

Grievance Redress Mechanism

University of Kelaniya

- 1. Policy Title:** Policy on Grievance Redress
- 2. Policy Number:** P/CQA/2020/04
- 3. Policy Functional Area:** Academic, Administration, Academic support, Non-academic
- 4. Purpose of the policy:**

A committed and satisfied body of staff is vital for the effective functioning of any organization and the successful achievement of its objectives. In any large organization, it is also very natural for staff to encounter work-place related grievances. It is the responsibility of the management to formulate a mechanism for prompt resolution of such grievances, so that the institution is able to maintain a highly satisfied and productive workforce.

The University of Kelaniya (UoK) has nearly 1400 staff members at present, comprised of academic, administrative, and nonacademic staff. However, it has no proper mechanism to handle grievances. This has led to a situation where some disputes have remained unresolved over a long period of time, or aggrieved staff have gone to various external bodies such as the University Services Appeals Board, the Human Rights Commission or the Courts of Law in their search for redress.

- 5. Effective Date of the policy or revision:** 01 01 2021
- 6. Approved by:** Council Meeting No 485 held on 08.12 2020
- 7. Policy Contact information:** Deans office of all the faculties, Registrar office and Library office
- 8. Policy Principles:**

The University will adhere to the following principles in dealing with the grievances of its staff members.

- **Acceptance:** any problem brought to a grievance-handling committee will be accepted as such, in order to find solutions, without refusing to accept the existence of such problems.
- **Empathy:** the grievance-handling committees will seek to provide solutions for relevant problems through the point of view of employees.
- **Confidentiality:** in providing solutions, the privacy of aggrieved persons will be preserved as far as possible.

- **Impartiality and Fairness:** grievance handling committees will seek to provide impartial solutions for relevant problems.
- **Responsibility:** grievance handling committees will consider it their prime responsibility to find expeditious solutions to the problems brought to them.
- **Finding Solutions Continuously:** the grievance handling committee will refer any problem that cannot be resolved within the scope of the committee, to the Vice-Chancellor of the University.
- **Gender Balance:** the composition of all grievance committees in the UoK will strive to achieve gender balance as much as possible.

9. Applicability & Scope:

These guidelines cover only work-related grievances. General feedback, complaints and comments about administration, programs and services would not be viewed as a grievance unless specific negative implications were highlighted.

10 Responsible Office/Department/Unit: Vice Chancellor, Deans of the Faculties,
Registrar, Librarian

11. Policy Implementation:

It is proposed to establish 9 Grievance Redress Committees (GRC) and one University Grievance Redress Board (UGRB). There will be one GRC for each Faculty except Graduate Studies, and three others for library staff, administrative staff and non-academic staff.

Faculty Grievance Redress Committee (FGRC) – will hear the grievances reported by the academic staff, academic support staff, or non-academic staff attached to the Faculty. Each Committee will have three members of academic staff of Senior Lecturer Grade II or above, who have served for at least three years as a Head of Department or Dean. One member will be nominated by the Board of the relevant Faculty, while the other two will be nominated by two Faculty Boards other than the Faculty is concerned. The Dean will appoint the Chairperson from among one of the three members. Each member will serve for a period of 3 years. The SAR/AR of the Faculty shall serve as the Secretary to the Committee. The recommendations of the FGRC will be forwarded to the Dean of the Faculty for consideration and appropriate action.

Library Staff Grievance Redress Committee (LSGRC) – will hear the grievances reported by the academic staff, academic support staff, and non-academic staff attached to the Library. The LSGRC Committee will have three members of academic staff of Senior Assistant Librarian Grade II or above. All three members will be nominated by the Library Committee. The Vice-Chancellor will appoint the Chairperson from among one of the three members. Each member will serve for a period of 3 years. The AR of the Library shall serve as the Secretary to the Committee. The recommendations of the LSGRC will be forwarded to the Librarian for consideration and appropriate action.

Administrative Staff Grievance Redress Committee (ASGRC) – will hear the grievances reported by administrative officers of the UoK, including those assigned to Faculties, and the academic support staff attached to Units and Centres directly under the Vice-Chancellor of UoK. This Committee will have two executive officers of Senior Assistant Registrar grade or above nominated by the Registrar, and one of Senior Assistant Bursar grade or above, nominated by the Bursar. The Vice-Chancellor will appoint the Chairperson from among one of the three members. Each member will serve for a period of 3 years. An AR designated by the Registrar shall serve as Secretary to the Committee. The recommendations of the ASGRC will be forwarded to the Registrar or Bursar, as appropriate, for consideration and necessary action.

Non-Academic Staff Grievance Redress Committee (NASGRC) – will hear the grievances reported by non-academic staff in the administrative divisions. This Committee too will have three executive offices of Senior Assistant Registrar grade or above, nominated by the Registrar, one from among those in the administrative Division and two from among those serving in the Faculties. The Vice-Chancellor will appoint the Chairperson from among one of the three members. Each member will serve for a period of 3 years. An AR designated by the Registrar shall serve as Secretary to the Committee. The recommendations of the NASGRC will be forwarded to the Registrar or Bursar, as appropriate, for consideration and necessary action.

University Grievance Redress Board (UGRB) - will hear the grievances that cannot be resolved by the Grievance Redress Committees, or by a grievant who is not satisfied with the decision of the GRCs. The UGRB will consist of a total of ten members: Chairpersons of each of the 9 GRCs and one other nominated by the Vice-Chancellor, from among senior academic staff of the grade of Professor or Senior Professor with extensive administrative experience, who will serve as the chairperson of the board. Each member will serve for a period of 3 years. The SAR / Legal and Documentation shall serve as the Secretary to the Committee. The recommendations of the Board will be forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor for consideration and necessary action. When the grievance is submitted to the UGRB, the UGRB shall accord the employee a fair hearing by allowing the worker an opportunity to be heard, and in the presence of a third party if requested by the employee.

11.1 Method of Reporting Grievances

A grievance should be submitted by an employee or employees in written form under confidential cover addressed to the Chairman of the relevant GRC or UGRB.

The grievance must be submitted within a period of six months beginning with the date on which the action alleged to amount to an employment grievance has occurred or has come to the notice of the employee, whichever is later, to enable the University to remedy the grievance rapidly and as near as possible to the point of origin. If the grievance is not submitted within this period, the University is not obliged to consider the employee's grievance.

11.2 Grievance Redress Mechanism*

Step I: The grievance will be first assessed to ascertain whether the matter is within the jurisdiction of the GRC. If the matter is within the scope of the GRC, it should follow Steps II to VII. If the matter is beyond the scope of the GRC, it should be forwarded to the UGRB.

Step II: The GRC /UGRB will meet at least once a month (or more frequently if required) and prepare schedules for hearing dates for the grievances submitted to it.

Step III: Initiate hearing of the grievance with the concerned employee or employees.

Step IV: Hearing with other parties named in the written submission, where necessary.

Step V: Inform the decision to all parties concerned (mainly the Grievant and other Complainants) and seek an agreement.

Step VI: Make recommendations in written form as solution for the grievance, to the Dean, Registrar, Librarian or Vice-Chancellor, as the case may be.

Step VII: Record the process for each grievance handled.

*refer to the annexed flow chart.

11.3 Procedural Conditions

- If the grievant is not satisfied with the decisions and the recommendation of the GRC, he/ she can submit the grievance to the UGRB, with reasons for dissatisfaction with the decision of the GRC.
- A reported grievance should be addressed (i.e., the process of hearing and recommended solution submitted to Dean or Registrar or Librarian or Vice-Chancellor) within a period of three months.
- The decision of the VC on UGRB recommendation is final and ultimate.

11.4 Responsibilities of the Members of the GRCs and UGRB

All members of the GRCs and the UGRB are expected to adhere to the following code of conduct:

1. Treat complaints seriously and the grievant(s) with sensitivity, respect, and courtesy.
2. Give the grievant an opportunity to have their complaints dealt with by an appropriate officer and if a dispute arises, by one not previously involved in the matter.
3. Ensure all conflicts of interest are disclosed and acted upon.
4. Judge grievance on their merits and facts, after obtaining and considering all relevant information.
5. Give equal treatment to all persons, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion.
6. Ensure an appropriate remedy is provided where the complaint is substantiated.
7. Provide all parties with clear reasons as to why any actions have been taken.

8. Keep information related to the grievance handling procedure confidential until the decision is formally informed to the grievant.

11.5 Actions to be Taken

The actions that can be recommended by a GRC or the UGRB is limited to the following:

1. An explanation
2. An apology
3. A mediation
4. An admission of fault
5. A change in decision
6. A change to policy, procedure or practice
7. A correction of misleading records
8. A financial compensation, including a refund of any fees
9. A waiving of a debt
10. A remission of a penalty
11. A protection to the complainant
12. A disciplinary action
13. A referral of a matter to an external agency; University Services Appeals Board (USAB) for further investigation or prosecution.

12. Definitions/ Glossary:

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO),

“Grievance means, a complaint of one or more workers in respect of wages, allowances, conditions of work and interpretation of service stipulations covering such areas as overtime, leave, transfer, promotion, seniority, job assignment, and termination of service”.

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ANNEXURE: GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM OF UOK

