



University Technical College Warrington (UTCW)

Disciplinary Policy

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1 SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the procedure is to give a structure to improve conduct to the standards expected and to facilitate the fair dismissal of those who have not improved or whose conduct is so unacceptable as to warrant dismissal without notice.
- 1.2 This policy must be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct which sets out the standards to be expected of each employee.
- 1.3 The Trustees delegate their authority in the manner set out in this procedure.
- 1.4 There may be some occasions where an employee's behaviour could also be described as incapability. This Disciplinary Policy and the relevant Capability Policy may be used concurrently whilst University Technical College Warrington ("UTCW") endeavours to ascertain if the behaviour is misconduct or incapability.
- 1.5 There may be occasions where an employee's conduct could relate to their health. This Disciplinary Policy may be used concurrently with UTCW's Sickness Absence Policy. In particular, if an employee goes off sick following the use of this Disciplinary Policy, UTCW may use its Sickness Absence Policy.
- 1.6 There may be occasions when an employee attempts to use UTCW's Grievance Policy in connection with actions taken under this Disciplinary Policy. This shall not lead to any delay or pause in the conduct of any matters under the Disciplinary Policy.
- 1.7 There may be occasions where this procedure needs to be modified, for example to comply with any requirements in relation to the safeguarding of students.
- 1.8 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. UTCW may also vary the procedures set out in this policy, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case.
- 1.9 Where instances of misconduct occur during an employee's probationary period any disciplinary process will start at the final stage and may result in dismissal.

2 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POLICY?

- 2.1 The Trust Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. The Trust Board has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Principal.

2.2 The Senior Leadership Team has a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all members of staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

3 WHO IS COVERED BY THIS POLICY?

3.1 This policy covers all employees at all levels and grades, including senior managers, officers, employees, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees (collectively referred to as **employees** in this policy).

3.2 It does not apply to agency staff and self-employed contractors.

4 DEFINITIONS

In this policy **working day** means any day on which an employee would ordinarily work if he/she were a full time employee. In other words, it will be different for teaching and non-teaching staff but will not be different on the basis of whether an employee is full-time or part-time.

5 INFORMAL ACTION

5.1 UTCW will, where appropriate, try and deal with matters on an informal basis. It is often the case that minor issues of conduct can be resolved informally between an employee and their manager and in many cases this will be the appropriate way to address any concerns.

5.2 An employee's line manager may give him/her informal warnings at any time about any conduct falling short of the standard expected. The Business Manager should be informed of any concerns raised.

5.3 Informal warnings may be recorded in writing and referred to at a later stage to evidence that an informal approach was attempted and the success or failure of such an approach.

5.4 Failure to comply with informal action should not on its own be used as justification for issuing a higher form of sanction than would otherwise have been imposed under the formal process.

5.5 It is also possible for the parties to agree an outcome to a formal process and sanction prior to a formal disciplinary meeting being held. Any such agreement will be recorded in writing.

6 INVESTIGATING, DISCIPLINARY AND APPEAL MANAGERS

6.1 The personnel responsible for each stage of this policy depends on the role the relevant employee performs.

6.2 The following table describes the normal course of action although this may be subject to change depending on the circumstances of the individual case.

Employee Level	Investigating Manager	Disciplinary Manager	Appeal Manager
Principal	The Chair of Trustees or a non-staff Trustee nominated by the Chair of Trustees	Trustee Disciplinary Panel appointed by the Chair of Trustees	Trustee Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair of Trustees
Other Leadership Spine and UTCW Business Manager	Business Manager	Principal	Trustee Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair of Trustees
Other Teaching Staff	Business Manager	Member of SLT or Principal	Principal or Trustee Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair of Trustees
Other Support Staff	Line Manager or Business Manager	Business Manager or Principal	Principal or Trustee Appeal Panel appointed by the Chair of Trustees

7 SUSPENSION

7.1 In cases where it is justified, after a preliminary investigation, the Principal or the Chair of Trustees may suspend an employee for a reasonable period of time.

7.2 The Principal must inform the Chair of Trustees of the suspension or in the event of suspension by the Chair of Trustees the Chair must inform the Trust Board (excluding staff Trustees).

- 7.3 This period of suspension must be reviewed by the Principal / Chair of Trustees at intermittent intervals and must be no longer than is required depending on the circumstances.
- 7.4 Suspension should ideally be undertaken in person but may be undertaken in writing. If it is undertaken in person it will be confirmed in writing. Where practicable, the employee will be entitled to be accompanied by their Trade Union representative but their non-availability will not delay a suspension meeting.
- 7.5 Suspension may be justified in cases where:
- 7.5.1 Relationships have broken down.
 - 7.5.2 Gross misconduct is alleged.
 - 7.5.3 There are reasonable concerns that evidence or witnesses could be interfered with.
 - 7.5.4 There are responsibilities to other parties.
 - 7.5.5 To protect students or property.
- 7.6 Suspension is a neutral act and is not a disciplinary sanction. It does not imply that any decision has already been made about the allegations. An employee will receive full pay and benefits during a period of suspension (unless he/she is otherwise absent from work due to sickness or other leave and have exhausted the full pay entitlements connected to his/her absence). The employee will also receive details of a named contact during any period of suspension.
- 7.7 During a period of suspension UTCW may require an employee not:
- 7.7.1 to attend UTCW at any time (except with the prior agreement of the Principal or Chair of Trustees)
 - 7.7.2 to communicate in any way with colleagues, parents, students and Trustees except:
 - 7.7.2.1 with the prior agreement of the Principal / Chair of Trustees or
 - 7.7.2.2 where following the investigation an employee is called to a formal disciplinary meeting, when he/she may then approach Trustees, parents or students as potential witnesses but this must be done via the Investigating

Manager to avoid any breach of the Data Protection Act or confidentiality.

7.7.3 to discuss the fact of an employee's suspension or the fact of or nature of the allegations against him/her with any member of staff except:

7.7.3.1 with the prior agreement of the Principal / Chair of Trustees

7.7.3.2 for communication with his/her union representative;

7.7.3.3 where he/she is called to an interview with the Investigating Manager or a disciplinary meeting when he/she may approach work colleagues for the purposes of identifying a willing work companion but only if he/she does not have a trade union representative, or

7.7.3.4 where he/she is called to a formal disciplinary meeting he/she may approach work colleagues as potential witnesses in support of his/her case.

7.8 During a period of suspension UTCW may suspend an employee's access to his/her email account/intranet.

7.9 During a period of suspension UTCW may take such steps as necessary to cover an employee's lessons or other commitments.

8 **FORMAL PROCESS**

8.1 **Step 1 - Investigation**

8.1.1 The Investigating Manager will conduct an investigation into the alleged conduct. The purpose of an investigation is for UTCW to establish a fair and balanced view of the facts relating to any disciplinary allegations against an employee, before deciding whether to proceed with a disciplinary hearing. The amount of investigation required will depend on the nature of the allegations and will vary from case to case.

8.1.2 The Investigating Manager may appoint any other person from within UTCW or externally to assist in the investigation.

8.1.3 The investigation may include a face to face interview with an employee but these are not mandatory. Investigative interviews are solely for the purpose of fact-finding and no decision on disciplinary action will be

taken until after a disciplinary hearing has been held. An employee may if he/she wishes provide a written statement or response to the Investigating Manager instead.

8.1.4 An employee is required to co-operate fully and promptly with the Investigating Manager to ensure that the investigation can be completed as swiftly and thoroughly as possible.

8.1.5 The Investigating Manager will normally produce an Investigation Report setting out evidence and detailed allegations and a recommendation on whether there is a potential disciplinary case to answer.

8.1.6 An employee will be sent a copy of the Investigation Report.

8.2 **Step 2 – Disciplinary Meeting**

8.2.1 If the Investigation Manager recommends that the matter should proceed to a formal disciplinary meeting the employee shall be required to attend a formal disciplinary meeting with the Disciplinary Manager.

8.2.2 The disciplinary meeting shall take place at least 2 days after disciplinary invitation was sent to the employee.

8.2.3 The Disciplinary Manager shall consider all the evidence presented and the employee shall have an opportunity to present evidence in his/her defence and any evidence in mitigation.

8.2.4 The Disciplinary Manager may adjourn the disciplinary meeting to allow further investigations in the light of the employee's evidence and may reconvene if appropriate to give the him/her an opportunity to comment on any further evidence produced by further investigations.

8.2.5 The Disciplinary Manager is not required to hear oral evidence from witnesses and may rely on written evidence.

8.2.6 If the Disciplinary Manager does decide to hear oral witness evidence, the employee will be given an opportunity to comment on it during the meeting.

8.3 **Step 3 - Appeal**

- 8.3.1 If the Disciplinary Manager decides to impose a formal disciplinary sanction the employee will have the right to appeal to the Appeal Manager provided that he/she does so in writing to the Disciplinary Manager within 10 working days of the written notification of the disciplinary decision.
- 8.3.2 An appeal must set out the grounds of appeal in detail. This will enable the Disciplinary Manager and Appeal Manager to determine if the appeal is to be by way of a rehearing of the case or by way of a review of the case.
- 8.3.3 If the employee is appealing against dismissal, the date on which the dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of the appeal. However, if the appeal is successful the employee will be reinstated with no loss of continuity or pay.
- 8.3.4 The Appeal meeting will normally take place within 20 working days of the notice of appeal being received by the Disciplinary Manager.
- 8.3.5 The Appeal Manager may not impose a more severe sanction than that imposed by the Disciplinary Manager.
- 8.3.6 The Appeal Manager may consider any new evidence produced by the employee not available to the Disciplinary Manager.
- 8.3.7 The Appeal Manager may only consider new evidence produced by the Disciplinary Manager if it touches upon the employee's credibility in relation to evidence he/she has already given or if it rebuts any new evidence produced by the employee or any assertions made by him/her in the grounds of appeal.
- 8.3.8 If the Appeal Manager considers that any new evidence from whatever source would warrant a more severe sanction the Appeal Manager shall refer the matter to the original Disciplinary Manager for consideration and the Disciplinary Manager may impose a more severe sanction. If there was an appeal against such an increased sanction, it would be heard (where possible) by a different Appeal Manager.

- 8.3.9 The Appeal Manager is not required to hear oral evidence from witnesses and may rely on written evidence.
- 8.3.10 If the Appeal Manager does decide to hear oral witness evidence, the employee will be given an opportunity to comment on it during the meeting.
- 8.3.11 The employee will be informed in writing of the Appeal Manager's decision as soon as possible, and usually within 14 days of any appeal meeting. There is no further right of appeal.

9 FORMAL SANCTIONS

The Disciplinary Manager may impose the following sanctions:

9.1 A First Written Warning

- 9.1.1 A First Written Warning will remain live for **12** months from the date that the Disciplinary Manager's written decision was sent to the employee.
- 9.1.2 For a first disciplinary offence (ignoring any informal action), a First Written Warning would be the normal response.
- 9.1.3 Once a First Written Warning has expired it will be removed from an employee's formal record (with the exception of any issues relating to safeguarding) and disregarded in deciding the outcome of any future formal procedure.

9.2 A Final Written Warning

- 9.2.1 A Final Written Warning will remain live for **18** months from the date that the Disciplinary Manager's written decision was sent to the employee.
- 9.2.2 A Final Written Warning would normally be given for a second disciplinary offence committed or discovered during the currency of a live First Written Warning (even if that First Written Warning related to a different type of misconduct)
- 9.2.3 A Final Written Warning could be given for serious misconduct regardless of previous disciplinary history if the conduct is sufficiently serious.
- 9.2.4 Once a Final Written Warning has expired it will be removed from an employee's record (with the exception of any issues relating to

safeguarding) and disregarded in deciding the outcome of any future formal procedure.

9.2.5 Information which is recorded and retained is compliant with Data Protection and GDPR legislation.

9.3 **Dismissal on notice**

9.3.1 Dismissal on contractual notice would be given for a disciplinary offence (other than an act of gross misconduct) committed or discovered during the currency of a live Final Written Warning (even if the Final Written Warning related to a different type of misconduct).

9.3.2 For the avoidance of doubt, the notice commences immediately and does not await the outcome of any appeal.

9.3.3 If the employee's contract contains a payment in lieu of notice clause UTCW may exercise that clause to bring an employee's contract to an end with immediate effect.

9.4 **Dismissal without notice or compensation**

9.4.1 Dismissal without notice or compensation (also known as Summary Dismissal) will only occur if an employee has committed an act of gross misconduct or otherwise have destroyed the trust and confidence required between the employee and UTCW.

9.4.2 For the avoidance of doubt the dismissal takes effect immediately and does not await the outcome of any appeal.

9.4.3 The Code of Conduct contains a **non-exhaustive** list of matters which UTCW considers may amount to gross misconduct.

9.5 **Voluntary demotion as an alternative to higher formal sanction**

9.5.1 The Disciplinary Manager may offer an employee the option of taking a voluntary demotion as an alternative to a higher formal sanction.

10 **TRUSTEE PANELS**

10.1 Trustee Disciplinary and Appeal Panels shall comprise two/three non-staff Trustees not previously involved in the matter.

- 10.2 In the event that there are insufficient numbers of Trustees available to participate in a Panel, the Chair of Trustees as appropriate may appoint associate members to solely participate in the appropriate Panel.

11 **RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED**

- 11.1 If an employee is the subject of disciplinary allegations leading to a disciplinary interview by the Investigation Manager or a meeting with the Disciplinary Manager or Appeal Manager, he/she may be accompanied at such interview or meeting by a companion who must be either be a willing work colleague not involved in the substance of the allegations against the employee or an accredited trade union representative. A Trade Union representative is anyone appearing on the certification officers list of a Trade Union
- 11.2 The employee must let the relevant Manager know who his/her companion will be at least one working day before the interview or meeting.
- 11.3 If the employee has any particular need, for example, a disability which causes him/her a substantial disadvantage, adjustments may be made to the procedure to allow him/her to participate and in limited circumstances this may include allowing the employee be accompanied by someone other than is listed in clause 11.1.
- 11.4 The companion can address the meeting in order to:
- 11.4.1 put forward the employee's case
 - 11.4.2 sum up the employee's case
 - 11.4.3 respond on behalf of the employee to any view expressed at the interview meeting.
- 11.5 The companion can also confer with the employee during the interview meeting.
- 11.6 The companion has no right to answer questions on the employee's behalf, or to address the interview meeting if the employee does not wish it, or to prevent the employee from explaining his/her case.
- 11.7 Where the employee has identified a companion to the relevant Manager and the companion has confirmed in writing to the relevant Manager that they cannot attend the date or time set for the interview meeting, the relevant Manager may postpone the interview meeting provided that the employee has suggested an alternative date within 5 working days of the original date set by UTCW to a date or time agreed were possible with the companion provided that it is reasonable.

12 **TIMING OF MEETINGS**

12.1 Meetings under this procedure may:

12.1.1 need to be held when an employee is timetabled to teach

12.1.2 exceptionally be held during planning preparation and administration time if this does not impact on lesson preparation

12.1.3 be held after the end of UTCW day

12.1.4 not be held on days on which an employee would not ordinarily work.

12.2 Meetings may take place in the absence of an employee in the event he/she is not able to attend a scheduled meeting and it is considered appropriate by UTCW to do so in the relevant circumstances.

13 **VENUE FOR MEETINGS**

13.1 If the allegations are sensitive the relevant Manager may hold the interview or meeting off UTCW site.

14 **TRADE UNION OFFICERS**

14.1 Where disciplinary action is being considered against an employee who is a recognised trade union representative the normal disciplinary procedure should be followed. Such matters should be discussed at an early stage with an official employed by the union, after obtaining the employee's agreement.

15 **CRIMINAL OFFENCES**

15.1 If an employee is charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence (outside of employment) this will not normally in itself be considered a reason for disciplinary action. In such circumstances the facts of the case would be clarified through a formal investigation and then consideration would be given as to whether the matter warrants formal disciplinary proceedings, having taken into account whether the alleged incident, act, or behaviour affects an employee's suitability for their job and/or the reputation of the UTCW. In the case of teachers, the content and effect of the Teachers Standards will be taken into account when deciding whether, or not, the matter may warrant formal disciplinary sanctions.

16 **REFERRAL**

- 16.1 Where a teacher is dismissed for serious misconduct (or may have been dismissed for serious misconduct if the teacher had not resigned) UTCW must consider whether to refer the circumstances to the National College for Teaching and Leadership under section 141D of the Education Act 2002 which came into force on 1 April 2012

- 16.2 Where a person working within UTCW (whether a teacher or not) is dismissed or would have been dismissed if they had not resigned) because that person committed conduct:
 - 16.2.1 which endangered a child or was likely to endanger a child
 - 16.2.2 which if repeated against or in relation to a child, would endanger that child or would be likely to endanger him
 - 16.2.3 involving sexual material relating to children (including possession of such material)
 - 16.2.4 involving sexually explicit images depicting violence against human beings (including possession of such images)
 - 16.2.5 of a sexual nature involving a child
 - 16.2.6 UTCW must refer that person to the Disclosure and Barring Service under section 35 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.