Disciplinary Procedure
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Appendix 1 – Gross Misconduct
1. General Principles

1.1. The University is committed to developing and maintaining constructive relations with its employees. This non-contractual procedure provides a framework for dealing with misconduct situations.

1.2. The University will act fairly and consistently when dealing with cases under the Disciplinary Procedure.

1.3. The procedure will give effect to the principle that, in their areas of academic expertise, staff engaged in teaching, the provision of learning or research will have freedom within the law to hold and express opinion, to question and test established ideas and received wisdom and to present controversial or unpopular points of view without placing in jeopardy their employment or any entitlements or privileges they enjoy.

1.4. The University will seek to resolve employment issues at the lowest possible level and, where appropriate, on an informal basis.

1.5. An employee has the right to be accompanied at any formal meeting and related appeal meeting under the Disciplinary Procedure by a work colleague, a duly accredited Trade Union representative or an official employed by a Trade Union and may also be accompanied on request at investigatory meetings.

1.6. If an employee has particular requirements at any stage of the procedures because of a disability, or wishes to inform the University of any relevant medical condition, the employee should contact the appropriate Human Resources representative.

1.7. Different procedures apply to competency and sickness/ill health cases. The University may commence the process using one procedure but continue the process using a different procedure if it is more appropriate and reasonable to do so.

1.8. The University will generally follow each of the stages set out in these Disciplinary Procedures in any particular case but reserves the right in appropriate cases to commence the procedure at any of the specified stages or to omit a particular stage/stages.

1.9. Notes of formal meetings will be taken, these will be summaries of the key points and not a verbatim record. Copies of these notes will be given to the parties present and they should inform the University if they wish to comment on the accuracy of the notes within 5 working days of receiving them. It is normally expected that all documentation including witness statements will be shared with relevant parties [except where the University has to withhold some information to protect a witness]. The University will keep a written record of every disciplinary
case which will be treated as confidential and kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Notes of informal meetings may also be taken where appropriate.

1.10. Formal disciplinary action will not be taken against a recognised Trade Union’s representative until the circumstances of the case have been discussed with either the Branch Chair/Secretary or if they are not available, with a full-time official.

1.11. Training and coaching of managers operating the procedure will be available. Advice and guidance on the application of the Disciplinary Procedure will be provided by Human Resources and a Human Resources Representative may be present at any stage in the process.

1.12. Whilst every effort will be made to manage disciplinary situations with sensitivity and due confidentiality, there may be some occasions where the University is obliged to confidentially report the outcome to an external body (e.g. a research funder) in line with applicable contractual terms or other relevant protocols. The University will make such disclosures at its sole discretion, providing the individual concerned with prior notification.

2. Disciplinary Procedure (Conduct)

2.1. Investigation

The University will investigate the alleged misconduct, without unreasonable delay, carrying out any necessary investigations to establish the facts in any particular case. The individual will be advised in appropriate detail of the allegations that are being investigated. Where practicable the person who conducts the disciplinary meeting should be different from the person(s) who carries out the investigation.

Where investigations into research misconduct and student complaints result in allegations of misconduct the relevant parts of the investigation carried out through the appropriate University procedure may be utilised. In the case of financial irregularities there may be an investigation undertaken by internal /external parties as appropriate. Where financial irregularities are identified the outcome of the investigation may be utilised. A separate disciplinary investigation will not normally be instigated in the circumstances outlined above. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to carry out some additional investigation.

2.2. Informal Disciplinary Action

Informal disciplinary action may be taken in appropriate cases. This involves informally discussing the matter with the employee, defining the conduct that is unacceptable and identifying any remedial action.
The employee should be made aware that formal action may be taken if the informal action does not resolve matters.

2.3. **Suspension**

If serious or gross misconduct is alleged the employee may be suspended on full pay and benefits or temporarily deployed on alternative duties. The period of suspension will be as brief as possible in the circumstances and should be kept under review. Suspensions will be agreed in advance with the appropriate HR Manager.

Suspension is not a disciplinary action nor does it infer any guilt.

2.4. **Formal Disciplinary Meeting**

If informal action does not resolve matters or if following investigation the alleged misconduct is considered sufficiently serious to potentially merit formal disciplinary action, the steps outlined below will be taken.

2.4.1. **Inform the Employee In Writing**

The University will inform the employee in writing of the allegations. The letter will contain sufficient information about the allegations and the possible consequences to enable the employee to respond to these at the disciplinary meeting.

The letter will normally enclose copies of any documents that have been gathered during the investigation process to allow for adequate preparation by the employee.

Possible consequences up to and including dismissal, will be outlined in the letter. The letter will also advise the employee of their right to be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union representative.

2.4.2. **The Meeting**

Disciplinary meetings to hear cases will normally be convened by the manager of the member of staff under investigation. The meeting should be held without unreasonable delay whilst allowing the employee reasonable time to prepare their case. Normally a minimum of 5 working days notice of disciplinary meetings will be given.

At the meeting the University will explain the allegations against the employee and go through the evidence that has been gathered. The employee will be allowed to set out their case and answer any allegations that have been made. They will also be given the opportunity to ask questions and present evidence.
It may be appropriate for relevant witnesses to attend the disciplinary meeting and the employee will be given the opportunity to raise points at the meeting about any information provided by witnesses. Where an employee or the University intends to call a witness, they should notify the other party of this in writing in advance of the meeting and ensure that they attend at the appropriate time. No individual can be compelled to attend a disciplinary meeting as a witness.

The manager convening the disciplinary meeting will decide on the outcome, where appropriate, seeking guidance from the relevant HR representative.

After the meeting, the University will notify the employee of its decision in writing. This will normally be done within 10 working days of the meeting. If disciplinary action is taken the employee will be advised of the right to appeal.

2.5. Disciplinary Sanctions

The University has discretion to determine the appropriate disciplinary sanction to apply to an employee who it concluded has committed an act of misconduct. These sanctions include:

2.5.1. Formal Oral Warning

This will usually be appropriate for a first act of misconduct where conduct falls below an acceptable level or a minor offence has been committed and there are no live written warnings. This warning will remain live for 6 months.

2.5.2. Written Warning

This will usually be appropriate for misconduct where there is already a live formal oral warning on the employee’s record or where the misconduct is considered sufficiently serious to warrant a written warning even although the employee has no live warnings. A written warning will remain live for 9 months.

2.5.3. Final Written Warning

This will usually be appropriate for misconduct where there is already a live written warning on the employee’s record or where the misconduct is considered sufficiently serious to warrant a final written warning even although the employee has no live warnings. A final written warning will remain live for 12 months.
2.5.4. Dismissal

Dismissal will usually be appropriate in respect of the following:

- Repeated or serious misconduct during the first 12 months of an employee’s employment;
- Further misconduct where there is a live final written warning; or
- Any gross misconduct regardless of whether there are live warnings.

Gross misconduct will usually result in summary dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice. Examples of conduct which are likely to amount to gross misconduct are attached as an Appendix to this procedure.

If the University decides that dismissal is the appropriate sanction, the employee will be informed of the reasons for the dismissal and the date on which employment will end.

An employee will not normally be dismissed for a first act of misconduct unless the University concludes that it amounts to gross misconduct or the employee is in the first 12 months of employment.

2.5.5. Alternative Sanctions Short Of Dismissal

In appropriate cases the University may consider some other sanction short of dismissal e.g. demotion or redeployment.

2.5.6. Warning to Employee

For both formal oral, first and final written warnings the University will inform the employee of the nature of the misconduct, the change in behaviour required, the likely consequences of further misconduct and that the warning will remain live for 6 months for formal oral warnings, 9 months for first written warnings and 12 months for final written warnings.

3. Appeal

If the employee wishes to appeal, the appeal should be made in writing, setting out in full the grounds of appeal to the appropriate HR Manager. The employee has 5 working days to notify intention to lodge an appeal from the date of receipt of the University’s decision and a maximum of a further 5 working days to submit the full grounds of the appeal.
The employee will be invited to attend an appeal meeting which will normally take place without unreasonable delay following receipt of the appeal notification and grounds of appeal. The letter will advise the employee of their right to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or a Trade Union representative.

Dismissal appeals will be heard by a panel of two: all other appeal meetings will be held by another member of staff, normally in the employee’s line management structure who has not previously been involved in the case.

The employee will be informed of the outcome of the appeal meeting in writing normally within 15 working days of the meeting and that this is the final stage of the disciplinary procedure.

There is no further right of appeal. This exhausts the University’s procedures.

The Disciplinary Procedure has been agreed by Court and is effective from 15th February 2012.

Appendix 1 - Gross Misconduct

1. GROSS MISCONDUCT

The following are examples of matters that are normally regarded as gross misconduct:

a) Theft or fraud;
b) Physical violence (actual or threatened);
c) Deliberate and serious damage to property;
d) Unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation against employees, contractors, students or members of the public on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, race, disability, religion or belief, or age which contravenes the University’s Equality Policy or Dignity at Work and Study Policy;
e) Deliberately accessing internet sites containing pornographic, offensive or obscene material;
f) Defamatory and /or abusive comments regarding the University or its staff through the inappropriate use of social networking technology, electronic web logs (blogs) or other internet sites;
g) Intentional or malicious refusal to comply with reasonable instructions or requests made by a line manager within the workplace;
h) Bringing the University into serious disrepute such as serious misuse of University property, name or reputation;
i) Giving false information as to qualifications or entitlement to work (including immigration status); using fraudulent identity or withholding information that would be relevant;

j) Incapability to work due to being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances during working hours;

k) Causing loss, including loss of life, damage or injury through serious negligence;

l) Serious or repeated breach of health and safety rules or serious misuse of safety equipment;

m) Serious breach of confidence including unauthorised use or disclosure of confidential information or a serious failure to ensure that confidential information in the employee’s possession is kept secure;

n) Acceptance of bribes or other secret or undeclared payments;

o) Conviction for a criminal offence that in the University’s opinion may affect the University’s reputation or its relationships with staff, students or the public, or otherwise affects the employee’s suitability to continue to work for the University;

p) Possession, use, supply or attempted supply of illegal drugs;

q) Serious neglect of duties, or deliberate breach of the University’s procedures;

r) Deliberate or malicious unauthorised use, processing or disclosure of personal data which contravenes the University’s Data Protection Policy;

s) Making a disclosure of false or misleading information under the Code on Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing Policy) maliciously, for personal gain, or otherwise in bad faith;

t) Making untrue/vexatious allegations in bad faith against a colleague;

u) Serious misuse of the University’s information technology systems (including misuse of developed or licensed software, use of unauthorised software and serious misuse of e-mail and the internet);

v) Serious and/or malicious misconduct in connection with research activities.

This list is intended as a guide and is not exhaustive.