

Student Disciplinary Procedure

August 2021

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University of the
Highlands and Islands
Perth College

Version Control History

Version Number	Date of Change	Summary of Revisions Made
1	August 2016	Footer updated to reflect new template model
2	March 2020	New UHI Single Policy

Student Disciplinary Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This procedure supports the Promoting a Positive Learning Environment Policy and the Student Code of Conduct.
- 1.2. This procedure is designed to give students and staff a clear framework to fairly and promptly address any situations which may arise around student behaviour and suspected breaches of the Student Code of Conduct.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This procedure applies to all students (Further Education, Higher Education, Postgraduate and Postgraduate Research) enrolled on a programme of study at AP Name or who are enrolled at another academic partner but are studying at AP Name.
- 2.2. This procedure applies to suspected breaches of the Student Code of Conduct in physical and online environments, including social media and messaging services.
- 2.3. The procedure applies to suspected breaches of the Student Code of Conduct on campus and off campus.
- 2.4. For students who are also school pupils, refer to Section 7.

3. Exceptions

- 3.1. As per Appendix 1 of the Promoting a Positive Learning Environment Policy, there are separate procedures for academic misconduct.
- 3.2. In situations where a student's behaviour may be related to a health condition e.g. mental health condition or a condition identified in a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP), additional support and use of Fitness to Study and/or Fitness to Practise Guidelines may be considered alongside or instead of this procedure.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. **Precautionary Action:** In the event of an allegation of misconduct, a student may be excluded from Perth College UHI until the investigation is completed if there is risk of harm to themselves, other students or staff. During this time they will be able to continue to study remotely and will continue to receive student support funds. Precautionary action is not a punishment, but is intended to protect the interests of all parties.

Where precautionary action is to be used the Sector Development Director should inform the student by letter explaining that they are being excluded to allow an investigation to occur.

Precautionary action may also include measures up to complete exclusion from Perth College UHI e.g. removal of access to a course of study or specific building.

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4.2 **Exclusion from Campus:** The removal of the student's access to all sites constituting Perth College UHI campus for a specified period of time in response to a disciplinary incident. In some circumstances this exclusion may extend to all University and Academic Partner campuses. The student may continue to study remotely throughout this period.

4.3 **Exclusion from Studies:** The removal from the student's course of study in response to a disciplinary incident, resulting in the loss of registered student status and loss of access to all facilities.

In some circumstances this exclusion may apply to the University and all Academic Partners for a period of time deemed appropriate by the disciplinary process. In some cases this may result in any future applications from the student being rejected.

4.4 **Suspension of Studies:** A Suspension of Studies is not a disciplinary measure. When a student chooses to take a period of time out from their studies because of a change in their personal circumstances, with the intention to return at a later date.

5. Procedure

It is widely acknowledged that disruptive behaviour is a barrier to learning and can negatively impact on the learning and wellbeing of the student themselves and/or other students and staff. This procedure should be implemented promptly as early intervention and support can result in better outcomes for the student and may avoid the situation becoming more complex.

All staff have a responsibility to promote a positive learning environment and challenge behaviour contrary to the Student Code of Conduct. Staff should ensure that, when intervening in any situation, they consider their own safety as well as the safety of other staff and students.

At any stage during the disciplinary process, if a student is found not to be responsible for any suspected misconduct then the investigation will be closed and no further action taken. A record of the investigation will be retained according to the retention schedule.

5.2 Informal Stage

5.2.1 The College will usually try to deal with suspected breaches of the Student Code of Conduct informally first, and only use the formal disciplinary process when this proves unsuccessful, or it is inappropriate in the circumstances (e.g. recurring breaches of the Student Code of Conduct, an instance of a more serious nature or gross misconduct).

5.2.2 Informal action would normally involve staff discussing with the student any behaviour causing concern and setting out the expectations around behaviour. Brief

notes should be taken of the discussions and recorded on student's record or relevant system.

- 5.2.3 All students interviewed, including the student who is alleged to have breached the code of conduct, should be offered the opportunity to be accompanied by a supporter of their choosing (other than a legal representative or another student involved in the incident or investigation). Should the student wish, this could be a representative from HISA or an appropriate member of staff.
- 5.2.4 Students should be notified that a note has been made of the discussions and that no further action will be taken unless misconduct continues or escalates. This would constitute as an informal verbal warning.
- 5.2.5 Informal breaches of the code of conduct, and informal verbal warnings, should be noted on BRAG by the PAT and the Quality Department informed.
- 5.2.6 Repeated low-level misconduct should be raised with the PAT or equivalent, who should discuss this with the student and make a record of the incidents and dates spoken to the student. Should the misconduct continue or escalate, the formal disciplinary process will be considered.

5.3 Stage 1 Formal Disciplinary Process

- 5.3.1 Where a suspected breach of the Student Code of Conduct has occurred, or where previous informal discussions and or informal verbal warnings or other sanctions have been ignored, the reporting member of staff should discuss the situation with the PAT.
- 5.3.2 The PAT will then consider the incident alongside the student's behaviour to date generally. Discussions should be held with the student to establish their version of events.
- 5.3.3 All students interviewed, including the student who is alleged to have breached the code of conduct, should be offered the opportunity to be accompanied by a supporter of their choosing (other than a legal representative or another student involved in the incident or investigation). Should the student wish, this could be a representative from HISA or an appropriate member of staff.
- 5.3.4 Discussions may be held with other staff and/or students to ascertain the situation and verify events.
- 5.3.5 The PAT should take brief notes of all the discussions along with gathering any evidence which may indicate whether the suspected misconduct has taken place. A copy of the notes should be given to the parties interviewed to be signed for verification of accuracy.
- 5.3.6 Provided the staff members investigating are satisfied that a breach of the Student Code of Conduct has taken place, PAT can issue a verbal warning to the student.
- 5.3.7 Should the evidence suggest that the misconduct is not serious enough to merit a verbal warning, PAT can use informal warning instead, following the guidance in Section 5.2.2 onwards.

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- 5.3.8 At the point of issuing the verbal warning, the student's behaviour should be discussed, outlining the impact on others and emphasising the need to change. Strategies should be discussed that will lead to improvements and agreed with the student. The student should be informed that repeated misconduct may lead to a Stage 2 formal disciplinary procedure.
- 5.3.9 After issuing the verbal warning to the student, the PAT will arrange for an official notification of the verbal warning, and any possible supplementary action plan, to be sent to the student. The warning should be documented on student's record or relevant system. The verbal warning will remain in place for the remainder of the academic year.
- 5.3.10 When issuing the verbal warning, the PAT should complete all appropriate paperwork. A copy of this should be sent to the Quality Team. Appropriate information and any relevant documentation should be logged in the student's file and noted on BRAG. The written warning will remain in place for the remainder of the academic year.
- 5.3.11 The PAT should provide feedback to the member of staff that initially reported the misconduct where relevant.
- 5.3.12 The student has the right to make an appeal against the outcome under specific circumstances. Further information is included in Section 6.

5.4 Stage 2 Formal Disciplinary Process

- 5.4.1 Where behaviour which has previously received a formal verbal warning recurs, or where there is serious breach of the Student Code of Conduct, the Stage 2 Formal Disciplinary Process will be initiated.
- 5.4.2 The PAT will consider the suspected breach of the Student Code of Conduct alongside the student's behaviour to date. Discussions should be held with the student to establish their version of events.
- 5.4.3 All students interviewed, including the student who is alleged to have breached the code of conduct, should be offered the opportunity to be accompanied by a supporter of their choosing (other than a legal representative or another student involved in the incident or investigation). Should the student wish, this could be a representative from HISA or an appropriate member of staff.
- 5.4.4 Discussions may be held with other staff and/or students to ascertain the situation and verify events. The PAT should take brief notes of the discussions along with gathering any evidence which may indicate whether the suspected misconduct has taken place. A copy of the notes should be given to the parties interviewed to be signed for verification of accuracy.
- 5.4.5 Provided the staff members investigating are satisfied a breach of the Student Code of Conduct has taken place the PAT can issue a written warning to the student, however this should be agreed in advance with the Sector Manager or Subject Leader, where relevant.

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- 5.4.6 Should the evidence suggest that the misconduct is not serious enough to merit a written warning, the PAT can issue a verbal warning instead, following the guidance in Section 5.3.4 onwards.
- 5.4.7 At the point of issuing a formal warning the PAT should arrange to meet with the student to discuss their behaviour, outlining the impact on others and emphasising the need to change. Strategies should be discussed that will lead to improvements and agreed with the student. The student should be informed that repeated misconduct may lead to the Stage 3 Disciplinary Process being initiated.
- 5.4.8 When issuing the written warning, the PAT should complete the appropriate paperwork. A copy of this, and any possible supplementary action plan, should be sent to the student, Sector Manager or Subject Leader, and the Quality Team. Appropriate information and any relevant documentation should be logged on student's SITS record and noted on BRAG. The written warning will remain in place for the remainder of the academic year.
- 5.4.9 The student has the right to make an appeal against the outcome under specific circumstances. Further information is included in Section 6.

5.5 Stage 3 Formal Disciplinary Process (including Gross Misconduct)

Context

- 5.5.1 The Stage 3 Formal Disciplinary Process will be initiated where:
- Repeated breach of the Student Code of Conduct for which the student has previously received warnings
 - A single instance of suspected gross misconduct e.g. behaviour serious enough that if proven it may lead to exclusion or withdrawal from Perth College UHI.
- 5.5.2 Should a member of staff believe Stage 3 Formal Disciplinary Process may be appropriate, the issue should be discussed with the relevant Sector Manager or Subject Leader. The issue should then be taken to Sector Development Director and the Quality Manager who will make a joint decision about whether to proceed to Stage 3 Formal Disciplinary Process.

Investigation

- 5.5.3 Following initial investigations into the suspected breach of the Student Code of Conduct, consideration should be given by Sector Development Director and Quality Manager as to whether precautionary action should be taken (see Section 4.1).
- 5.5.4 An appropriate member of staff will be appointed as Investigating Officer by the Quality Manager. Any potential conflicts of interests should be avoided when appointing an Investigating Officer.
- 5.5.5 All investigations should be conducted within a timeous period. For example, it is recommended that an investigation should not normally take more than 10 working days.

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- 5.5.6 Before meeting with a student as part of a formal investigation, it should be ascertained whether the student has a Personal Learning Support Plan that means they may need extra support during the investigation. This support should be arranged before any formal disciplinary meeting. The Investigating Officer should be aware of the impact the student's PLSP may have on their experience of the disciplinary process. This also applies to any witnesses that may be interviewed.
- 5.5.7 The student who is the subject of the disciplinary investigation should be provided with a copy of the Disciplinary Procedures prior to interviews taking place.
- 5.5.8 The Investigating Officer will identify all witnesses and individuals involved in the suspected misconduct and collect any relevant evidence. Where it is considered necessary to interview a witness or those involved, the Investigating Officer should meet with each of these people individually. A record of these interviews will be taken by appropriate person. A copy of the notes should be given to the parties interviewed to be signed for verification of accuracy.
- 5.5.9 All students interviewed, including the student who suspected of breaching the code of conduct, should be offered the opportunity to be accompanied by a supporter of their choosing (other than a legal representative or another student involved in the incident or investigation). Should the student wish, this could be a representative from HISA or an appropriate member of staff.
- 5.5.10 At the end of the investigation the Investigating Officer will complete the Stage 3 Disciplinary Checklist and provide a recommendation on whether there is a disciplinary case to answer to the Quality Manager. The recommendation will be accompanied by any evidence relating to the suspected breach of the Student Code of Conduct collected during the investigation, including statements from staff and/or students.
- 5.5.11 The recommendation will include details of any previous disciplinary action and an overview of the student's engagement with studies to date.
- 5.5.12 The Quality Manager will liaise with the Sector Development Director and make a decision whether to proceed to a Disciplinary Hearing, based on the recommendation from the Investigating Officer and the evidence collected during the investigation.
- 5.5.13 Should the Quality Manager choose not to proceed to a Disciplinary Hearing, their rationale should be recorded and all records retained for the published retention period.

Disciplinary Hearing

- 5.5.14 Should the Quality Manager decide to proceed to a Disciplinary Hearing, it will take place within ten working days of the Investigating Officer making their recommendation.
- 5.5.15 The Disciplinary Hearing panel should consist of as a minimum 3 members, plus a scribe. At least one of the panel members should be of a senior enough level to be

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able to make a decision on withdrawing or excluding a student. Where the latter is not possible the panel outcome should be passed to a relevant senior member of staff after the meeting who can take this decision within a timeous manner. It is recommended that at least one of the managers on the panel is from another curriculum area and includes the Quality Manager. The panel is normally chaired by the Head of Student Experience: they can delegate this role where required.

5.5.16 The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Establish whether the alleged incident took place
- Explore the reasons for alleged incident
- Establish whether the student is committed to correcting their behaviour
- Explore how the student can be supported if they continue with their studies
- Determine any disciplinary action that should be taken against the student
- Determine whether the circumstances are such that the student should be excluded from their studies or from the campus (and/or all UHI campuses)

5.5.17 The panel must consider all the evidence presented before arriving at a conclusion. The conclusion may be reached at the end of the meeting or through further discussion with relevant members of staff after the meeting.

5.5.18 Where a student declines to attend an interview or does not attend the hearing, the hearing will take place in order to consider the investigation findings before coming to a conclusion as to the appropriate course of action.

Outcome of Disciplinary Hearing

5.5.19 The student must be informed of the outcome of the Disciplinary Hearing in writing within three working days of the meeting.

5.5.20 The Disciplinary Hearing Panel has scope to take disciplinary action that may include one or more of the following:

- Final written warning
- Written warning
- Verbal warning
- Written apology to the aggrieved party
- Compulsory attendance at a workshop/coaching session
- Restrictions/conditions on attendance
- Fines for wilful damage, theft or non-return of equipment
- Exclusion from their studies
- Exclusion from campus
- Permanent exclusion from the University and all Academic Partners
- De-registration (postgraduate research students)
- Removal of university award
- Referred for consideration to the Fitness to Study Procedure/Fitness to Practise Procedure
- No further action

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- 5.5.21 The student has the right to make an appeal against the outcome under specific circumstances. Further information is included in Section 6.
- 5.5.22 A copy of all documentation presented as evidence, the panel outcome letter, and the Hearing Report should be sent to the Quality Unit. If a sanction is given this should be logged on student's record on SITS and noted in BRAG. The Disciplinary Hearing Panel will determine the length of time for which the warning or sanction will remain in place.

6. Appeals

- 6.1 A student may appeal against any disciplinary action taken against them. Appeals will only be considered on the following grounds:
- a. That the Disciplinary Process was not followed correctly;
 - b. That there was prejudice and/or bias on the part of the Investigating Officer or any Disciplinary Hearing Panel members which affected the outcome;
 - c. That the disciplinary action imposed is thought to be disproportionate to the offence;
 - d. That there is new evidence which could not have been made reasonably available during the original determination.
- 6.2 Appeals must be made in writing to the stage appropriate Senior Member of Staff ie Stage 1 and 2 the Sector Development Director, and stage 3 the Depute Principal. Academic. The appeal must be made within five working days of receiving the outcome of disciplinary action and must state the grounds on which the appeal is being made.
- 6.3 Appeals will not be considered for any other reason or through any other means than those outlined above.
- 6.4 The appeal will be considered by the relevant Member of Staff, see 6.2 above, who will respond to the student within five working days of receiving the appeal. Once the outcome has been decided there is no recourse to further appeal.

7. Students who are school pupils

- 7.1 The College works in partnership with local education authorities in Perth and Kinross to allow school pupils access to our school/college courses.
- 7.2 Schools shall be responsible for the actions and behaviour of their pupils when pupils are on college programmes in school.
- 7.3 When the pupils are in College, they are subject to the College disciplinary policy and pupils will be expected to adhere to our policies, codes and regulations that are applicable to all other Students. Schools will be kept informed of any pupil who has is placed on a disciplinary procedure and the ongoing associated processes.
- 7.4 The College reserves the right to require the withdrawal of a pupil determined to be unsuitable for a college courses by virtue of maturity or poor behaviour, as per the College's Student Code of Conduct.

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- 7.5 Absences for students on School Links Programmes will also be reported to the individual schools for possible further action as per individual school procedures.
- 7.6 The College retains the right to suspend or terminate the enrolment of any pupil on any school/college course for any breach of these Terms and Conditions.

8. Supporting Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures should be referred to alongside reading this procedure as they are complementary to it.

Promoting a Positive Learning Environment Policy

Student Code of Conduct

Safeguarding Policy

IT Acceptable Use Policy

Complaints Handling Procedure

Support to Study Procedure (previously Fitness to Study Procedure)

BRAG Attendance and Performance Monitoring Procedure

Data Protection Policy and Guidance

E-Safety Policy

Student Mental Health, Wellbeing and Counselling Policy

Student Mental Health, Wellbeing and Counselling Procedure

Mental Health Strategy

9. Appendices

Please refer to the **Promoting a Positive Learning Environment Policy** appendices for an overview of policies and procedures, and a flowchart to help staff ascertain which policy and procedure should be used.

Appendix 1: Disciplinary Procedure Overview

Appendix 2: Informal Stage Flowchart

Appendix 3: Stage 1 Flowchart

Appendix 4: Stage 2 Flowchart

Appendix 5: Stage 3 Flowchart

Appendix 6: Stage 3 Disciplinary Checklist

Appendix 7: Appeals Flowchart

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