

THE NORTHCOTT SOCIETY

POLICY ON GRIEVANCES (STAFF)

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Policy

It is The Northcott Society's policy that management and staff are responsible for resolving grievances and disputes which may arise from time to time before they have an opportunity to escalate further. Northcott's Grievance Policy and the accompanying procedures have been developed to assist staff members in reporting and resolving grievances in those cases where early resolution is not possible.

Definition - Grievance

For the purposes of this policy a grievance is defined as any type of problem, concern, dispute or complaint related to work or the work environment which cannot be resolved through normal staff/staff or staff/management communication. While the large majority of grievances should be resolved by these means some involve more complex matters requiring further investigation, negotiation or disciplinary action.

Some examples of types of grievances that may occur are discriminatory treatment/practices, sexual, racial or any other form of harassment. It may be necessary to refer such cases to the Grievance Panel.

Principles

1. The behaviour of all staff members should reflect the values of respect for other people, impartiality, honesty and integrity and that staff members should be competent in the performance of their duties. Northcott's Code of Conduct and Ethics establishes appropriate personal and professional behaviour for Northcott staff, departure from which may represent grounds for disciplinary action in line with Northcott's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.
2. Northcott's Grievance Policy is intended to deal with disputes arising in a variety of areas, the exception being matters arising from the performance management process. Staff members may invoke its provisions should a dispute arise. However, in order to maintain the highest standard of service possible, staff are required to comply with existing instructions and/or policies pending resolution of the disagreement.

3. Should a staff member require assistance in dealing with a grievance issue, they should consult with the Human Resources Manager who will provide them with clear and concise direction with respect to their rights and obligations, and the appropriate steps to take.

Objectives

1. To ensure that grievances are heard promptly and resolved by negotiation and discussion between the parties.
2. To ensure confidentiality and the protection of rights of all parties involved.
3. To ensure that an employee will have the opportunity for a grievance to be heard through all levels of line management.
4. To ensure that employees have access to information about external advisors. This information will be available through the Human Resources Department.

Grievance Procedure

1. Notifying a Grievance

A grievance may be formally notified through:

1. Immediate Supervisor or Manager
2. A Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) representative
3. Human Resources Manager

The recipient is then responsible for ensuring the continuance of the grievance process and appropriate documentation.

2. Clarifying a Grievance

Upon notification of the grievance the recipient will:-

- a) Check all the facts with the person lodging the grievance.
- b) Ensure that all responsible steps have been taken to resolve the grievance as close to the source as possible i.e. involving Line Managers and/or Supervisors as appropriate.
- c) Ensure that all reasonable steps have been taken so that discussions and information concerning the grievance may be treated confidentially.
- d) Every grievance must be treated seriously and with sensitivity as individual perceptions of a situation may vary.
- e) Be aware of grievances that may indicate repeated incidents (e.g. harassment) which may constitute a more serious type of grievance.

- f) Discuss the range of resolution options available to the person raising the grievance. These may include external options.

3. Referring a Grievance to the Joint Consultative Committee

If staff are unable to reasonably resolve their grievance by discussions with their immediate Supervisor/Manager they may choose to have the matter heard by a mediation panel specifically appointed to the task. The panel has the responsibility of hearing and resolving disputes or grievances once they have moved outside the normal lines of communication.

The panel has the necessary authority to:

- i) resolve disputes within the bounds of existing Northcott policy, and
- ii) make recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer concerning changes in Northcott policy arising out of disputes.

The panel will consist of two staff representatives from the JCC and two management representatives, one of whom will be the Manager, Human Resources, acting as convener.

4. Resolving a Grievance

- a. The JCC sub-committee, once convened, will attempt to resolve the grievance by
 - i. Substantiating the grievance through discussions with all involved parties.
 - ii. Counselling the parties involved individually and/or conciliating between them.
- b. All meetings and decisions taken by the panel should be formally recorded as minutes and kept as such by the designated chairman of the committee.
- c. The JCC sub-committee must communicate its decision in resolution of the dispute to all parties involved. Such communication should include explanation of the reasoning behind the decision.
- d. Unless there are mitigating factors, a grievance should be resolved within 4 weeks of notification.
- e. Any staff member raising a grievance under internal procedures must advise the person handling the grievance if the same matter has been raised with an external body.

5. Documentation

Upon resolution of the grievance, all documentation relating to the matter must be placed in a sealed envelope and stored on the Grievance File in a secure and separate section of Personnel Records. The envelope to be marked as follows:

- a) The name of the person raising the grievance.
- b) The date the grievance was resolved.
- c) A brief (one line) précis of the grievance.

These records may only be opened by the Chief Executive Officer and Human Resources Manager in each other's presence.

6. Follow up

The JCC sub-committee should discuss the resolution with all parties involved to ensure they are satisfied with the result. The sub-committee may delegate one or some of its members to this role, or alternatively seek the involvement of the Human Resources Manager.

This means that the resolution of a substantiated grievance will as far as possible appropriately incorporate arrangements to repair and rectify the damage and distress suffered by those involved without any threat to their future.

Supporting Policies

Code of Conduct and Ethics (Staff)
Discipline and Dismissal
Termination Procedures
Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti Discrimination

Authorised by:

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