



# **STAFF MEDIATION SERVICE**



## **Information for Staff**



## What is the mediation service?

The mediation service is a voluntary process and is a way of resolving conflict between individuals in the workplace. Early, constructive discussion through mediation can assist with resolution before problems escalate and working relationships deteriorate.

Mediation is a structured but informal process which brings people together in the presence of an independent, impartial and skilled mediator to agree constructive resolutions. The mediator does not impose solutions on participants, or impart advice on how a particular difficulty might be alleviated. Parties to the dispute will be encouraged to communicate openly, in a confidential setting, and to create their own solution. Mediation is future focused.

The mediation service is open to all staff. All parties involved need to agree on the use of mediation.

## What does staff mediation involve?

The process involves a mediator meeting with the parties alone and then bringing them together for a facilitated meeting, where the parties will be supported by the mediator in looking for areas of agreement.

## Who are the mediators?

The mediators are University of Ulster staff who have been professionally trained by ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) in the skills necessary to facilitate mediation.

Their qualification is accredited by OCR (Oxford and Cambridge Examining Bodies and the RSA), one of the three main awarding bodies in the UK. The mediators come from a mixed group of staff from a range of Faculties and Departments across the University.

## What are the values of mediation?

The Mediation Service is based on clear values and principles which underpin the process. These are:

• Impartiality	• Confidentiality
• Independence	• Equality of Opportunity
• Participation	• Collaboration
• Being non-judgemental	

## **Are agreements reached during mediation binding?**

No, agreements reached are completely voluntary and it is up to the individuals involved to stick to them. Mediation aims to produce a voluntary framework within which to rebuild relations, but ultimately, neither party is bound by the outcome of mediation. The risk of breaching an agreement is that the problem re-surfaces.

## **Will mediation replace more formal procedures?**

No, however given the positive outcomes that can be achieved, individuals should seriously consider mediation prior to instigating a formal grievance or formal complaint of bullying and harassment. Where mediation is opted for part way through the formal Grievance or Bullying and Harassment Procedure, the formal procedure will be temporarily suspended pending the outcome of the mediation.

## **How can mediation help me?**

Mediation can:

- reduce levels of stress around a difficult relationship
- improve communication and working relationships  
provide a solution which works for you and which is flexible and enduring and meets the needs of all involved
- be relatively speedy

## **How can the service be accessed?**

The service can be accessed in several ways:

- individuals may wish to refer themselves to the Mediation Service. In such cases, the Mediation Service Co-ordinator will consider whether mediation is appropriate, and if so, will then contact all parties to seek their agreement to enter into the mediation process.
- a line manager can contact the Mediation Service Co-ordinator if he/she feels that there is a situation in the workplace that could be mediated. Agreement to enter into the mediation process will be sought by the manager from the members of staff concerned before making contact.
- a Human Resources Advisor / Consultant may wish to refer a matter to the Mediation Service Co-ordinator for mediation. The Human Resources Advisor/Consultant will seek the agreement of the party(s) concerned before a case is referred.

- a trade union representative may wish to refer a matter to the Mediator Service Co-ordinator for mediation. The trade union representative will seek the agreement of the party(s) concerned before a case is referred.
- a Bullying and Harassment Advisor may suggest that an individual contact the Mediation Service Co-ordinator. Bullying and Harassment Advisors will not be able to make direct referrals due to the confidential nature of their contact with staff.

## **Who do I contact?**

The service is managed by the University's Mediation Service Co-ordinator, Andrew Caldwell. Contact details:

**Telephone:** 028 9036 8961      **email:** [ja.caldwell@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:ja.caldwell@ulster.ac.uk)

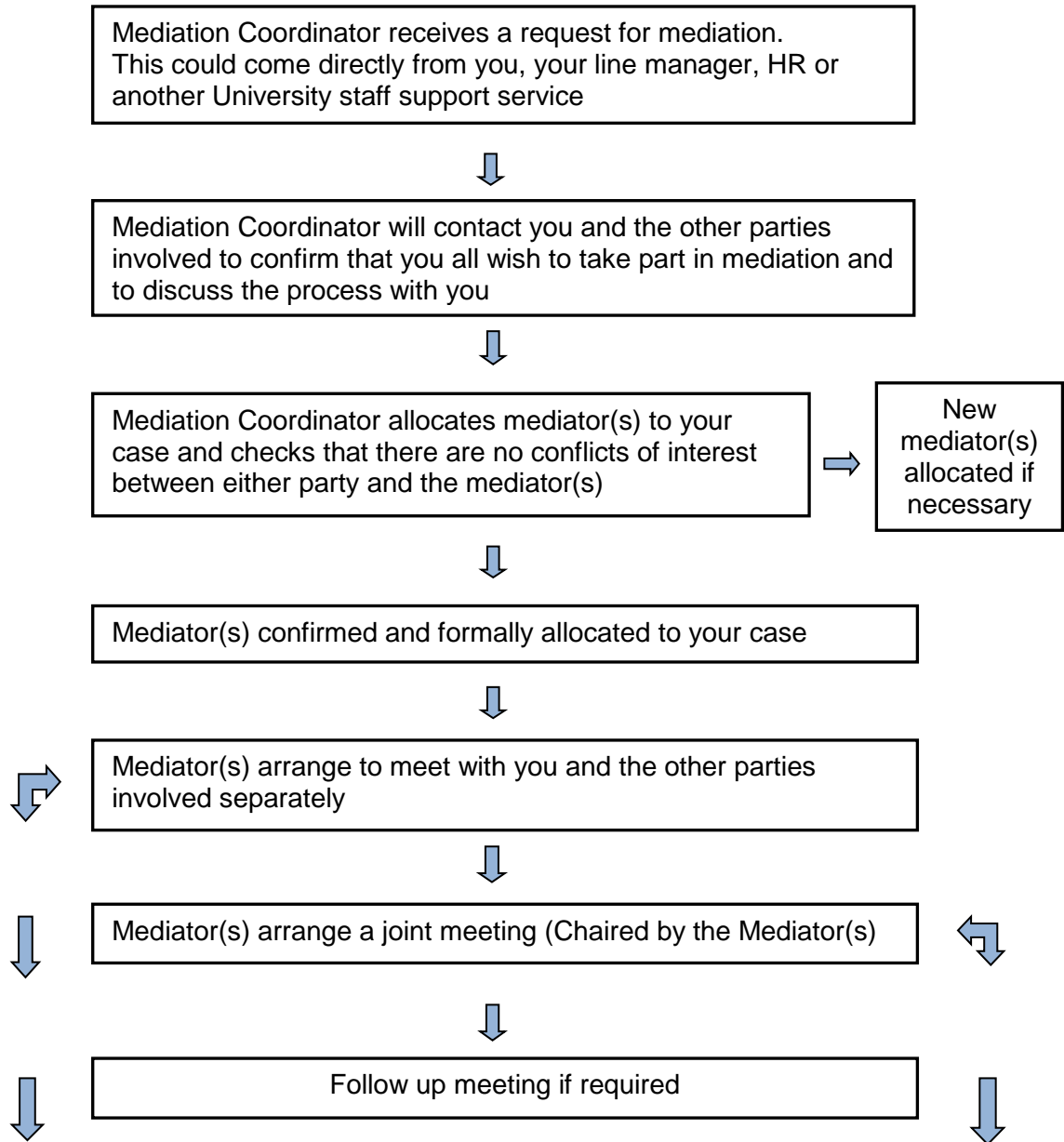
If you want to talk about how mediation could help you or just to see if an issue is suitable for mediation, we are happy to talk.

There is no obligation to participate in the full mediation process. During such pre-mediation discussions, mediators will remain impartial and neutral.

## **Where can I obtain further information?**

Further information in relation to the staff mediation service can be found in the University's Mediation Guidelines which are available for viewing on the Human Resources website.

# THE MEDIATION PROCESS



## Purpose of the First Meeting:

1. Discuss the mediator's Role.
2. Discuss the problem from your perspective.
3. Explore and clarify what you want from the mediation process.
4. Raise concerns or questions.

## Purpose of the Joint Meeting:

1. Discuss the problem in a safe and structured environment.
2. Allow each participant equal time and space to talk and be heard.
3. Discuss all options and arrive at realistic, agreed outcomes.
4. Develop a written Agreement.
5. Discuss longer term requirements and any follow up arrangements.