

Student Conduct Policy

1. PRINCIPLES OF GOOD CONDUCT

The University of Sunderland welcomes a diverse community of students and staff and embraces equality, dignity and shared mutual respect, in a positive environment where all can feel valued and supported. This environment encompasses not just activities on campus, but also in clinical or other work placements, field trips or sporting activity, or other activities where students are learning away from the campus or are representing the University.

As a community we are committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation, where all members of our community and others are treated with respect and dignity, and do not face discrimination, bullying or harassment with regard to any aspect of their identity, such as age, disability, gender (including gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy and maternity), ethnicity (including race, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including non-belief) or sexual orientation. The University does not tolerate discrimination of any kind, in any form.

The University is very clear that our community exists in the digital world, as well as the physical world, and that harassment, discrimination and bullying can take place online and in social media as much as they can face to face. What people write on social media is no different to any other form of expression, and students are expected to recognise this in their conduct.

All students give an undertaking at enrolment to abide by the rules and regulations of the University, including those relating to conduct and discipline. This Policy outlines how the University expects members of its student community to behave, and outlines what it considers to be unacceptable behaviour on the part of students. It is a partner document to the University Disciplinary Procedure, which describes the process used where there is concern that the behaviour of a student or students does not meet the expectations of this Policy.

2. MISCONDUCT

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner which does not cause risk, distress or fear to others, hinder the University's proper operation, or damage its reputation. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not normally be accepted as a mitigating factor or excuse for misconduct, and may be regarded as an aggravating factor. Examples of misconduct include (but are not limited to):

Physical misconduct: unwanted physical contact, pushing, punching, kicking, spitting etc.

Sexual misconduct: engaging in, or attempting to engage in, sexual activity without consent, making or sharing intimate images without consent, unwanted touching or sexual comments, unwanted or inappropriate display of the body. Facilitating such behaviour by others (for example, by spiking drinks). Degrading or humiliating victims of sexual violence.

Harassment: controlling or coercive behaviour, stalking and following. Sexual, homophobic, transphobic, racial, physical or any other harassment against someone due to their belonging or perceived belonging or association to protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010). Behaviour which causes fear or distress to others; threatening, abusive, disorderly or unreasonable behaviour; behaviour which contravenes the University's principles of dignity and respect or is a form of harassment or bullying, or which creates a hostile environment for another. This includes postings, comments and other actions on social media, including within private groups, and includes, for example, publication of digital or other images with or without text, intended to demean the victim.

Abusive behaviour: making threats, acting in an intimidating or hostile way, use of inappropriate language.

Property: causing damage to the property of members of the University community or of the University. Theft. Unauthorised entry to University property, or misuse of University facilities, including IT networks.

Health and Safety: any action or knowing omission likely to cause injury to any person or impairing the health and safety of the premises or its occupants, or contravening University policies on Health Safety and the Environment. This includes tampering with fire safety equipment, blocking or propping open fire doors, creating false alarms, or smoking where it is forbidden.

Drugs: the possession or supply of illegal drugs. The possession or supply of prescription drugs which are not prescribed to you, or to the person supplied to.

Disruption: disruption of academic, administrative, sporting, social or other activities of the University, or of the legitimate activities of members of the University community. Behaviour which interferes with freedom of speech, thought, action or enquiry of any other student or member of staff or lawful visitor to the University. Behaviour that could cause damage to the reputation of the University. Failure to disclose name and/or student ID to an employee of the University when it is reasonable to require such information, or impersonation of another student/using their identity at any time or requesting/facilitating someone else to impersonate a student. Interfering with a disciplinary investigation, for example by the destruction of evidence or the intimidation of witnesses, or by retaliation for disciplinary allegations, or making vexatious or malicious conduct allegations.

Dishonesty: fraud, deceit, deception, dishonesty or misappropriation of University funds or assets, misuse or falsification of any records or documents held by the University (including falsification of qualifications or other requirements for admission to the University, or of attendance monitoring of any student by the University), its staff, students or visitors, or any improper access to, transmission, use, or disclosure of computerised or other data held by the University or accessible through University equipment or networks. Actions designed to deceive the University in its business operations. Offering or giving money, gifts or other incentives to any employee of the University with the intention of inducing that employee to perform her/his job improperly or to reward her/him for doing so. Encouraging or inducing other students to commit academic misconduct, or to facilitate them in doing so.

Initiation Ceremonies: initiation ceremonies are not permitted by the University. This means any joining event designed to make participants behave in a way that might reasonably be perceived as humiliating, demeaning or degrading, to drink excessive amounts of alcohol or to take other substances (illegal or otherwise), or to make the participants behave in a way that would bring the University into disrepute.

Criminality: conduct which constitutes a criminal offence, where one or more of the following apply:

- (a) the conduct took place on or in the vicinity of University premises, or in placement or while on other official University activity;
- (b) affected or concerned other members of the University;
- (c) creates a risk for other members of the University community;
- (d) damages or threatens the reputation of the University;
- (e) is an offence of dishonesty, where a student holds an office of responsibility within the University.

Failure to declare any criminal convictions acquired while at University, as outlined in the University's terms and conditions of enrolment.

Procedural: A breach of any other University Rules, Regulations, Codes of Conduct or Procedures, or any failure to comply with any ruling or instruction made as a result of disciplinary proceedings, whether formal or informal, or misconduct committed when the student is already in receipt of an active formal reprimand.

3. PRINCIPLES OF DEALING WITH MISCONDUCT

Allegations of misconduct are dealt with through the Student Disciplinary Procedure. They may be dealt with informally, formally but locally within Faculty or Service, or at University level.

On the basis of a risk assessment, the University may suspend reported students against whom allegations are made on a precautionary basis, pending disciplinary proceedings. This is not a determination of guilt, it is a way of managing risk until the facts are clear. This suspension may be from placement, from teaching, from the campus, or from all of those activities. Wellbeing support will remain available to students who are under suspension.

If allegations are proven, the University has a range of sanctions it can choose to apply, from warnings through to expulsion from the University. Students have a right of appeal within the Procedure, and may take their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education if they remain dissatisfied.

The Student Disciplinary Procedure is not a criminal process, and will not seek to establish whether a student has committed a criminal offence. Instead, it seeks to establish whether a student has committed misconduct under this Policy. Where an allegation of misconduct is a criminal offence that is being dealt with by the police and criminal justice system, the University will liaise with the police to ensure that its actions do not prejudice that other process. However, the University may take disciplinary action in parallel, and can investigate misconduct which might be criminal but where the victim has chosen not to report it to the police.

At all points in a misconduct investigation, the University will support the reporting student, the reported student, and any witnesses. The process will take into account any relevant reasonable adjustments.

For full details of how allegations of misconduct are received, investigated, and outcomes reached, please see the Student Disciplinary Procedure.