SOP: Dispute Resolution and Escalation Protocols

This SOP defines **dispute resolution and escalation protocols**, detailing the systematic approach to addressing conflicts and disagreements within the organization. It includes steps for identifying disputes, methods for informal and formal resolution, criteria for escalation to higher management levels, and documentation procedures. The goal is to ensure timely, fair, and effective resolution of disputes while maintaining professional relationships and minimizing disruptions to operations.

1. Purpose

To outline processes for resolving disputes and escalating unresolved issues to maintain a collaborative, efficient, and harmonious work environment.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all employees, departments, and stakeholders involved in organizational processes.

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Dispute	Any disagreement, conflict, or grievance arising between staff or departments.
Resolution	The process of addressing and resolving a dispute.
Escalation	Referring an unresolved dispute to higher management or relevant committees.

4. Responsibilities

- **All Employees**: Identify and report disputes promptly; participate in the resolution process.
- **Line Managers/Supervisors**: Facilitate informal resolution; escalate if necessary.
- **HR Department**: Mediate formal disputes; guide escalation processes.
- **Senior Management**: Resolve escalated disputes and make final decisions as required.

5. Procedure

1. **Dispute Identification**
   - Employees or managers recognize and document the occurrence of a dispute.
   - Dispute details to be logged with date, parties involved, and nature of conflict.
2. **Informal Resolution**
   - Direct discussion between involved parties to resolve the issue amicably.
   - Managers may mediate the discussion.
   - Resolution or failure must be documented.
3. **Formal Resolution**
   - If informal methods fail, escalate the dispute to the HR department.
   - HR conducts a structured mediation process with all relevant parties.
   - Document the outcomes and agreed actions.
4. **Escalation Protocols**
   - Escalate disputes to senior management if unresolved after formal mediation.
   - Criteria for escalation: unresolved after two mediation attempts, involves legal/regulatory risks, or impacts business operations significantly.
   - Senior management to review all documentation and provide a binding resolution.
5. **Documentation**
   - Maintain records of all disputes, actions taken, and outcomes for compliance and future reference.
   - Ensure confidentiality and restrict access to authorized personnel only.

6. Review and Continuous Improvement

- Regularly review dispute logs and resolutions for process improvements.
- Update SOP as needed based on feedback and organizational changes.

7. Appendices

- Dispute Report Template
- Contact List for Escalation
- Related Policies (e.g., Code of Conduct)