

Policy and Procedures for Higher Education Academic Performance

*Excellence, Teamwork, Integrity,
Valuing Others, Supportiveness*



With excellence in
Environmental and Land Based Training

Recognising the best organisations
for training and development solutions

Our Mission

To inspire learners to recognise and achieve their full potential

Our Values

Excellence, Passion, Team Work, Integrity, Innovation,
Sustainability, Valuing Others and Supportiveness

Sparsholt College Hampshire, incorporating Andover College

The *Policy and Procedures for Higher Education Academic Performance* was approved by the Board of Governors in July 2017. This supersedes the previous publication and is effective from 7 July 2017.

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Moodle

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Excellence, Teamwork, Integrity, Valuing Others, Supportiveness

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Policy and Procedures for Higher Education Academic Performance

Excellence, Teamwork, Integrity, Valuing Others, Supportiveness

Purpose

The purpose of the Policy and Procedures for Higher Education Academic Performance is:

- To promote the College Vision and Values to all students, staff and visitors to the College.
- To ensure that all students receive fair and consistent treatment with access to a fair appeals procedure and to promote compliance with the Student Code of Conduct.
- Through induction and the programme of study, to provide students with a clear understanding of the commitment they need to make to their studies and College life.
- To provide a framework in which to support Higher Education students in the transition to the management of their own learning from levels 4 to 6.
- To support and promote high levels of academic achievement in the Higher Education cohort appropriate to the provision and modes of study.
- Ensure that any actions or sanctions are coupled with support for the student that takes into account their individual circumstances.

Reference

This document has been produced with reference to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, in particular Chapters A6 and B6, the University of Portsmouth Examination and Assessment Regulations for Sparsholt College and the University's Student Complaint Procedures.

- A6 Expectation: "Higher education providers ensure the assessment of students is robust, valid and reliable and that the award of qualifications and credit are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes."
- B6 Indicator 14: "Higher Education providers operate processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice."

Procedures

Level 1:

Performance: This is intended to be the informal first stage of a student being made aware of issues through level 1 alerts that indicate a requirement for improvement to ensure progress is not adversely affected. This will usually be around attendance and preparation. A level 1 alert will also be given in the first instance where non-compliance with 'Turnitin' requirements results in a 10% grade penalty.

Process

- Unit lecturers, group/year tutors or Course Tutors can give a student a Level 1 performance warning.
- Actions need to include explaining clearly the issue and reasons for the Level 1 alert. The alert can be given verbally.
- The member of teaching staff or tutor is then responsible for completing the relevant part of the ePersonal Development Plan, for notifying the personal/course/year tutor and/or ensuring that any academic penalties are noted on the HE Learner Tracker.

Sanctions

- Students can have more than one Level 1 alert. In general when a student exceeds three alerts, the tutor and Head of Faculty will evaluate whether progress to Level 2 is appropriate.
- Sanctions can include assessment penalties as outlined in the relevant Course Handbook.

Support/Follow up

- The personal/course/year tutor is responsible for monitoring the student's progress over a period of three months, at which time the student's ePersonal Development Plan status can be changed to 'expired' if the actions have been successfully complied with.

Level 2:

Performance: If level 1 alerts do not result in improvement, and/or issues around hand-in of work adversely impact academic performance, then the following areas may trigger a level 2 alert;

- Unsatisfactory progress following a level 1 alert
- Failure to hand in a formative assignment within the agreed deadline
- Late submission of a summative assessment resulting in a capped maximum 40% mark
- Sub-40% in a summative unit assessment
- A second non-compliance with 'Turnitin' requirements

This list is not exhaustive and intended to provide examples only.

Process

- Personal/course/year tutors are authorised to deliver a Level 2 alert for performance.
- The Level 2 alert must be delivered with both personal/course/year tutor and the student present, with immediate completion of the relevant parts of the ePersonal Development Plan. This will include a performance action plan.

Sanctions

- Students can receive more than one Level 2 performance action plan. In general when a student exceeds two academic performance action plans, the tutor and Head of Faculty will evaluate whether progress to Level 3 is appropriate.
- Sanctions can include assessment penalties as outlined in the relevant Course Handbook.

Support/Follow up

- The personal/course/year tutor is responsible for monitoring the student's progress over a period of three months, at which time the student's ePersonal Development Plan status can be changed to 'expired' if the actions have been successfully complied with.

Level 3:

Performance: If level 2 alerts do not result in improvement, and/or the lack of improvement is seriously impacting on the student's achievement then the following areas may trigger a level 3 warning;

- Failure to improve performance following level 2 actions
- Persistent late submission (within 20 working days), non-submission or late submission (exceeding 20 days) of summative assessment
- An academic offence that is considered to be inadvertent, minor and/or the result of poor academic practice. (see Annex 1 for definitions of academic misconduct)

This list is not exhaustive and intended to provide examples only.

Process

A formal hearing will be chaired by the Head of Faculty. The student will be invited to attend the hearing in writing. The invitation must include details of the alleged misconduct and a copy of these procedures. Students may be accompanied by a friend. Legal representation is not appropriate.

- The appropriate tutor investigates and presents the evidence.
- The outcome of the hearing will be confirmed in writing within five working days, with details of the action plan, including any support that is being put in place.

Sanctions

- For Academic Misconduct only, reduction of the mark originally awarded.
- For Academic Misconduct only, cancellation of the assessment and the mark recorded as 0%.
- For Academic Misconduct only, cancellation of all assessment artefacts for the unit(s) and the mark for each recorded as 0%.
- Any combination of the penalties defined above.

Support/Follow up

- The personal/course/year tutor or warden will be responsible for monitoring the Level 3 action plan over a period of six months, at which time the student's ePersonal Development Plan status can be changed to 'expired' if the actions have been successfully complied with.
- As part of the support system, any student on a Level 3 action plan will also be placed on the College 'Cause for Concern' register. This will facilitate additional reviews/support from Student Support to promote improvement in conduct or performance.

Level 4:

Performance: If a level 3 warning does not result in improvement, and/or the lack of improvement is affecting the student's achievement and is likely to result in year or course failure, then the following areas may trigger a level 4 warning;

- Failure to improve performance following Level 3 actions
- Performance levels likely to result in unit failure at exam board at any point during the course
- An academic offence which is deliberate, persistent and/or serious. (see Annex 1 for definitions of academic misconduct)
- Failure to communicate with staff at the College for a minimum of 4 weeks (30 calendar days)

This list is not exhaustive and intended to provide examples only.

Process

A formal hearing is chaired by the Dean of Higher Education. The student will be invited to attend the hearing in writing. The invitation must include details of the alleged misconduct and a copy of these procedures. Students may be accompanied by a friend. Legal representation is not appropriate.

- The outcome of the hearing will be confirmed in writing within five working days, with details of the action plan, including any support that is being put in place.
- May occur as a review of Level 3 interventions if performance issues persist as unresolved.
- If outcome is a recommendation for exclusion this will be formally referred to Deputy Principal

Sanctions

For Assessment Misconduct only, the cancellation of all assessment results achieved during the academic year in which the offence took place.

For Assessment Misconduct only the limitation of marks or award that a student may achieve.

For Performance issues, a Final Written Warning regarding course place may be the outcome of a level 4 hearing or the Dean of Higher Education may recommend permanent exclusion from College to the Deputy Principal. The latter would be the case in the event of failure of the student to communicate with staff at the College for a minimum of 4 weeks (30 calendar days).

If the conditions and actions set following a level 4 Performance or Conduct hearing are not subsequently met, the Dean of Higher Education may recommend to the Deputy Principal a permanent exclusion from the College.

Support/Follow Up

- If the result of the Level 4 is a final written warning, the Head of Faculty or Student Services Manager will be responsible for monitoring the action plan over a period of nine months. At this point, the student's ePersonal Development Plan status can be changed to 'expired' if the actions have been successfully complied with.
- As part of the support system, any student on a Level 4 action plan will also be placed on the College 'Cause for Concern' register. This will facilitate additional reviews/support from Student Support to promote improvement in conduct or performance.

Decisions

These are not legal procedures. There must be a fair and equitable process in considering cases of alleged misconduct. However, the judgment should be based on the balance of probabilities and does not (as in legal cases) need to be proved beyond all reasonable doubt. The manager will make a decision on the best course of action in the interests of the College community and the upholding of academic integrity and standards and balancing this with the interests of the individual. The emphasis is on managing behavior and achievement.

Sanctions should be decided in terms of:

- Academic integrity
- Maintenance of Academic Standards
- Willfulness and the likelihood of the individual improving their behaviour
- Coherence with the approach taken across the College
- Learning being the purpose of the College and for a student being part of the College

Exclusion

In cases where the conclusion of the Dean of Higher Education hearing a case is that the student should be permanently excluded, the Dean of Higher Education will recommend this action to the Deputy Principal providing full documentation to support this conclusion. The Deputy Principal will review the evidence and decide to:

- Confirm the exclusion or
- Amend the sanction or
- Re-examine the case

Appeals

The individual may appeal against sanctions imposed as a result of the process by writing to the appropriate Head of Faculty within 10 working days of the decision. This will be:

- Level 1 and 2 with Head of Faculty
- Level 3 with the Dean of Higher Education
- Level 4 the student may appeal to the Deputy Principal in writing within 10 College working days of receiving confirmation of the exclusion. The letter should clearly set out grounds for the appeal.

The outcomes of an appeal may be that:

- The findings are upheld and exclusion is appropriate
- The findings are upheld but exclusion was not warranted
- The findings are flawed due to the failings in the original hearing or because new evidence has come to light.

Complaints

Complaints about the way the procedure is implemented should be made in writing to the Principal who will identify a manager at the appropriate level to investigate the complaint. The Principal will identify the appropriate external body to which the complaint can be referred if the student is unhappy with the outcome of the College process.

The University of Portsmouth

In accordance with the UK QAA's Quality Code, specifically Chapter B9: Academic appeals and student complaints, the University has revised its Student Complaint Procedure to allow students studying with a collaborative partner the right to raise their concerns with the University, even if their complaint concerns the actions of the partner. The partner's policies/procedures need to have been exhausted before a complaint/appeal can be progressed through the University. Students will need to explain in their complaint/appeal to the University why they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the partner's efforts to resolve the matter internally. If the complaint/appeal is accepted by the University, a review of the original complaint/appeal and the partner's attempts to resolve it will be carried out by the University Secretary, or an individual to whom the University Secretary delegates the investigation. If a student remains dissatisfied at the end of the University's review stage of the process, the student may then submit their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

Professional bodies

Students on certain professional courses, for example the Foundation Degree in Veterinary Nursing Science, will also be subject to the professional standards that are expected of them at all times. Students will be informed of these standards at the start of the course; this policy is complementary to, and does not replace, these professional standards. Registration with professional bodies, for example the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, is subject to applicants demonstrating their 'fitness to practice'. Level 3 and particularly Level 4 Academic Performance procedures may reflect negatively on a student's fitness to practice.

Training and Monitoring

All personnel who chair hearings will be given sufficient training in order to fulfill this role effectively. Level 4 sanctions will be reported (in numeric form) on a monthly basis to the Board of Governors and will be supplemented with an annual equality monitoring report.

Annex 1: Assessment Offences

Definitions are found in the University of Portsmouth Examination and Assessment regulations for Sparsholt College, which are updated annually.

Assessment offences are defined as below:

- a) failure to comply with any of the General Rules for the Conduct of Examinations;
- b) any attempt to complete any assessment by means considered to be unfair;
- c) production of and/or use of fraudulent data or information in any assessment artefact;
- d) plagiarism, which the University defines as “the incorporation by a student in work for assessment of material which is not their own, in the sense that all or a substantial part of the work has been copied without any adequate attempt at attribution, or has been incorporated as if it were the student’s own when in fact it is wholly or substantially the work of another person or persons”.

By 'substantial', the University means large and significant sections of the work; by 'adequate', the University means accurate referencing in accordance with one of the University's approved referencing conventions

This includes, but is not limited to:

- i. copying material from any source and trying to pass it off as your own work (this includes computer language and programs, scientific experiments, and visual images in addition to standard written text),
 - ii. paraphrasing material without appropriate acknowledgement and not in accordance with the University’s agreed referencing conventions (this includes computer language and programs, scientific experiments and visual images in addition to standard written text),
 - iii. collusion, where the assessment artefact is prepared by someone else and presented as your own work,
 - iv. purchase of essay/project/computer program,
 - v. submission of essay/project/computer program written by someone else,
 - vi. submission of another student’s work with or without that student’s knowledge or consent;
- e) failure to provide an electronic copy of an assessment artefact when requested;
 - f) the late return of equipment loaned by a Faculty or Department which is required by other students to complete an assessment;
 - g) losing, breaking or damaging equipment loaned by a Faculty or Department which is required by other students to complete an assessment.