

LESSON 8: PROBLEMS IN THE WORKPLACE

Lesson aim:

- To enhance students' knowledge of the problems which may arise in the workplace and how union representation can help.

Learning objectives:

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- outline the difference between a grievance and disciplinary procedure; and
- explain the role of the union representative in each situation.

Lesson outline:

Write the words "grievance" and "discipline" on a board or flipchart and ask students for the meaning in a work context. Read through the information resource on this topic and ensure students understand them fully.

Using the following case studies ask students what steps should be taken to handle the situation.

- Is this a grievance or disciplinary issue? Explain.
- What are the main issues? What would you do in this situation?
- If you were a union representative, how would you approach this situation?
- What are the advantages of a union representative in each situation?

Case Studies:

Sinead has been fired after a row with her supervisor. She says that it is because they don't get on, but her supervisor says that she didn't do as she was told.

John works in a local shop and has a range of duties. He is working more on the tills but has never received any training. On a number of occasions the till didn't balance and his supervisor shouted abuse at him. Now the manager has called him into his office.

Chris works in a clothes store and has been late on a number of occasions although his boss has said nothing. Just recently he noticed that there is less money in his pay.

Mary asked her supervisor for time off to go on holiday, which was booked before she took her part-time job. Her supervisor has said no, but she went anyway. Now she is back in work and her supervisor has given her a letter stating that she is to be dismissed.

Activity: Role play

When the students have worked through each case study and have identified the issues involved, they should be asked to act out each scenario as follows:

- The conversation between the member and the union representative.
- The meeting between the member, the union rep and the manager.

When finished assess with the class how they felt it went and what would they do differently?

Assignment: Research and analysis

Ask a family member or friend for a copy of their company grievance and/or disciplinary procedure. Get a copy of the Labour Relations Commission's code of practice on grievance and disciplinary procedures. This can either be downloaded from their website www.lrc.ie or write directly to:

Labour Relations Commission
Tom Johnson House
Haddington Road
Dublin 4

- Compare both sets of procedures highlighting the similarities and differences.
- What are your conclusions from this assignment?
- What have you learned from this exercise?