues in the workplace establish the facts of each case.

It is important to carry out necessary investigations of potential disciplinary matters without unreasonable delay to establish the facts of the case. In some cases this will require the holding of an investigatory meeting with the employee before proceeding to any disciplinary hearing. In others, the investigatory stage will be the collation of evidence by Oxford Energy Academy for use at any disciplinary hearing.

In misconduct cases, where practicable, Directors should carry out the investigation and disciplinary hearing. If there is an investigatory meeting this should not by itself result in any disciplinary action. Although there is no statutory right for an employee to be accompanied at a formal investigatory meeting, such a right may be allowed under an employer’s own procedure.

In cases where a period of suspension with pay is considered necessary, this period should be as brief as possible, should be kept under review and it should be made clear that this suspension is not considered a disciplinary action.

Inform the employee of the problem.

If it is decided that there is a disciplinary case to answer, the employee should be notified of this in writing. This notification should contain sufficient information about the alleged misconduct or poor performance and its possible consequences to enable the employee to prepare to answer the case at a disciplinary meeting. It would normally be appropriate to provide copies of any written evidence, which may include any witness statements, with the notification.

The notification should also give details of the time and venue for the disciplinary meeting and advise the employee of their right to be accompanied at the meeting.

DISCIPLINARY MEETING

Hold a meeting with the employee to discuss the problem. The meeting should be held without unreasonable delay whilst allowing the employee reasonable time to prepare their case.

Oxford Energy Academy and employees (and their companions) should make every effort to attend the meeting. At the meeting the Oxford Energy Academy should explain the complaint against the employee and go through the evidence that has been gathered. The employee should be allowed to set out their case and answer any allegations that have been made. The employee should also be given a reasonable opportunity to ask questions, present evidence and call relevant witnesses.

They should also be given an opportunity to raise points about any information provided by witnesses.

Where an Oxford Energy Academy or employee intends to call relevant witnesses they should give advance notice that they intend to do this.

Allow the employee to be accompanied at the meeting.

Workers have a statutory right to be accompanied by a companion where the disciplinary meeting could result in:

A formal warning being issued;

The taking of some other disciplinary action;

The confirmation of a warning or some other disciplinary action (appeal hearings).

The chosen companion may be a fellow worker, or an official employed by a trade union.

A trade union representative who is not an employed official must have been certified by their union as being competent to accompany a worker.

To exercise the statutory right to be accompanied workers must make a reasonable request. What is reasonable will depend on the circumstances of each individual case. However, it would not normally be reasonable for workers to insist on being accompanied by a companion whose presence would prejudice the hearing nor would it be reasonable for a worker to ask to be accompanied by a companion from a remote geographical location if someone suitable and willing was available on site.

The companion should be allowed to address the hearing to put and sum up the worker’s case, respond on behalf of the worker to any views expressed at the meeting and confer with the worker during the hearing. The companion does not, however, have the right to answer questions on the worker’s behalf, address the hearing if the worker does not wish it or prevent Oxford Energy Academy from explaining their case.

Decide on appropriate action.

After the meeting decide whether or not disciplinary or any other action is justified and Oxford Energy Academy will inform the employee accordingly in writing.

Where misconduct is confirmed or the employee is found to be performing unsatisfactorily it is usual to give the employee a written warning.

A further act of misconduct or failure to improve performance within a set period would normally result in a final written warning.

If an employee’s first misconduct or unsatisfactory performance is sufficiently serious, it may be appropriate to move directly to a final written warning.

This might occur where the employee’s actions have had, or are liable to have, a serious or harmful impact on Oxford Energy Academy or learners.

A first or final written warning should set out the nature of the misconduct or poor performance and the change in behaviour or improvement in performance required (with timescale). The employee should be told how long the warning will remain current.

The employee should be informed of the consequences of further misconduct, or failure to improve performance, within the set period following a final warning. For instance that it may result in dismissal or some other contractual penalty such as demotion or loss of seniority.

A decision to dismiss should only be taken by a Director who has the authority to do so. The employee should be informed as soon as possible of the reasons for the dismissal, the date on which the employment contract will end, the appropriate period of notice and their right of appeal.

Some acts, termed gross misconduct, are so serious in themselves or have such serious consequences that they may call for dismissal without notice for a first offence.

But a fair disciplinary process should always be followed, before dismissing for gross misconduct.

Disciplinary rules give examples of acts which the employer regards as acts of gross misconduct, including things such as theft or fraud, physical violence, gross negligence or serious insubordination.

Where an employee is persistently unable or unwilling to attend a disciplinary meeting without good cause Oxford Energy Academy should make a decision on the evidence available. Provide employees with an opportunity to appeal.

Appeals

Where an employee feels that disciplinary action taken against them is wrong or unjust they should appeal against the decision. Appeals should be heard without unreasonable delay and ideally at an agreed time and place. Employees should let Oxford Energy Academy know the grounds for their appeal in writing.

The appeal should be dealt with impartially and wherever possible, by a Director who has not previously been involved in the case. Workers have a statutory right to be accompanied at appeal hearings.

Employees should be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing as soon as possible.

If an employee is charged with, or convicted of a criminal offence this is not normally in itself reason for disciplinary action. Consideration needs to be given to what effect the charge or conviction has on the employee’s suitability to do the job and their relationship with their employer, work colleagues, customers and learners.

Grievance

Keys to handling grievances in the workplace Let Oxford Energy Academy know the nature of the grievance. If it is not possible to resolve a grievance informally employees should raise the matter formally and without unreasonable delay with a Director who is not the subject of the grievance. This should be done in writing and should set out the nature of the grievance.

Oxford Energy Academy will hold a meeting with the employee to discuss the grievance, arrange for a formal meeting to be held without unreasonable delay after a grievance is received.

Oxford Energy Academy, employees and their companions should make every effort to attend the meeting. Employees should be allowed to explain their grievance and how they think it should be resolved. Consideration should be given to adjourning the meeting for any investigation that may be necessary.

Allow the employee to be accompanied at the meeting. Workers have a statutory right to be accompanied by a companion at a grievance meeting which deals with a complaint about a duty owed by Oxford Energy Academy to the worker. So this would apply where the complaint is, for example, that Oxford Energy Academy is not honouring the worker’s contract, or is in breach of legislation.

The chosen companion may be a fellow worker or an official employed by a trade union. A trade union representative who is not an employed official must have been certified by their union as being competent to accompany a worker.

To exercise the right to be accompanied a worker must first make a reasonable request. What is reasonable will depend on the circumstances of each individual case. However it would not normally be reasonable for workers to insist on being accompanied by a companion whose presence would prejudice the hearing nor would it be reasonable for a worker to ask to be accompanied by a companion from a remote geographical location if someone suitable and willing was available on site.

The companion should be allowed to address the hearing to put and sum up the worker’s case, respond on behalf of the worker to any views expressed at the meeting and confer with the worker during the hearing. The companion does not however, have the right to answer questions on the worker’s behalf, address the hearing if the worker does not wish it or prevent Oxford Energy Academy from explaining their case.

Decide on appropriate action.

Following the meeting decide on what action, if any, to take. Decisions should be communicated to the employee, in writing, without unreasonable delay and, where appropriate, should set out what action Oxford Energy Academy intends to take to resolve the grievance. The employee should be informed that they can appeal if they are not content with the action taken.

Allow the employee to take the grievance further if not resolved. Where an employee feels that their grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved they should appeal. They should let Oxford Energy Academy know the grounds for their appeal without unreasonable delay and in writing. Appeals should be heard without unreasonable delay and at a time and place which should be notified to the employee in advance.

The appeal should be dealt with impartially and wherever possible by a Director who has not previously been involved in the case.

Workers have a statutory right to be accompanied at any such appeal hearing. The outcome of the appeal should be communicated to the employee in writing without unreasonable delay.

Overlapping grievance and disciplinary cases.

Where an employee raises a grievance during a disciplinary process the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance. Where the grievance and disciplinary cases are related it may be appropriate to deal with both issues concurrently.

Oxford Energy Academy Ltd