

It is anticipated that informal discussions between professional colleagues will normally resolve any minor difficulties and prevent the use of a formal disciplinary procedure. The objective of the procedure, however, is to ensure the fair and consistent treatment of employees and to aid and encourage employees to maintain standards of conduct and attendance. During the investigation of any alleged disciplinary offence, the Company may suspend the employee until such time as the investigation is complete.

Principles of the procedure.

- No disciplinary action will be taken against any employee until the case has been fully investigated.
- At every stage in the procedure the employee will be advised of the nature of the complaint against him/her and will be given an opportunity to state his case before any decision is made.
- The employee will have the right of access to evidence being brought against him and the right to produce evidence of his own.
- At all stages the employee will have the right to be accompanied by a companion who may be a fellow employee of the Company who may be present during the disciplinary hearing.
- No employee will be dismissed for a first breach of discipline except in the case of gross misconduct, when the penalty will be dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice.
- An employee will have the right to appeal against any disciplinary penalty imposed.
- The procedure may be implemented at any stage if the employee's alleged misconduct warrants such action.

Procedure

In order to ensure the fair treatment of an employee who becomes liable to disciplinary action because of his failure to meet the standards prescribed by the Company with regard to conduct or attendance, the following procedure has been adopted.

Stage One: Verbal Warning

In the first instance of an employee's failure to reach a required standard of performance, failure to observe the Company rules or demonstrate unacceptable conduct, a verbal warning will be given by a Company Director, the HR Manager or team leader.

The following are examples of the type of occurrence which would merit a verbal warning:

- Absenteeism.
- Failure to meet a required standard of performance.
- Persistent lateness.
- Insubordination.
- Disruptive conduct.

The list is not exclusive or exhaustive and is by way of example only. The Company reserves the right to consider other acts as falling within this category.

A verbal warning constitutes the first stage of the disciplinary procedure. Details of the verbal warning will be followed up in writing to the employee within seven days. This record will be kept on the employee's personnel file for a period of three months. Removal of the warning will be subject to satisfactory conduct and performance.

Stage Two: Formal Written Warning

A repetition of the offence or if there is no improvement or if an individual offence is considered sufficiently serious to warrant it, a formal written warning will be issued by a Company Director or the HR Manager. A detailed account of the incident and action to which the employee will be liable will be written. A copy of this account will be issued to the employee together with the improvement required and the time scale.

The action will be accompanied by a hearing. Reasonable notice for the date of the hearing will be given to allow sufficient time for the employee to review the formal written warning. The written warning and the results of the hearing will be held on the employee's personnel file for a period defined by a Company Director or Line Manager the length of which will not be longer than six months. Removal of the warning will be subject to satisfactory conduct and performance.

In addition to the above the following are a few examples of the type of occurrence which would merit a written warning:

- Persistent Insubordination.
- Gross Incompetence.
- Misuse of the Company's equipment.
- Smoking in prohibited areas.
- Unauthorised absence from work.
- Any behaviour likely to bring the Company's reputation into disrepute.

The list is not exclusive or exhaustive and is by way of example only. The Company reserves the right to consider other acts as falling within this category.

Stage Three: Final Written Warning

A repetition of a previous offence or similar failure to meet standards will justify a final written warning. At this stage a detailed written account of the incident and the action to which the employee will be liable for a subsequent failure will be written. A copy will be issued to the employee together with the improvement required and the time scale.

The action will be accompanied by a hearing which will be attended by a Company Director and/or the HR Manager. Reasonable notice for the date of the hearing will be given to allow sufficient time for the employee to review the formal written warning. The written warning and the results of the hearing will be held on the employee's personnel file for a period defined by a Company Director or the HR Manager the length of which will not be longer than twelve months. Removal of the warning will be subject to satisfactory conduct and performance.

In addition to those listed above the following are examples of the type of occurrence which would merit a final written warning.

- Being unfit to work due to the influence of alcohol or prescribed drugs.
- Rude or offensive behaviour to customers, external contacts or fellow employees.
- Acts of sexual harassment.
- Acts of racial harassment.
- Persistent insubordination.

The list is not exclusive or exhaustive and is by way of example only. The Company reserves the right to consider other acts as falling within this category.

Stage Four: Disciplinary Hearing

Failure to comply with the final written warning will result in disciplinary action.

The Company Director or HR Manager involved will prepare written statement setting out what the employee has done or failed to do that may result in disciplinary action or dismissal. A copy of the statement will be sent to the employee.

The employee will be given reasonable notice of the hearing date which will be held at a reasonable time and convenient location. He/she may be accompanied by a companion who may be another employee.

The meeting will result in detailing the disciplinary action to be taken against the employee. This will also be sent in writing to the employee within seven days of the meeting. The employee will have the right to appeal.

Gross Misconduct.

In the cases of gross misconduct, an employee may be summarily dismissed without notice in writing. No employee may be summarily dismissed without prior reference to the Company Directors but in the event of a Director not being available the HR Manager may suspend the employee for a period up to seven days pending an investigation and decision. This action may be repeated once more if the Director is unavailable for longer term.

In addition to those listed above, the following are examples of the type of occurrence which merit summary dismissal:

- Theft or attempted theft from fellow employees, the Company or the Company's Customers resulting in a conviction before the courts.
- Fraud or attempted fraud by way of unauthorised transaction of records resulting in fraudulent manipulation of the Company's assets and materials.
- Verbal abuse likely to provoke a breach of good relations between the Company and its external contacts, or likely to provoke a breach of normal office discipline and behaviour.
- Disclosure of personal and business information to persons other than the Company's duly authorised officers and auditors.
- Fighting or attempting to injure another person.
- Serious incapability through alcohol or being under the influence of illegal drugs.

The list is not exclusive or exhaustive and is by way of example only. The Company reserves the right to consider other acts as falling within this category.

The Appeal Procedure

Appeals may be heard at any point in the written stages of the procedure but must be lodged by the employee within seven days of the hearing.

The appeal should be addressed to one or other of the Company's Directors stating the reason for non-acceptance of the action. The Director will then carry out a full review of the facts which may involve a further meeting with the employee. The results of the appeal will be given to the employee within seven days.