

# Pay Transparency Enablement - Escalation Tree + Guardrails

Starter Pack Template for HR, Compensation & Benefits, People Leaders, and TA

## What this is

A practical one-page operating system for the first 30 days of pay transparency questions - so managers and TA do not improvise, and HR/Comp/Legal do not become the escalation inbox.

## Who it is for

- HR and C&B teams that need consistent answers across leaders and TA
- People leaders who will get employee questions before HR is ready
- TA partners who need a stable range message and a clear escalation path

## How to use this pack (15-minute setup)

1. Agree owners: who answers what (HR, Comp, Legal, TA).
2. Use the Red-flag Questions (Section 3) to define escalation triggers.
3. Align the 'safe first sentence' + handoff line for managers and TA.
4. Set response SLAs so escalations do not stall.
5. Share the 1-page summary with leaders + TA (and store it where they can find it fast).

## 1) Escalation tree - who answers what

Fill in owners and escalation paths for your organisation:

Question type	Manager can answer?	Owner (HR/Comp/Legal)	Escalate when... (trigger)
Range question (role-level)	[Yes/No]	[Owner]	[Trigger]
Why paid more/less than colleague	[Yes/No]	[Owner]	[Trigger]
Promotion/level change request	[Yes/No]	[Owner]	[Trigger]
Pay equity concern /	[Yes/No]	[Owner]	[Trigger]

discrimination claim			
Offer negotiation beyond range	[Yes/No]	[Owner]	[Trigger]

## 2) Guardrails - what to say vs what to escalate

Use short, repeatable wording. Keep it factual. Never promise exceptions in real time.

Safe first sentence (manager/TA)	Escalation line (handoff)
"I can explain how pay is set and what the range is for this role."	"To give you an accurate answer, I need to loop in HR/Comp. I will come back by [day/time]."
"I hear your question - let's separate the facts from assumptions."	"This is one of the cases we handle through our escalation path. I will raise it today."
"For candidate conversations, we share ranges consistently and avoid ad-hoc exceptions."	"If this request is outside the range, Comp will review it and confirm the right next step."
"I cannot discuss anyone else's pay. I can explain the factors we use for pay decisions and what applies to your role."	"If you want your situation reviewed, HR/Comp will take it through the formal review path and follow up."
"I understand why you're asking. I'm not able to promise changes in the moment - we follow a defined process."	"I will escalate this to Comp today. You will get a response by [day/time] with the next step."
"If you want to raise this formally, that is OK. There is a clear process so it gets handled fairly and consistently."	"HR/People Ops will guide the process and confirm what happens next and when."

## 3) Red-flag questions - escalate when you hear this

- "Why is [Name] paid more than me?"
- "What is the range for my role - and where am I in it?" (if you cannot answer consistently)
- "Can you tell me what others in my team earn?"
- "This feels unfair / discriminatory - what will you do about it?"
- "Can you adjust my pay now / outside the cycle?"
- "If this is not fixed, I will complain / involve the union / raise a grievance."
- "Can we make an exception to the range for this candidate / offer?"
- "Can you re-level / change my title so my pay increases?"

## 4) Handoff scripts - how to escalate without losing trust

Use these short lines to keep the conversation calm and move the question to the right owner.

- "That is a fair question. To give you an accurate answer, I need to loop in HR/Comp. I will come back by [day/time]."

- “I can explain our pay principles and range approach. For individual comparisons, HR/Comp will handle the next step.”
- “I cannot promise exceptions in real time. If this is outside the guidelines, Comp will review and confirm the right path.”
- “If you want to raise this formally, that is OK. Here is the process and who will follow up.”

## 5) Response SLAs - keep momentum and trust

Escalation type	Owner	Response target (SLA)
Range question / TA alignment	[Owner]	Within 24 hours
Employee comparison question	[Owner]	Within 48 hours
Formal complaint risk	[Owner]	Same day

## Bonus - 2-week enablement sequence (teaser)

Use this as a simple cadence to move from 'questions' to consistent answers. Keep it lightweight - the goal is alignment, not training overload.

- Day 1 - Leadership alignment: owners, guardrails, escalation triggers
- Day 2 - Manager micro-training (30 min): 5 questions + safe first sentence + handoff line
- Day 3 - TA alignment (30 min): ranges, candidate Q&A, exception rules
- Week 2 - Office hours: HR/Comp drop-in for escalations and pattern spotting
- Week 2 - Reinforcement: one-pager recap + 'what changed' update to leaders and TA

Want the full system - and how to roll it out across managers, TA and leaders? Reply WEBINAR and I will send the invite when registration opens next week. (If you also want the Manager Scripts Pack, reply FILTER.)

## Next step - Free live webinar (course walkthrough)

In this free 60-minute live session, I will walk you through the complete EU Pay Transparency enablement system - scripts, guardrails, escalation triggers, TA range messaging and leader alignment - and show how it fits together in my course on EU Pay Transparency readiness.

What you will get in the session:

- The 10 manager conversations that make or break rollout - and the wording that keeps trust intact
- Guardrails + escalation triggers: what to say, what to escalate, and who answers what (HR/Comp/Legal)
- TA range messaging that prevents range drift, 'special case' offers and candidate confusion
- Leader alignment: what leaders need to know, what to reinforce, and how to avoid mixed messages across the org