

Grievance policy

February, 2026

Approving authority:	Global People and Culture Committee
Approval date:	26 February 2026
Review period:	26 May 2027
Responsible Executive:	Global director of HR
Responsible Office:	HR
Effective date:	27 February 2026
Scope:	All Campuses

Grievance Policy

Including Bullying & Harassment

Why do we have a grievance policy?

We recognise that, at times, there may be something at work that employees are not happy with, that they may have been unable to resolve informally.

At Heriot Watt, we aim to create a positive, respectful, and dignified working environment where everyone feels confident to raise any issues that are concerning them. We think that the best way to resolve most issues or concerns is to speak to someone informally (usually a manager in the first instance or a Respect Ambassador).

The grievance policy is there to support Heriot Watt employees raise concerns when something cannot be resolved informally. We encourage employees to raise any concerns as soon as they arise so that an effective resolution can be reached as quickly as possible.

The Grievance Policy should be read in conjunction with the [Grievance - Employee and Manager Frequently Asked Questions](#). Employees who have further questions or trouble accessing the link should contact HR.

Who does the grievance policy apply to?

Our policy and supporting guidance apply to employees across all Heriot Watt campuses, regardless of role or status.

It does not apply to students or contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for Heriot Watt.

Throughout this policy and the [Grievance - Employee and Manager Frequently Asked Questions](#) it will be made clear, where due to legal requirements and practices outside the UK, different processes will apply.

Our policy does not form part of any contract of employment in any location. We may amend the policy at any time through consultation with the recognised trade unions.

An individual employee or groups of employees can raise a grievance.

Our grievance policy aims to:

- Provide a way to raise concerns when employees haven't been able to resolve them informally or it is not appropriate for the concern to be resolved informally
- Ensure all concerns are managed sensitively, fairly and consistently
- Investigate concerns thoroughly and quickly
- Ensure all concerns raised reach an effective resolution

Our guiding principles

Our policy complies with UK law and ACAS code of practice.

We respect the right of academic colleagues to exercise their Academic Freedom responsibly and professionally, in accordance with the legislation, ordinances and resolutions affecting Heriot Watt.

We encourage employees to try and resolve concerns or differences informally in the first instance, where possible. Informal routes will be discussed in the first instance, where reasonable, to help employees decide if their concern could be resolved out with a formal grievance process.

However, if informal routes have been unsuccessful or if an employee does not feel comfortable or that it is not appropriate to resolve the issue informally then a formal grievance should be raised.

Any formal grievances raised will be processed in a thorough, fair, and professional way. Outcomes of formal grievances will be explained to the complainant and where applicable, respondent. In some cases, a grievance may lead to a disciplinary investigation.

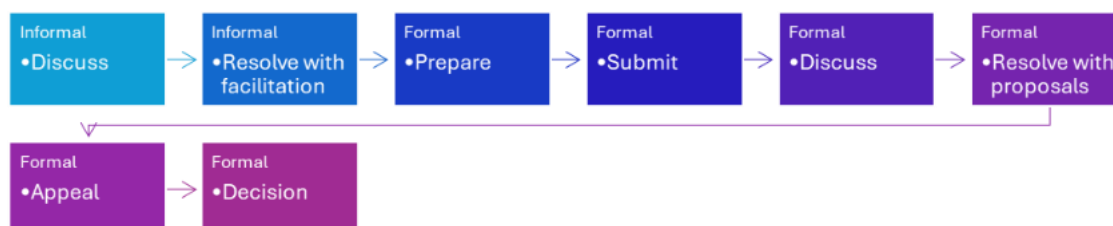
Any concerns raised about colleagues should focus on issues and behaviours, not the people involved.

We do not tolerate any form of harassment, including sexual harassment; any concerns of this nature will be taken seriously. Where possible we will work with employees to resolve matters informally, however in some instances it might be too serious to deal with informally.

We will treat all grievance matters confidentially. Information will only be shared where necessary to investigate and resolve the issue. All participants must maintain confidentiality. Any breach of confidentiality may lead to disciplinary action.

Process and rights

- **Process to follow** – Employees are encouraged to try resolve work related concerns informally by speaking to someone, usually their line manager, as soon as possible. However, if an employee or their line manager doesn't feel this is appropriate or if they can't resolve the concern informally, they can raise a formal grievance by raising a query via the Global [HR - Self-Service Portal](#). Once the query has been submitted, it will be sent to one of our experienced HR professionals in the appropriate location, who will then contact the employee. The full grievance process is shown below



- **Indicative timescales** – Formal grievances should be raised via the Global [HR - Self-Service Portal](#). One of our HR professionals will then reply to the employee to acknowledge receipt, within 3 working days. They may also contact the employee to discuss the concern.

A formal grievance meeting will be arranged within 5-10 working days following the discussion with HR. Employees will be notified of any potential delays to these timescales.

Employees will be provided with an outcome to their grievance as quickly as possible. Exact timescales will depend on the complexity of the grievance. The Grievance Manager will ensure the employee receives an update every 2 weeks.

- **Potential outcomes** – The aim of the of grievance outcome will be to support a way forward which creates a positive and constructive working environment. As such in most cases recommendations will be made as to how this can be achieved regardless of whether a decision is made to uphold, not uphold or partially uphold the grievance.
- **Right of appeal** – Employees can appeal a grievance decision within 10 working days of receiving the outcome letter. To do this, the employee should contact the Employee Relations Manager via the Global [HR - Self-Service Portal](#) who will acknowledge receipt and if required may contact the employee to discuss.
- **Right to representation** – Employees have the right to be accompanied at formal Grievance Meetings by either a trade union representative (UK only) or a work colleague with their agreement.

For more detailed information please refer to the [Grievance - Employee and Manager Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Compliance

We expect all employees to behave in line with our [Global Respect Statement](#) and our commitment to positive working relationships. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary or if a criminal act has occurred legal action.

Useful information

The Grievance Policy should be read in conjunction with the [Grievance - Employee and Manager Frequently Asked Questions](#). Employees who have further questions or trouble accessing the link should contact HR.

Support

All grievances will be thoroughly reviewed by an independent investigating manager, to ensure both parties perspectives are listened to, ensuring everyone involved is treated with dignity and respect. However, we understand that the grievance process can be challenging for all involved, including for both the complainant and respondent as well as witnesses.

We offer support to everyone through our [Employee Assistance Programme](#), available across all Campuses, where employees can speak with an independent counsellor about workplace issues and via our [Respect Ambassadors](#). [ACAS](#) also provide confidential advice to employees in the UK.

Employees can also seek advice from their Trade Union Representative (UK only). We recognise the following unions:

- UCU <http://heriotwatt.web.ucu.org.uk> or UCU@hw.ac.uk
- Unite <https://unitetheunion.org/> or unite@hw.ac.uk
- Unison <https://www.unison.org.uk> or unison.hwuniversity@hw.ac.uk
- EIS [EIS Scotland's Largest Teaching Union](#)

HR Policies are available in alternative format upon request, as a reasonable adjustment, by contacting equality@hw.ac.uk

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact the University via the online BSL Video Relay Interpreting Service: <https://contactscotland-bsl.org/>

Owner and version history

Version No	Date of Approval	Approving Authority	Brief Description of Amendment
V. 1.0	24.05.2021	Global People and Culture Committee (known previously as staff committee)	Combines previous Grievance and Bullying / Harassment Policies and Procedures. Reflects the Global approach to managing staff concerns (specific country legislation is identified). Links to the Global Respect Statement.
V. 2			Revised policy