

The Mediation Service at Aberystwyth University

The Mediation Service is available to all employees of the University. It is intended to comply with the Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory Service (ACAS) Code of Practice, introduced in April 2009, which is designed to help employers, employees and their representatives, deal with grievance situations in the workplace. In particular, the code emphasises the need to resolve issues at the lowest possible level.

Aberystwyth University has a pool of ACAS trained mediators who have been drawn from a range of roles and departments across the Institution, and are representative of the diverse nature of the staff complement within the University. Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities operate a reciprocal agreement whereby, if necessary, Bangor University has access to Aberystwyth University's trained mediators and Aberystwyth University has access to Bangor University's trained mediators.

What are the benefits of Mediation?

It is effective – Mediation is designed to have a positive effect, as it doesn't seek to apportion blame for past events, but focuses on the future.

It is quick –The objective is for the mediation process to be completed in less than 6 weeks.

What is Workplace Mediation?

Workplace mediation is a confidential and informal way to resolve disputes between work colleagues with the assistance of a trained mediator. The process works by encouraging the parties to speak to each other and to reach a mutually acceptable way forward. It is your chance to talk about the situation, exchange your concerns and come up with some practical ideas about how things could change for the better, in a completely safe environment.

Mediation is:

A voluntary process – Mediation can only work if both parties agree to mediation and work towards a solution. It is therefore important that parties are not put under pressure to go to mediation, or feel that it will count against them if they decide not to go ahead.

A means for reaching agreement – The process involves parties identifying their issues and concerns, setting an agenda and working towards an acceptable agreement. During the process the mediator will encourage open communication between the parties involved and will help them to generate ideas and options that will improve and move the situation forward. The aim is for a win/win resolution with the parties involved taking responsibility for making appropriate changes.

A confidential process – Mediation is carried out on the basis of agreed confidentiality between the parties and the mediator (The exception to this would be if a party raised issues of harm to self or others, or issues of serious misconduct). The content of mediation is not fed back to managers or HR, nor is it recorded on a member of staff's personnel file. However, some parties find it helpful to share information that arises from the mediation and parties can agree to share some issues outside of the process.

Which conflicts can be resolved through Workplace Mediation?

The types of cases handled successfully are around issues about work or management styles, working arrangements and environmental conditions. Examples of these include:

- Change management;
- Interpersonal conflict;
- Perceived discrimination, harassment and bullying;
- Differences of working style or approach;
- Communication breakdown; and
- Inappropriate use of power, status or position.

Consideration should always be given to using mediation in the first instance to try to resolve issues prior to following a formal procedure or mediation may form part of an agreed action following formal procedures. Any information shared by parties to mediation is not used in formal procedures. Notes made by the mediator are not kept or used beyond the mediation process.

If mediation does not resolve the issues, staff can still choose to pursue formal proceedings.

How can you access the Mediation Service?

As a member of staff – If you're involved in a workplace dispute or conflict you can contact the Mediation Co-ordinator, Graham Lewis (contact details below) he will be able to discuss the process with you in detail and help you decide the best way forward or alternatively the HR department will be able to provide further information on the process,

As a manager – If you are a manager and members of your team are in conflict you have a responsibility to try to resolve the situation in the first instance. If you cannot resolve the issues, contact the HR Department for advice or alternatively contact the Mediation Co-ordinator, Graham Lewis (contact details below).

The mediation service is open to referrals from individual members of staff, managers, trade union representatives and staff networks alike.

The mediation service operates independently from the Human Resources Department.

You can obtain further information on the process or request mediation by emailing the dedicated mediation email address below or by contacting your designated HR Manager/Officer:

e-mail: mediation@aber.ac.uk