

# **HR Manual**

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# **1. Employment Policies**

## **1.1 At-Will Employment / Employment Agreement**

### **Description:**

This section defines the nature of the employment relationship between the company and the employee — specifically, whether employment is “at-will” or governed by a contract.

### **Key Elements to Include:**

- A statement that employment is “at-will” unless otherwise agreed in writing
- Terms for termination: notice, severance, cause & without cause
- Legal constraints or exceptions (e.g. termination cannot violate anti-discrimination laws)
- A disclaimer clarifying that the policy manual is not a binding contract

### **Sample Wording:**

“Unless otherwise specified in a written agreement, employment is at-will, meaning either party may terminate the relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice, consistent with applicable law.”

### **Recommendations:**

- If in a jurisdiction where “at-will” employment is not recognized, modify accordingly
- Ensure consistency with employment contracts and legal counsel
- Explicitly state that any contractual terms take precedence over the handbook

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## **1.2 Equal Opportunity & Anti-Discrimination**

### **Description:**

This section articulates the company’s commitment to providing equal employment opportunities and prohibiting discrimination and harassment in all employment practices.

### **Key Elements to Include:**

- A list of protected characteristics (e.g. race, color, religion, gender, age, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity)
- Prohibition of discrimination in hiring, promotion, compensation, benefits, termination
- Harassment policy & prohibition
- Process for reporting complaints, investigation, corrective actions
- Protections against retaliation for reporting claims in good faith

**Sample Wording:**

“The company is committed to equal employment opportunity. Discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other legally protected status is strictly prohibited.”

**Recommendations:**

- Designate a contact person or HR representative for complaints
  - State confidentiality and protection for complainants
  - Include a “no retaliation” clause
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### 1.3 Probationary Period

**Description:**

This defines the initial period during which a new employee’s performance, behavior, and fit are assessed before the employment becomes regular.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Duration of the probationary period (e.g. 3 months)
- Conditions during probation: whether full benefits apply, or reduced benefits
- Criteria and process of evaluation
- Notice and procedure for confirmation or termination

**Sample Wording:**

“All new hires shall serve a probationary period of **3 months**, during which performance, cultural fit, and overall suitability will be evaluated before confirmation of ongoing employment status.”

**Recommendations:**

- Provide supervisors with an evaluation framework
- Clarify whether termination during probation requires notice

- Maintain documentation of performance reviews during probation
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## **1.4 Employment Classification**

### **Description:**

This section defines various employment categories and explains which benefits, rights, and obligations apply to each.

### **Typical Classifications:**

- Full-Time
- Part-Time
- Contract / Consultant
- Intern / Trainee

### **Key Points to Define:**

- Eligibility for benefits and leave by classification
- Expected work hours, roles, responsibilities
- Term limits or renewal conditions for contract / intern roles
- Tax, social contribution, and legal distinctions

### **Sample Wording:**

“Employees are classified into Full-Time, Part-Time, Contract/Consultant, or Intern/Trainee categories. Eligibility for benefits and entitlements depends on classification.”

### **Recommendations:**

- Clearly state which benefits apply to which classification
- Ensure compliance with local labor law regarding part-time or intern entitlements

- Clearly define contract roles in terms of duration, scope, and expectations
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## **1.5 Employment Offer & Onboarding**

### **Description:**

This part covers issuance of the employment offer, required pre-employment checks, and the onboarding process for new employees.

### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Written offer contents: position/title, salary, start date, key terms
- Preconditions: background checks, reference checks, documentation
- Onboarding steps: policy orientation, system access, team introductions
- Employee acknowledgment of receipt & understanding of handbook

### **Sample Wording:**

“Employees will receive a written offer letter stating the position, salary, start date, and essential terms. Pre-employment checks (e.g. background, references) may be required. Onboarding includes orientation on policies, system setup, and introduction to team and processes.”

### **Recommendations:**

- Provide an onboarding checklist for HR and managers
- Ensure employees sign an acknowledgment that they have reviewed the handbook
- Include timeframe within which onboarding steps should be completed

## **2. Working Hours & Attendance**

### **2.1 Work Schedule**

#### **Description & Purpose:**

This subsection defines the standard working hours expected from employees, core business hours, and how work time is allocated. It sets a baseline for attendance, scheduling, and capacity planning.

#### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Standard full-time hours (e.g. 8 hours/day, 40 hours/week)
- Start and end times (e.g. 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM with 1-hour lunch break)
- Core business hours (time when employees should be available for meetings or collaboration)
- Flex periods or bandwidth windows (if flexible scheduling is allowed)
- Time zone considerations (if distributed or remote teams)
- Breaks, rest periods, lunch breaks
- Deviations (compressed workweeks, shift schedules)

#### **Sample Wording:**

“Employees are expected to work **8 hours per day, 40 hours per week**, typically between **9:00 AM and 6:00 PM**, with a **1-hour lunch break**. The core business hours are **10:00 AM to 3:00 PM**, during which all employees should be available for collaboration.”

#### **Notes & Best Practices:**

- The concept of **flextime** allows employees to vary start and end times within a defined bandwidth, while still being present during core hours.
- In the EU, the **Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC)** imposes limits: maximum 48 work hours per week (unless opted out), minimum rest periods, rest breaks, etc.

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## **2.2 Flexible / Remote Work**

#### **Description & Purpose:**

This section sets guidelines for flexibility in working location and hours—defining how remote or hybrid work is handled and what expectations exist.



### Key Elements to Include:

- Eligibility criteria (which roles, seniority, performance)
- Frequency / ratio (fully remote, hybrid, minimal remote)
- Core availability hours when remote employees must be reachable (e.g. at least 2 hours overlap)
- Communication expectations (response times, channels, meeting attendance)
- Tools & technology requirements (internet, hardware, VPN, security)
- Data protection / confidentiality rules for remote work
- Periodic review or revocation of remote privilege

### Sample Wording:

“Remote or flexible work may be requested and approved based on role and manager discretion. While working remotely, employees must maintain overlap of at least **2 hours daily** with core business hours to ensure collaboration. Employees should be reachable via Slack, email, or phone during those periods, and adhere to data security protocols and use company-mandated tools.”

### Notes & Best Practices:

- Remote work policies should specify **availability windows** to schedule team collaboration.
- It's good practice to define remote expectations clearly (communication, deliverables, equipment).

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## 2.3 Overtime Policy

### Description & Purpose:

This subpoint addresses when work beyond the normal schedule is authorized, how it is compensated or handled, and approval protocols.

### Key Elements to Include:

- Definition of overtime (hours beyond the standard work schedule)
- Authorization process (must be pre-approved by manager)
- Compensation: rate (e.g. 1.5×, 2×), or time off in lieu (comp time)
- Conditions or caps (daily or weekly maximum overtime)
- Overtime recording / tracking requirements
- Exceptions or special projects

#### **Sample Wording:**

“Overtime must be pre-approved by management. Overtime pay is provided at **1.5× the regular hourly rate** for authorized hours beyond 40 hours/week. Alternatively, compensatory time off may be granted in lieu, subject to manager approval.”

#### **Notes & Legal Considerations:**

- In U.S. law (Fair Labor Standards Act), hours over 40/week must be paid at time and a half for non-exempt employees.
- In many jurisdictions, overtime is regulated by law (daily maximum, rest periods, premium pay)
- Always align your policy with applicable local labor law

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## **2.4 Attendance, Tardiness & Absences**

#### **Description & Purpose:**

This section defines expected behavior regarding coming to work, reporting lateness or absence, and consequences for violations.

#### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Procedure for notifying supervisors when late or absent (how, when, what information)
- Definition of tardiness (e.g. 5–15 min, >15 min) and no-call/no-show

- Acceptable vs unacceptable absence (with or without notice)
- Point systems or thresholds for repeated infractions
- Verification (doctor's note, proof) for extended absences
- Consequences (verbal warning, written warning, further discipline)
- Recording / tracking attendance (e.g. timesheets, HRIS)

#### **Sample Wording:**

"Employees must notify their supervisor as soon as possible if delayed or absent, stating reason and expected return time. Unexcused absences or repeated tardiness may lead to disciplinary action. A point-based system may be used to track attendance infractions (e.g. 1 point per unexcused absence, 0.5 point per lateness over 15 minutes)."

#### **Notes & Best Practices:**

- [Many attendance policies implement a \*\*points system\*\* to quantify infractions and trigger discipline.](#)
- Policies should be fair, transparent, and include verification steps (e.g. medical certification)
- [Attendance policy templates emphasize consistency, clarity, and process for managing absenteeism.](#)

## **3. Leave Policies**

### **3.1 Vacation / Annual Leave**

#### **Description & Purpose:**

This section defines how employees accrue, request, and use vacation (annual) leave. It ensures employees receive paid time off for rest and recreation, balancing productivity and well-being.

#### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Accrual rate (e.g. X days per year, pro rata for part-time)

- Eligibility threshold (e.g. after probation)
- Carryover rules (whether unused days can be carried to next year)
- Maximum accrual caps (to prevent indefinite accumulation)
- Payment for unused leave at termination (if policy allows)
- Blackout periods or high-demand times when leave may be restricted

#### Sample Wording:

“Full-time employees accrue **20 days** of paid vacation per calendar year (pro rated for part-time). Up to **5 days** may be carried over to the following year, subject to manager approval. Upon separation, unused vacation days will be paid out in the final paycheck, unless prohibited by law.”

#### Notes & Legal Context:

- In Germany, the **Federal Vacation Law (Bundesurlaubsgesetz)** mandates a minimum of 24 working days of annual leave (for a 6-day workweek) or 20 days (for a 5-day workweek).
- Some jurisdictions require that vacation be used in minimum continuous blocks or restrict carryover periods.
- Employers may enforce blackout periods (e.g. holidays, business peaks) when vacations may be limited.

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## 3.2 Sick Leave / Medical Leave

#### Description & Purpose:

This leave is for employees who are ill, injured, or need to attend medical appointments, or care for a family member in some cases.

#### Key Elements to Include:

- Sick leave accrual or grant rate (e.g. X days per year)
- Whether unused sick leave rolls over

- Eligibility (all employees, after probation, full-time only)
- Required documentation (doctor's note for absences > Y days)
- Notification procedures (how & when to report sickness)
- Use of sick leave to care for a family member (if included)
- Provisions for long-term medical leave or disability

#### **Sample Wording:**

"Employees are entitled to **10 paid sick days** per year. Amounts unused may carry over, up to a maximum of **30 days**. A medical certificate is required for any absence longer than **3 consecutive days**. Sick leave may be used to care for an immediate family member, per policy. Notification to the supervisor is required as soon as possible."

#### **Notes & Legal Context / Best Practices:**

- A clear sick leave policy helps manage absences, reduce presenteeism, and protect workplace health.
- Many organizations require a medical note for extended absences.
- In U.S. federal employment, sick leave may be used for medical, family care, or bereavement purposes, and agencies may require proof for extended absence.

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### **3.3 Parental Leave / Maternity / Paternity**

#### **Description & Purpose:**

This leave supports employees becoming parents (by birth, adoption, or foster care). It ensures job protection and often partial or full pay during the leave period.

#### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Eligibility (tenure, full-time/part-time, probation completed)
- Duration (weeks or months) of maternity, paternity, or parental leave
- Pay status (fully paid, partially paid, or unpaid)

- Job protection / rights to return to same or equivalent role
- Notice requirements, documentation (birth certificate, adoption papers)
- Coordination with statutory leave entitlements (if local law)
- Options for leave extension, shared parental leave, or flexible return

### Sample Wording:

“Employees who become parents (via birth, adoption, or foster care) are eligible for **12 weeks** of parental leave. Maternity leave (for birth) will be **8 weeks** fully paid, and paternity leave will be **4 weeks** fully paid. To qualify, employees must have at least **12 months** of continuous service and have worked **1,250 hours** in the prior year. Employees must provide notice at least **30 days** before leave start, unless not reasonably possible.”

### Notes & Legal Context:

- In the U.S., the **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** entitles eligible employees to **12 work weeks** of unpaid, job-protected leave for certain family/medical reasons including birth/adoption.
- Local labor laws may require longer or paid leave, especially for maternity.
- Many companies allow top-ups (employer pay in addition to statutory) or flexible return-to-work arrangements.

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## 3.4 Bereavement Leave

### Description & Purpose:

This leave allows employees time off to grieve, manage affairs, or attend services after the death of a close family member or loved one.

### Key Elements to Include:

- Definition of “immediate family” (spouse, parent, child, sibling, in-laws etc.)
- Number of paid days allowed (e.g. 3–5 days)
- Unpaid options beyond the paid period

- Notification procedure
- Whether bereavement leave may be extended with annual leave or unpaid leave

**Sample Wording:**

“In the event of a death in an employee’s immediate family, the employee may take up to **5 paid days** of bereavement leave. Immediate family includes spouse, parent, child, sibling, parent-in-law, or grandparent. Additional time off may be granted as unpaid leave at management’s discretion.”

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### **3.5 Public Holidays**

**Description & Purpose:**

This section lists official paid public holidays observed by the company, and rules for when holidays fall on weekends.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- List of observed public holidays
- If holiday falls on non-working day (e.g. weekend), whether a substitute day is given
- Pay rules for employees scheduled to work on a holiday
- Whether part-time employees are eligible proportionally

**Sample Wording:**

“The company observes the following public holidays: New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, etc. If a public holiday falls on a non-working day, employees will receive a substitute day off. Employees required to work on a holiday will be paid at **1.5×** normal hourly rate or receive compensatory time in lieu.”

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### **3.6 Unpaid Leave**

**Description & Purpose:**

This leave covers extended absences beyond paid leave entitlements, for personal reasons, education, or other non-medical needs.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Conditions under which unpaid leave may be granted (seniority, performance, role)
- Maximum duration (e.g. up to 3 months)
- Whether benefits (health insurance, accrual) continue during unpaid leave
- Procedures to request and approve unpaid leave
- How unpaid leave affects accrual of paid benefits

**Sample Wording:**

“Unpaid leave may be granted at management’s discretion for personal or exceptional reasons for a period up to **3 months**, subject to business needs. Employees on unpaid leave will not accrue vacation or sick leave during that period, unless legally required. Benefits continuation may be available under certain conditions.”

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### **3.7 Leave Request & Approval**

**Description & Purpose:**

This defines the procedure by which employees request leave and managers approve or deny it. It ensures fairness and helps manage staffing needs.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Lead time / advance notice required (e.g. submit vacation **14 days** ahead)
- Mode of request (HR system, form, email)
- Criteria for approval (coverage, staffing conflicts)
- Denial process and appeal or negotiation
- Recording & tracking (HRIS, timesheets)
- Handling of overlapping leave requests or blackout periods

**Sample Wording:**



“Employees must submit leave requests at least **14 days** in advance (for vacation) via the company HR system. Requests will be approved by the manager based on business coverage and staffing. In case of conflict, leave may be rescheduled. All leave is tracked in the HRIS. Sick or medical leave may be requested with shorter notice.”

## 4. Compensation & Benefits

### 4.1 Salaries & Pay Periods

#### Description & Purpose:

This subsection defines how base compensation is determined, how often employees are paid, and adjustments or reviews to salaries.

#### Key Elements to Include:

- Salary structure / bands / pay grades
- Base salary vs variable components
- Frequency of pay (monthly, biweekly, weekly)
- Pay date (e.g. last business day of month)
- Overtime / premium pay as applicable
- Salary reviews / adjustments (annual, merit increases)
- Procedures for salary changes (promotion, cost-of-living adjustments)

#### Sample Wording:

“Employees are paid on a **monthly** basis, with salary payments processed on the last business day of each month. Base salaries are assigned within defined salary bands. Salary reviews will occur annually, and adjustments may be made for performance, promotion, or cost-of-living increases.”

#### Notes & Best Practices:

- Have transparent salary bands or ranges to ensure fairness and market competitiveness

- Align salary review cycles with performance review periods
  - Ensure compliance with local laws on minimum wage, pay equity, etc.
  - Use market benchmarking to adjust pay scales periodically
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## **4.2 Bonuses & Incentives**

### **Description & Purpose:**

This section covers variable pay components — bonuses, incentives, commissions — tied to individual, team, or company performance.

### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Types of bonuses (performance bonus, sign-on bonus, retention bonus, commission)
- Eligibility criteria (who qualifies, service length, performance thresholds)
- Bonus calculation method (percentage of salary, formula, targets)
- Timing and payout schedule (quarterly, annually)
- Clawback or reversal clauses (if metrics change, or early termination)
- Communication and transparency of bonus plans

### **Sample Wording:**

“Discretionary performance bonuses may be awarded annually based on individual, departmental, and company performance. Eligibility requires at least 6 months of service. Bonus formulas will be communicated in advance. In certain circumstances, bonuses may be subject to clawback if performance targets are later found invalid or employment is terminated for cause.”

### **Notes & References:**

- Bonus plans help align employee behavior with strategic goals and drive performance (variable pay).
- Transparent eligibility and formula helps avoid perceptions of unfairness

- Consider tiered bonus structures or bonus caps
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### **4.3 Health / Medical Benefits**

#### **Description & Purpose:**

This subsection defines health care, medical insurance, wellness programs, and how employees are covered.

#### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Eligibility (full-time, part-time, dependents)
- Coverage details (medical, dental, vision, out-of-pocket limits)
- Cost sharing (employer contribution vs employee premiums)
- Enrollment period windows
- Wellness benefits (e.g. fitness subsidies, preventive health)
- Coordination with local statutory health insurance, if applicable

#### **Sample Wording:**

“Full-time employees are eligible for health, dental, and vision insurance coverage, with the company paying [X%] of employee premium. Dependent coverage is available at employee cost. Enrollment occurs during the annual benefits open season or following qualifying life events.”

#### **Notes & Best Practices:**

- The total compensation package includes non-monetary benefits like health coverage.
  - Wellness programs and preventive care reduce long-term cost and support employee well-being
  - Communicate clearly cost, coverage, networks
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### **4.4 Retirement / Pension / Provident Fund**

**Description & Purpose:**

This outlines retirement savings, pensions, or provident funds the company supports or mandates.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Eligibility criteria
- Employer contribution matching or defined benefit contributions
- Vesting schedule
- Retirement plan types (401(k), pension, provident fund, defined benefit)
- Withdrawal / portability rules
- Compliance with relevant laws

**Sample Wording:**

“Eligible employees may contribute to the company’s retirement plan, with employer matching up to **4%** of salary. Contributions vest over **3 years**. Upon resignation or retirement, funds may be rolled over per plan rules.”

**Notes & References:**

- Some jurisdictions require mandatory pension or provident fund contributions by employer or employee
- Ensure plan design aligns with legal compliance

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## **4.5 Insurance (Life, Disability, etc.)**

**Description & Purpose:**

This section describes additional insurance benefits beyond health: life, disability, accident, etc.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Types of insurance provided (life, short-term disability, long-term disability, accidental death & dismemberment)
- Eligibility
- Coverage amounts or multiples of salary
- Employee-paid supplemental insurance options
- Claim procedures

**Sample Wording:**

“The company provides basic life insurance equal to **1× annual salary**, and short-term disability coverage. Additional supplemental insurance may be elected by employees at their own cost.”

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## **4.6 Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)**

**Description & Purpose:**

EAPs are support services for employees facing personal or work-related issues — counseling, legal, financial lines, etc.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Scope of services (counseling, legal/financial referrals, mental health support)
- Confidentiality guarantees
- Access process and hours (24/7, hotline, online)
- Cost (free, subsidized)
- How the program integrates with benefits

**Sample Wording:**

“The company offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) providing confidential support in mental health, legal, financial, family, and substance use matters. Services are free to employees and their dependents, available 24/7 via hotline or online portal.”

**Notes & Best Practices:**

- EAPs are voluntary, confidential programs assisting employees with personal issues that may impact performance.
  - Communicate clearly about confidentiality and usage
  - Periodically measure utilization and feedback
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## 4.7 Stock / Equity Plans

### Description & Purpose:

This defines equity-based compensation — sharing in ownership via stock options, restricted stock, etc.

### Key Elements to Include:

- Types of equity plans (stock options, RSUs, ESPP, phantom stock)
- Eligibility criteria
- Vesting schedule and cliffs
- Exercise rules, pricing, and expiration
- Tax treatment, legal constraints
- Terms on termination (what happens to unvested shares)

### Sample Wording:

“Eligible employees may receive stock options, RSUs, or phantom shares as part of their compensation package. Options vest over **4 years** with a one-year cliff. If employment ends before vesting, unvested shares are forfeited or subject to post-termination exercise windows.”

### Notes & References:

- Equity compensation is commonly used to align employee interests with company performance.
- Ensure clarity on vesting, taxation, and exit treatment

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## 4.8 Benefits Enrollment & Changes

### Description & Purpose:

This outlines when and how employees enroll in benefits, and how/when changes can be made.

### Key Elements to Include:

- Open enrollment period (annual)
- Qualifying life events (marriage, birth, etc.)
- Procedure to propose changes (form, HR system)
- Deadlines, effective dates
- Special rule if an employee declines coverage

### Sample Wording:

“Benefits open enrollment occurs each November. Employees may also make changes within **30 days** of a qualifying life event (e.g. marriage, birth, loss of other coverage). Changes become effective the first of the next month.”

### Notes & Best Practices:

- Use clear communication and reminders for open enrollment
- Ensure compliance with legal deadlines for benefit eligibility
- Track changes and maintain audit logs

## 5. Performance Management

### 5.1 Performance Reviews / Appraisals

#### Description & Purpose:

Performance reviews (also called appraisals or evaluations) are formal assessments of an employee's contributions over a defined period (e.g. annually or semi-annually). They help

managers and employees reflect on achievements, gaps, development, and set direction for future performance.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Frequency (annual, semiannual, quarterly)
- Process steps: self-assessment, manager assessment, calibration / review, feedback meeting
- Rating scales or classifications (e.g. exceeds expectations, meets, needs improvement)
- Documentation requirements (comments, examples, goals)
- Calibration across teams (to ensure fairness)
- Timing, scheduling, and advance notice
- How evaluations tie into compensation, promotion, training

**Sample Wording:**

“Formal performance reviews will be conducted **annually** and may include a **mid-year check-in**. Employees will complete a self-assessment, managers will provide their assessment, and both will meet to review performance, lessons learned, and goals for the next period. A standardized rating scale will be used, and comments and examples are required.”

**Best Practices & Insights:**

- Combine **continuous feedback** with formal reviews, rather than relying solely on annual reviews.
- Establish **SMART goals** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) as the basis for evaluation.
- Encourage calibration among managers to reduce rating inflation or bias.
- Use specific examples (behaviors, outcomes) rather than vague judgments.
- Ensure transparency and communication of criteria beforehand.



## 5.2 Goal Setting & KPIs

### Description & Purpose:

This subsection defines how goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are established, aligned, monitored, and adjusted. Proper goal setting aligns individual performance with organizational objectives.

### Key Elements to Include:

- Goal setting process: who sets, how, timeline
- SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)
- Cascading of goals from company → team → individual
- Differentiation between outcome goals and behavioral / competency goals
- Monitoring, checkpoints, and mid-period reviews
- Revising or rebalancing goals if priorities shift

### Sample Wording:

“At the start of each review period, employees and managers jointly define **3–5 SMART goals** aligned to team and company strategy. KPIs will be established with clear metrics or milestones. Regular check-ins (monthly or quarterly) will monitor progress and allow adjustments if business priorities change.”

### Best Practices & Insight:

- Goals should not only measure output, but also **leading indicators** (inputs/process) to help detect issues earlier.
- Employee involvement in goal setting increases commitment.
- Align goals across levels ensures strategic coherence.

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## 5.3 Promotions & Career Development

### Description & Purpose:

This section outlines how employees can advance within the company, the criteria for promotion, and the paths for professional growth.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Eligibility criteria (tenure, performance, skills, competencies)
- Promotion framework (levels, expectations, steps)
- Assessment methods (performance reviews, interviews, project results)
- Career paths, competencies, role profiles
- Communication of career development opportunities
- Use of mentors, stretch assignments, internal mobility

**Sample Wording:**

“Promotions are awarded based on consistent performance, demonstrated capability, and readiness for added responsibility. Employees should meet eligibility criteria (e.g. minimum 12 months in current role, satisfactory performance) and pass a promotion review, including feedback from peers, manager, and occasionally cross-department input. Career development plans will map out paths and competencies needed for advancement.”

**Best Practices & Insight:**

- Provide **transparent promotion guidelines** to avoid perceptions of favoritism
- Use **development plans** to prepare employees for the next role
- Encourage skill development, stretch assignments, cross-functional exposure

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## 5.4 Training & Development

**Description & Purpose:**

To foster growth, retention, and improved performance, training and development programs support employees in acquiring new skills, knowledge, and capabilities.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Types of training: technical, soft skills, leadership, compliance
- Budget allocation / reimbursement / sponsorship
- Eligibility (who can access, when)
- Individual development plans (IDPs)
- Tracking and evaluation of training effectiveness
- Mandatory compliance training (e.g. safety, data protection)

#### **Sample Wording:**

“The company allocates an annual training budget. Employees may request training or courses aligned to their development goals, subject to manager and HR approval. Mandatory training (e.g. data privacy, safety) must be completed by all employees. Training results and certifications should be tracked in the HR system.”

#### **Best Practices & Insight:**

- Link training to performance gaps or growth aspirations
- Measure ROI of training (application, performance change)
- Encourage continuous learning culture

---

## **5.5 Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)**

#### **Description & Purpose:**

A PIP is a structured process to help employees improve when performance falls below expectations. It sets clear expectations, provides support, monitors progress, and defines consequences.

#### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Triggers / criteria for initiating a PIP
- Duration and timeline (e.g. 30, 60, 90 days)

- Specific objectives, metrics, support (mentoring, training)
- Check-in schedule (weekly, biweekly)
- Consequences of failure (further action, termination)
- Documentation, review, and sign-off

#### **Sample Wording:**

“When performance fails to meet expectations, the manager may place the employee on a **90-day Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)**. The PIP will include **3–5 measurable improvement goals**, support mechanisms (coaching, resources), check-ins every two weeks, and final evaluation. If objectives are not met, further action up to termination may result.”

#### **Best Practices & Insight:**

- Goals in PIP should be **realistic and measurable**
- Provide resources, guidance, and feedback, not just enforcement
- Document every step carefully for fairness and transparency
- Use PIP as development tool, not just disciplinary tool
- Ensure consistency — avoid bias or perception of unfair targeting

---

## **5.6 Recognition & Rewards**

### **Description & Purpose:**

Recognition and rewards reinforce positive behaviors and high performance, improving morale, motivation, and retention.

### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Types of recognition: peer recognition, manager praise, awards (e.g. “Employee of the Month”)
- Tangible rewards: bonuses, gift cards, certificates, extra days off

- Criteria and nomination process
- Timing and frequency (monthly, quarterly, ad hoc)
- Communication and visibility

**Sample Wording:**

“Employees may be nominated for recognition awards (e.g. ‘Star Performer’) based on outstanding contributions. Awards may include bonus, extra paid day off, or public acknowledgment. Recognition will be communicated across teams to highlight success.”

**Best Practices & Insight:**

- Timely and frequent recognition is more effective than annual awards
- Peer-to-peer recognition programs increase inclusivity
- Align rewards with company values and goals
- Use recognition to boost engagement and reinforce good culture

## **6. Code of Conduct & Discipline**

### **6.1 General Conduct & Ethics**

**Description & Purpose:**

This subsection defines expectations for professional behavior, integrity, and ethical standards that employees must adhere to. It sets the tone for company culture and ensures that conduct aligns with values and legal requirements.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Scope and applicability: who this covers (employees, contractors, interns)
- Core values and principles (e.g. integrity, respect, fairness, transparency)
- Expected behavior: professionalism, workplace demeanor, respect, non-discriminatory interactions

- Prohibited behaviors: harassment, bullying, violence, misuse of company property, insubordination
- Compliance with laws and regulations: e.g. anti-bribery, anti-corruption, environmental, safety
- Reporting obligations: duty to report violations, whistleblower protections
- Consequences of violation

### **Sample Wording:**

“All employees are expected to conduct themselves with integrity, respect, professionalism, and in compliance with applicable laws and company policies. Harassment, discrimination, theft, fraud, or other misconduct are strictly prohibited. Employees have a duty to report any suspected violation of this Code in good faith and will be protected from retaliation.”

### **References / Best Practices:**

- A Code of Conduct serves as a foundation for company behavior expectations and ethics.
- Include concrete examples of acceptable and unacceptable behavior to reduce ambiguity.

---

## **6.2 Conflict of Interest**

### **Description & Purpose:**

This part defines what constitutes a conflict between personal interests and company interests, and how employees must handle such situations to maintain trust and fairness.

### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Definition of conflict of interest (actual, potential, perceived)
- Examples: accepting gifts, outside employment, business with company vendors, family relationships influencing decisions
- Duty to disclose: when and how employees must notify management or compliance office

- Review, approval, or mitigation of conflicts
- Procedures for employees recusing themselves from decision-making

**Sample Wording:**

“Employees must avoid situations where personal, financial, or family interests conflict (or appear to conflict) with the interests of the company. Any potential conflict must be promptly disclosed in writing to the employee’s manager or compliance office. In such cases, the employee may be required to recuse themselves from decision-making or take other mitigating actions.”

**References / Best Practices:**

- A clear conflict-of-interest policy helps maintain trust and avoids favoritism or abuses.
  - Require regular declarations/updates to capture new conflicts.
- 

## **6.3 Confidentiality & Data Protection**

**Description & Purpose:**

This section sets rules for handling sensitive company and third-party information, ensuring that confidentiality, privacy, and data protection obligations are met.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- What constitutes confidential information: trade secrets, business strategies, customer data, financials, IP, etc.
- Employee obligations: nondisclosure, proper storage, limited access, return of materials at exit
- Data protection rules: compliance with GDPR or local privacy laws, data subject rights, lawful bases for processing
- Exceptions: disclosures required by law or with prior approval
- Handling of breaches: reporting, containment, remediation

**Sample Wording:**

“Employees must keep confidential all proprietary, sensitive, or personal data belonging to the company, clients, or partners. Disclosure without authorization is prohibited. Data protection laws (e.g. GDPR) and company policies apply to all processing, storage, access, and transmission of personal data. In case of a suspected breach, employees must immediately report it to the data protection officer or HR.”

#### **References / Best Practices:**

- Confidentiality provisions are essential to protect competitive advantage and comply with regulation.
  - Data protection integration in conduct code is now standard in modern governance policies.
- 

## **6.4 Disciplinary Process & Corrective Action**

### **Description & Purpose:**

This subsection defines how offenses or violations are handled—what steps, investigations, fairness, documentation, escalation, and appeals are allowed.

### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Types of infractions (minor, major, gross misconduct)
- Progressive discipline framework: verbal warning → written warning → suspension → termination (or skip steps for severe cases)
- Investigation process: fact gathering, interviews, documentation, fairness
- Notification & meeting: inform employee of allegations, present evidence, allow employee to respond
- Decision & sanction: selection of appropriate corrective action based on severity, past record, consistency
- Documentation & record-keeping: maintain written records of actions, steps, communications.
- Appeal process: process by which employee may challenge or appeal the decision



- Post-decision follow-up: monitoring, check-ins, counseling

**Sample Wording:**

“The company uses a progressive discipline approach. Minor infractions may lead to verbal warnings, then written warnings, suspension, or termination for repeated or severe offenses. All disciplinary steps will follow a fair procedure: investigation, meeting with the employee, opportunity to respond, decision, and right to appeal. All actions will be documented and retained.”

**References / Best Practices:**

- Progressive discipline helps remediate rather than immediately punish, offering employees a chance to improve.
  - Avoid skipping steps except for gross misconduct.
  - Ensure fairness, clarity, consistency to reduce legal risk.
- 

## **6.5 Termination, Resignation & Exit**

**Description & Purpose:**

This section outlines how employment is ended—voluntarily or involuntarily—and the procedures around it to ensure smooth transitions and compliance.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Notice periods: required length by employee/ employer
- Types of termination: voluntary resignation, termination for cause, termination without cause
- Exit interview: process, purpose, feedback collection
- Return of company property: keys, laptops, badges, documents
- Final pay and settlement: unused leave pay, severance (if any), benefits continuation
- Access revocation: system access, email, physical access
- Non-disparagement, confidentiality after exit

- References or past employment verification

### **Sample Wording:**

“Employees wishing to resign should provide **[X weeks]** notice. The company may terminate employment with notice or pay in lieu, except in cases of gross misconduct, which may lead to immediate termination. All departing employees will be invited to an exit interview. They must return all company property and settle final compensation, including pay for accrued vacation unless prohibited by law. Access rights will be revoked immediately upon termination.”

### **References / Best Practices:**

- Exit procedures help protect the organization (e.g. securing systems, recovering assets)
- Legal compliance is critical—ensure final pay and benefits rules align with local laws
- Exit interviews can yield actionable feedback

## **7. Health, Safety & Workplace Policies**

### **7.1 Safety Standards**

#### **Description & Purpose:**

This subsection defines the overarching safety obligations and standards the company commits to. It ensures a safe working environment, prevents accidents and occupational illnesses, and fosters a proactive safety culture.

#### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Commitment statement: the company’s responsibility to maintain safe, healthy workplaces
- Regulatory compliance: adherence to applicable occupational health and safety laws and standards (e.g. OSHA in U.S.)
- Structure and roles: define responsibilities of management, supervisors, safety officers, employees
- Safety program components: hazard identification, risk assessment, inspections, audits, training, incident investigations

- Hierarchy of controls: elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls, personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Reporting unsafe conditions & near-misses
- Recordkeeping, safety metrics, continuous improvement

### **Sample Wording:**

“The company is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment. We shall comply with all applicable health and safety laws and regulations. Responsibilities for safety span all levels: management ensures resources and oversight, supervisors enforce protocols, and employees follow procedures and report hazards. Our safety program includes regular risk assessments, inspections, hazard mitigation, training, incident investigations, and continuous improvement using safety metrics and feedback.”

### **References / Best Practices:**

- OSHA’s **Recommended Practices for Safety and Health Programs** presents a mature framework for safety management systems.
- Development of safety policies requires employee participation, daily inspections, and feedback channels.
- The hierarchy of hazard controls is a widely accepted system to prioritize risk mitigation strategies.

---

## **7.2 Workplace Harassment / Anti-Bullying**

### **Description & Purpose:**

This section emphasizes that a safe workplace is not just physical safety, but also psychological safety—prohibiting harassment, bullying, hostile behavior, and ensuring respectful work relationships.

### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Definition: harassment, bullying, discrimination, hostile environment
- Prohibited behavior examples (verbal abuse, unwanted advances, intimidation, etc.)

- Scope: applies to workplace, remote interactions, company events, third-party engagements
- Reporting channels: anonymous or confidential reporting to HR or designated officer
- Investigation and response process: timeliness, impartiality, confidentiality
- Protection against retaliation for reporting in good faith
- Training and awareness programs

#### **Sample Wording:**

“The company has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment or bullying. Harassing behavior includes unwelcome remarks, threats, intimidation, inappropriate jokes, or unwanted physical contact. Such behavior in person, online, at remote work, or during company events is prohibited. Employees are encouraged to report incidents to HR or a designated officer. Reports will be handled promptly, fairly, and confidentially. Retaliation against individuals raising concerns in good faith is prohibited.”

#### **References / Best Practices:**

- Policies should cover not only in-office but also remote communications and conduct
- Clear definitions and examples help reduce ambiguity and enforce consistency

---

## **7.3 Drug & Alcohol Policy**

### **Description & Purpose:**

This subsection outlines rules on the use of drugs and alcohol in the workplace, aiming to maintain safety, productivity, and compliance with laws.

### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Prohibition of working under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs, or misuse of legal substances
- On-site consumption: whether permitted or forbidden
- Testing: random, for cause, post-accident (if lawful)

- Rehabilitation / assistance programs (if any)
- Consequences for violations
- Reporting of observed impairment

**Sample Wording:**

“Employees are prohibited from working under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misused prescription medication. On-site consumption of alcohol is not permitted unless pre-approved for special events. If impairment is suspected, an employee may be asked to undergo testing (where legal). Violations may lead to disciplinary action up to termination. The company may offer assistance or referral to rehabilitation programs.”

---

## **7.4 Remote / Home Office Safety**

**Description & Purpose:**

With remote work, employees’ home offices become an extension of the workplace. This section ensures safety even in remote setups by defining minimal standards and guidelines.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Safety guidelines: ergonomics, lighting, electrical safety, trip hazards, fire safety, slips and falls
- Self-assessment or safety checklist (employee signs off that home workspace meets safety standards)
- Equipment standards: desks, chairs, monitors, power strips, cable management
- Training and guidance for remote workers on hazards
- Reporting incidents even if at home
- Clarify liability limits (e.g. home office inspections) — OSHA generally does not hold employers liable for home offices and does not inspect home offices.

**Sample Wording:**

“Employees working from home must maintain a safe and ergonomic workspace. This includes appropriate lighting, electrical safety (no overloaded outlets), clear walkways, ergonomic chairs, and secure wiring. Employees complete a safety self-assessment checklist annually, and report

any work-related incidents. The company provides guidelines and training on home office safety, but is not liable to inspect home offices as OSHA does not typically regulate home offices. ”

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## **7.5 Emergency Response & Fire Safety**

### **Description & Purpose:**

This part defines how the company prepares for and responds to emergencies (fire, natural disaster, medical emergencies), ensuring employee safety, coordination, and business continuity.

### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Emergency plan: evacuation routes, assembly points, roles & responsibilities
- Fire prevention measures: suppression systems (sprinklers, extinguishers), alarms, fire drills
- Training and drills: regular scheduled fire drills, first-aid training
- Communication protocols: alarm systems, notifications, chain of command
- Medical emergencies: first-aid kits, emergency contacts, training
- Maintenance of emergency equipment
- Review & update plan periodically

### **Sample Wording:**

“The company shall maintain an emergency response plan covering evacuation routes, assembly points, and responsibilities for personnel. Fire prevention systems (alarms, extinguishers, sprinklers) will be in place, regularly inspected, and employees trained in fire drills. First aid kits and designated responders should be available. The plan will be reviewed and updated annually or after incidents.”

## **8. Privacy & Data Protection**

### **8.1 Employee Data / Records**

#### **Description & Purpose:**

This subsection clarifies what kinds of employee data the company collects and maintains, why it is needed, and how it is managed. It ensures transparency and trust by defining the boundaries of data use.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Definition of “employee data” — examples: name, address, contact information, date of birth, social security / national ID, bank account, performance reviews, disciplinary records, health records, leave / medical files, etc.
- Categorization of data by sensitivity (e.g. basic personal, sensitive personal, special category data)
- Purpose(s) for which data is collected (e.g. payroll, benefits, performance management, legal compliance)
- Minimization principle: only collect data that is necessary for the stated purposes
- Sources of data (direct from employee, third parties, public records)
- Integrity and accuracy: obligation to keep data up to date

**Sample Wording:**

“We collect and maintain only the personal data necessary for employment purposes. This includes contact information, tax and banking details, performance and disciplinary records, leave and health data (only when necessary), and other employment-related records. Data will be accurate, relevant, and limited to what is required for its intended use.”

---

## **8.2 Access, Retention & Deletion**

**Description & Purpose:**

This part addresses who is allowed to access employee data, how long data is kept, and when / how it is deleted or anonymized. It balances operational needs, legal obligations, and privacy.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Access control: roles and permissions (HR, management, payroll, IT)
- Principle of least privilege: only necessary access for job role

- Retention periods: define how long records are kept (e.g. 5, 7, 10 years or per legal requirement)
- Archival vs active data — older data may be moved to less accessible, more secure storage
- Deletion or anonymization: when the data is no longer necessary or when legal obligations expire
- Process for deletion and verifying that deletion was completed

#### **Sample Wording:**

“Access to employee records is restricted to authorized personnel only (HR, payroll, management, IT as needed) based on role. Employee files will be retained for **7 years** after termination (or as required by law). After the retention period, personal data is permanently deleted or anonymized, ensuring it cannot be reconstructed.”

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### **8.3 Data Subject Rights**

#### **Description & Purpose:**

This section lays out the rights employees have over their personal data (as data subjects), and how those rights can be exercised. It ensures compliance with privacy laws and promotes transparency.

#### **Key Elements to Include:**

- Right of access: the employee can request a copy of data held about them
- Right to rectification / correction of inaccurate or incomplete data
- Right to erasure / “right to be forgotten” (where applicable)
- Right to restrict processing or object to certain processing modes
- Right to data portability (to receive their data in a machine-readable format)
- Limitation / exceptions (when law prohibits erasure or if data must be retained)
- Process for submitting requests, timelines (e.g. respond within 30 days)



**Sample Wording:**

“Employees have the right to request access to, correction of, or deletion of their personal data, unless legal or contractual obligations require its retention. Requests should be made in writing to HR or the Data Protection Officer, and will be responded to within 30 days, unless extended by statutory grounds.”

---

## **8.4 GDPR / Local Data Privacy Compliance**

**Description & Purpose:**

This subsection ensures the company’s privacy practices comply with applicable data privacy laws, especially GDPR for EU / UK, and local equivalents. It sets the legal basis for processing and oversight mechanisms.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Legal basis for processing (e.g. contract necessity, legitimate interests, legal obligations) — note that consent may not always be valid in employment context under GDPR due to power imbalance
- Transparency / notice obligations: providing employees privacy notices, informing them how data is processed
- Data Protection Officer (DPO) role (if required)
- Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) when introducing processing with higher risk
- Cross-border transfers: ensuring adequate safeguards (Standard Contractual Clauses, Binding Corporate Rules)
- Periodic audits, reviews, record-keeping obligations

**Sample Wording:**

“Our data processing practices comply with applicable laws, including GDPR where applicable. We rely on lawful bases such as contract necessity, legitimate interests, and legal obligations. Employees will receive a privacy notice detailing how their data is used. When processing involves cross-border transfers, appropriate safeguards (e.g. SCCs) will be used. Where required, the company has appointed a Data Protection Officer and will perform DPIAs for high-risk processing.”

---

## 8.5 Third-Party Sharing & Contracts

### Description & Purpose:

This section articulates how employee data is shared with third parties (vendors, service providers), and ensures that third parties maintain comparable data protection safeguards.

### Key Elements to Include:

- Definition of third-party sharing (e.g. payroll provider, benefits provider, background check agencies)
- Criteria for selecting vendors: data protection standards, security, reputation
- Contractual safeguards: data processing agreements, confidentiality, liability, audit, deletion / return clauses
- Limiting data shared: only necessary data (data minimization)
- Monitoring and audits of vendor compliance

### Sample Wording:

“We may share employee data with authorized third-party service providers (e.g. payroll, benefits, background checks). We conduct due diligence and require them to sign data processing agreements that enforce confidentiality, security, audit rights, and provisions for deletion or return of data when processing services end.”

### Best Practices / References:

- Third parties must comply with data protection principles and be contractually bound to at least the same level of protection
- Regular audits and reviews of vendors’ privacy/security controls

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## 8.6 Data Breach Response

### Description & Purpose:

This part outlines how the company prepares for, responds to, and remediates data breaches involving employee data. It ensures timely mitigation, transparency, and compliance with legal notification requirements.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- Definition of a data breach (unauthorized access, disclosure, loss, alteration)
- Incident response team and roles (IT, legal, HR, communications)
- Steps for response: detection, containment, assessment, notification, mitigation, root cause analysis
- Internal reporting lines and escalation procedures
- Notification to employees / affected individuals (if required) and regulatory authorities (e.g. GDPR within 72 hours)
- Communication plan (content, timing, channels)
- Post-incident review, lessons learned, updates to policies
- Documentation and record-keeping of breach handling

**Sample Wording:**

“In the event of a breach of employee personal data, our incident response team will immediately act to contain and assess the impact. We will notify affected employees and regulatory authorities in accordance with applicable laws (GDPR: within 72 hours if high risk). We will communicate transparently with individuals about nature of breach, possible risks, mitigation, and next steps. A post-mortem review will be conducted and policies will be updated to prevent recurrence.”

## 9. Miscellaneous Policies

### 9.1 Business Travel & Expense Reimbursement

**Description & Purpose:**

This section defines rules and procedures for employees incurring expenses in the name of business (travel, lodging, meals, transportation, etc.) and how reimbursement is handled. It ensures fairness, accountability, and consistency.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- **Eligible Expenses:** Transportation (air, train, taxi, rideshare), lodging, meals and incidental expenses, business meeting costs, local transport, conference fees, visa/travel

document costs. ([turn0search1](#))

- **Non-Reimbursable Expenses:** Personal entertainment, upgrades (e.g. business class), commuting to/from home, fines, personal items. ([turn0search3](#))
- **Pre-Approval Requirements:** For major expenses or out-of-town travel, pre-approval by manager or finance is required.
- **Documentation & Receipts:** Original itemized receipts, proof of business purpose, dates, participants, travel itinerary.
- **Submission Deadline:** Expenses must be submitted within a set period (e.g. **30 days** after incurring) for reimbursement.
- **Reimbursement Timeline:** Once approved, reimbursement is processed in the next payroll or within a defined timeframe.
- **Per Diem / Policy Caps:** If per diem is used instead of actual expenses, define daily limits.
- **Currency / Exchange Rates:** For international travel, define how foreign currency is handled, required documentation of exchange rates.
- **Advances:** Whether travel advances are allowed, and how they are reconciled.
- **Approval Workflow:** Who reviews and approves claims (manager, finance, etc.).

### Sample Wording:

“Employees may be reimbursed for reasonable business travel expenses, including air/train fare, lodging, meals, and local transportation, subject to prior manager approval and this policy. Itemized receipts and justification of business purpose are required. Expense claims must be submitted within 30 days. Reimbursement will be made in the next payroll cycle following approval. Personal or unauthorized expenses (e.g. upgrades, fines, entertainment) will not be reimbursed.”

### Notes & Best Practices:

- Use “cheapest reasonable” travel options (economy class, standard lodging) unless pre-approved otherwise
- Maintain clarity and examples of reimbursable vs non-reimbursable items to reduce confusion

- Templates from Lattice and Workable provide good structure for expense policies
- 

## 9.2 Use of Company Assets & Equipment

### Description & Purpose:

This clause sets expectations for the use, maintenance, and return of company property (laptops, phones, hardware, software licenses). It protects the company's assets and ensures accountability.

### Key Elements to Include:

- **Authorized Use:** Assets may only be used for company business, not personal gain
- **Responsibility & Care:** Employees must use, maintain, and secure equipment properly (e.g. avoid spills, physical damage, theft)
- **Software / License Compliance:** Only use licensed software; no unauthorized installations
- **Return of Assets:** On exit or as requested, employees must return all company property (computers, ID cards, keys, accessories, documents)
- **Loss / Damage & Liability:** If asset is lost, damaged, or stolen due to negligence, the company may require reimbursement or replacement
- **Monitoring & Audits:** The company may audit devices or usage to ensure compliance

### Sample Wording:

"Company assets (e.g. laptops, phones, hardware, software licenses) must be used for business purposes only. Employees are responsible for the care, protection, and proper use of equipment. At termination or when requested, employees must return all equipment. In case of loss, damage, or theft resulting from negligence, the employee may be held liable."

---

## 9.3 IT & Acceptable Use Policy

### Description & Purpose:

This policy defines how employees may use company IT resources (networks, systems, email, internet, devices) to prevent misuse, security breaches, and ensure productive behavior.

### Key Elements to Include:

- **Permitted Use:** Business activities, limited personal use (if allowed), consistent with company policies
- **Prohibited Use:** Illegal acts, hacking, unauthorized software, excessive bandwidth usage, accessing inappropriate content, sharing credentials
- **Security Standards:** Password policies, multi-factor authentication, encryption, VPN usage, updates & patches
- **Monitoring & Privacy:** The company may monitor network usage, email, logs; disclaim privacy on company systems
- **Incident Reporting:** Reporting phishing, lost devices, suspicious behavior
- **Sanctions for Misuse:** Disciplinary action as per conduct policy

### Sample Wording:

“Employees must use the company IT systems responsibly and only for business-related purposes. Unauthorized use such as accessing illegal or offensive content, installing unapproved software, sharing account credentials, or attempting to bypass system security is prohibited. The company reserves the right to monitor systems, logs, and network usage. Security measures such as strong passwords, multi-factor authentication, and prompt updates must be followed.”

### Notes & Best Practices:

- Be clear about personal vs business use boundaries
- Explicitly address remote access, mobile devices, cloud usage
- Use “least privilege” principle: only grant necessary access to systems

---

## 9.4 Conflict Resolution & Grievance Procedures

### Description & Purpose:

This section outlines how employees can raise complaints or conflicts (workplace disputes, harassment, policy violations), and how those issues will be resolved in a fair, transparent, and timely manner.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- **Scope:** All employees, contractors, interns
- **Grievance Types:** Harassment, discrimination, unfair treatment, wage disputes, performance conflicts
- **Submission Procedure:** How to lodge a complaint (written form, to HR or designated officer), anonymity or confidentiality if applicable
- **Timeline / Acknowledgement:** How soon HR will acknowledge receipt, steps and expected timeline for review
- **Investigation:** Fact-finding, interviews, evidence, impartial review
- **Decision & Remediation:** Outcome communicated to parties, corrective actions as needed
- **Appeal Mechanism:** Right to challenge decision to higher level
- **Protection Against Retaliation:** No adverse action against complaining employee in good faith

**Sample Wording:**

“Employees may raise grievances (e.g. unfair treatment, harassment, policy violations) by submitting a complaint in writing to HR or a designated grievance officer. Complaints will be acknowledged within **5 business days**, and an investigation will follow. Outcomes will be communicated and, if necessary, corrective measures implemented. Employees may appeal decisions to senior management. Retaliation against employees who make complaints in good faith is strictly prohibited.”

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## **9.5 Policy Amendments & Review**

**Description & Purpose:**

This subpoint describes how and when the HR Manual and related policies may be updated, and how employees are informed of changes. It ensures policies remain current, relevant, and legal.

**Key Elements to Include:**

- **Review Cycle:** Annual or periodic reviews (e.g. every 12 months)

- **Amendment Authority:** Which role or body (HR Director, legal, executive) approves changes
- **Communication of Changes:** Notification to all employees via email, intranet, or staff meeting
- **Effective Date / Transition:** When changes take effect and any transition period
- **Version Control:** Policy version numbering, date of revision, archived prior versions

### Sample Wording:

“This HR Manual and associated policies will be reviewed at least annually. Any amendments must be approved by HR and legal leadership. Employees will be notified of changes via email and intranet at least **30 days** before the effective date. Each document version will include its version number, author, revision date, and change summary.”

## 10. Appendix, Glossary & Forms

### 10.1 Glossary / Definitions

#### Description & Purpose:

This subsection provides definitions of key terms used throughout the HR Manual. The glossary ensures clarity, consistency, and helps employees understand technical or specialized HR language.

#### Key Elements to Include:

- A list of terms and their definitions (alphabetical order)
- Terms used in policies (e.g. “FTE”, “At-Will”, “PIP”, “KPI”, “Equity Plan”, “Personal Data”, “Grievance”)
- Cross-references where useful
- Indicate whether definitions are statutory, organizational, or adapted

#### Sample Entries:

- **At-Will Employment:** A type of employment relationship in which either the employer or employee may terminate the relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice,



subject to applicable law.

- **FTE (Full-Time Equivalent):** A unit that indicates the workload of an employed person in a way that makes workloads comparable across various contexts.
- **KPI (Key Performance Indicator):** A quantifiable measurement used to judge how well an individual, team, or organization is performing relative to their goals.
- **PIP (Performance Improvement Plan):** A formal document setting out performance targets and support to assist an employee in improving performance deficits within a defined time period.
- **Personal Data:** Any information that relates to an identified or identifiable individual (e.g. name, identification number, location, online identifier).
- **Grievance:** A formal complaint raised by an employee about work conditions, treatment, or policy application.

You can draw on public HR glossaries (e.g. SHRM's HR Glossary) for reference.

Also see glossaries of HR definitions published by Factorial and others.

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## 10.2 Forms / Templates

### Description & Purpose:

This subsection enumerates the standard forms and templates that accompany the HR Manual — enabling consistency in process execution (leave requests, performance reviews, exit interviews, etc.).

### Common Forms / Templates to Include:

- **Leave Request Form:** to request vacation, sick leave, unpaid leave, etc.
- **Performance Review / Appraisal Form:** structured template for self-assessment, manager feedback, ratings, goals.
- **Resignation / Exit Interview Form:** capturing reasons for departure, feedback, lessons learned.

- **Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form:** form for employees to disclose external interests with potential conflict.
- **Expense Reimbursement / Travel Expense Form:** detailed template for travel, meals, lodging, etc.
- **Equipment / Asset Return Checklist:** checklist for items to be returned at exit (laptops, keys, phones)
- **Acknowledgement of Receipt** (see next subpoint)

#### **Notes & Tips:**

- Store forms in a central HR folder / intranet for easy access
- Use consistent design and clear instructions on each form
- Ensure forms adhere to data privacy (collect minimal required data, secure storage)
- Use digital or electronic forms where possible to simplify access and tracking

You can find sample HR templates via public repositories / resource sites (e.g. HR.com free forms).

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## **10.3 Acknowledgement of Receipt**

### **Description & Purpose:**

This form is intended to be signed by employees to acknowledge that they have received, read, and understood the HR Manual (or updated version) and agree to abide by its policies.

### **Key Elements to Include in the Acknowledgement:**

- Employee name, signature, and date
- Statement confirming receipt and understanding of the HR Manual
- Statement that the Manual does not constitute a contract (unless specified)
- Statement that the company may amend the Manual and employees will be notified

- Statement that employment is at-will (if applicable)
- Version number and date of the manual

**Sample Wording:**

"I, **[Employee Name]**, acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the [Company Name] HR Manual version **X.X**, effective **[Date]**. I understand that this manual is not a contract of employment and that the company may modify or revise it at its discretion, subject to applicable law. *If applicable:* I understand that my employment is at-will, and that either party may terminate employment at any time, with or without cause or notice. I agree to adhere to the policies, rules, and guidelines outlined in the HR Manual."

**Notes & Best Practices:**

- Keep a signed copy in the employee's HR file
- For updates to the Manual, circulate a revised version and have employees re-acknowledge (or allow for digital e-signatures)
- Use this document to set expectations and legal clarity