

Guidelines for dealing with complaints about employees and managers



1. Purpose

UCPH wants employees and managers to be able to do their jobs in a trusting collaboration and in a safe working and study environment. The University of Copenhagen is committed to protecting freedom of speech and academic freedom and offers employees, managers and students creative, academic and professional development with respect for the community and the University's objectives. However, if situations arise in which an employee, manager, student or an external party may find cause to complain about an employee or a manager at UCPH regarding matters of an official nature, these guidelines lay down the framework for dealing with complaints so that all parties involved may be aware of the complaints procedure.

2. Target group

These guidelines apply for all complaints about employees and managers at UCPH regardless of the nature of their employment, funding source and working area.

3. Complaints process

Complaints are to be submitted to the hiring manager, cf. guidelines for the Rector's delegation of managerial duties. In case of doubt as to whom to submit a complaint, the HR Centre or a union representative can help. Students should contact the student counselling.

If an employee does not feel comfortable contacting management, they can consult with their union representative or occupational health and safety representative in confidence.

The manager must take all enquiries seriously and must deal with all enquiries as quickly as possible. The manager may reject a complaint that they find to be manifestly unfounded and/or trivial. If this is the case, the manager must inform the person who has submitted the complaint.

3.1 Anonymity

The manager cannot guarantee anonymity to the complainant. Whether the defendant (the employee complained about) will be told the identity of the complainant will depend on an individual assessment of the opposing considerations relating to the parties involved, including the other party's ability to look after their own interests in the case.

Complaints filed anonymously can usually at most provide a basis for the manager to initiate an investigation. Whether the manager should initiate an investigation will be individually assessed in each case.

Employees can also confidentially contact their union representative.

3.2 Oral enquiries

Oral enquiries should initially lead to opening a dialogue, in the expectation that this conversation can prevent disagreements and/or misunderstandings from developing into actual complaints. In cases where the

manager finds that a dialogue between the parties involved is relevant, the manager is responsible for attempting to create such dialogue. In cases where a conversation between the parties resolves the situation, the enquiry elicits no further action.

3.3 Dealing with complaints

If the matter(s) referred to in the enquiry cannot be resolved through dialogue or is/are not suitable for dialogue, the enquiry must be treated as an actual complaint. In such cases, the complainant will be asked to submit a written complaint if it can clarify the enquiry. Failing this, the manager must prepare a memo on the factual matter of the enquiry.¹

Once the manager has received a complaint, the manager must, as soon as possible, notify the employee complained about (the defendant) in writing of the content of the complaint and the identity of the complainant. This is to give the defendant an opportunity to comment on the case. A reasonable period of time is given within which the defendant can submit their statement. If the statement is submitted orally, minutes of the conversation are to be written down and submitted to the defendant for approval.

Complaints must be handled with the utmost discretion for the sake of both the defendant and the complainant.

Both the defendant and the complainant may involve a union representative or another observer.

If a complaint concerns what could be a criminal offence, the manager should encourage the employee to report it to the police. The manager also informs their immediate supervisor of the situation.

4. Special circumstances regarding complaints about teaching staff

Complaints from students about teaching staff must be directed to the defendant's head of department, who will deal with the complaint.

If a complaint concerns teaching staff from different departments but the same faculty, the case is sent to the Dean, who can decide to deal with the complaint themselves or let the relevant heads of department deal with the complaint about their respective teaching staff members (defendants).

If a complaint concerns teaching staff from different faculties, the complaint should be sent to the deans of the faculties that employ the teaching staff concerned. The relevant deans are responsible for coordinating the process to the extent relevant.

If a head of studies, or others, receives a complaint from a student, they must immediately forward the complaint to the defendant's head of department.

These guidelines do not cover enquiries or complaints from students about specific course content and methods used in the teaching, or about which teacher is responsible for individual teaching assignments. Such cases are dealt with in accordance with educational regulations.

5. Complaints about offensive behaviour

For complaints concerning offensive behaviour, please refer to [‘Guidelines for the prevention and dealing with offensive behaviour such as bullying and sexual harassment’](#).

¹ Cf. section 13 of the Danish Open Administration Act on the duty to record.

6. Complaints that call into question a breach of contract

If the manager finds that the defendant is in breach of their employment contract, the case will be dealt with in accordance with '[Guidelines on handling of breach of contract and dismissals](#)'.

The defendant must be informed of this.

7. Informing the complainant and the defendant

After dealing with the complaint, the manager must inform the complainant that the complaint has been dealt with. The manager's options for providing information about the case depend on the individual case.

If, after having presented the complaint to the defendant, the manager finds that the complaint will elicit no further action, the defendant must be informed of this.

8. Role of union representative

In complaints cases, the manager should encourage the employee to be assisted by their union representative or another observer. It is then up to the employee to involve the staff representative/the trade union. The employee may also choose to be assisted by others.

9. Validity and termination

These guidelines take effect when adopted by the General Collaboration Committee.

Termination must comply with the rules in the collaboration committee circular according to which either of the parties may give three months' notice of termination of the guidelines. Before termination, the collaboration committee is to seek to amend the existing guidelines to make them acceptable to the parties in the collaboration committee.

These guidelines were considered and adopted at the General Collaboration Committee meeting on 24 March 2021 and replace the previous guidelines.

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