



**Higher Education Services
Student Disciplinary Procedure**

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Higher Education Services Student Disciplinary Procedure

1.0 Introduction

1.1 All students registered at FutureLearn are required to follow the institution's policies and guidelines, including those governing personal conduct as set out in the Code of Conduct. This document explains the procedures for addressing actions or behaviours that may be deemed inappropriate under these standards. This policy only includes those students who are under an OPM sub-contractual arrangement up to point 2.6, for example, Brunel University and Roehampton University.

1.2 The document should be read alongside the procedures for Brunel University and Roehampton University partner students:

- Brunel University (BU) [Student Misconduct \(Academic & Non-Academic\) and Fitness to Practise | Brunel University of London](#)
- Roehampton University (RU) [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#)

2.0 Stage One: Initial Investigation

2.1 Complaints regarding a student's conduct must be submitted in writing within 10 working days of the incident to quality@futurelearn.com. Whether raised by staff or fellow students, such concerns will be addressed through the following process:

2.2 Initial Review and Action

- The Programme Leader, or an appointed representative, will conduct a preliminary investigation.
- If deemed necessary after consultation with a Head of Programmes, the student may be temporarily suspended from their course while the investigation is ongoing.
- If no evidence of misconduct is found, the matter will be closed with no further action.

2.3 Allegation and Student Response

- Should the investigation reveal sufficient grounds for concern, the student will be formally notified of the allegation and given a deadline to respond.
- If the student is under 18, the complaint and details of the process will also be shared with their parent or guardian.

2.4 Outcome of Initial Investigation

- Upon reviewing the student's response, the Programme Leader, in collaboration with a Head of Programmes may:
 - Dismiss the allegation.
 - Issue a verbal or written warning.
 - Refer the case to the Student Disciplinary Committee for further review.

2.5 Referral to Disciplinary Committee

If the case is escalated, the student will be informed, and the referral will include:

- A written summary of the complaint.
- Findings from the initial investigation.
- Supporting evidence and the student's response.
- A clear reference to the specific section of the Code of Conduct allegedly breached.

2.6 From this point onwards, BU and RU partner students will follow the links in section 1 to the specific university procedure.

3.0 Stage Two: Referral to the Disciplinary Committee

3.1 Scheduling the Hearing

- The Academic Quality Lead, or their designated representative, will contact the student to arrange a disciplinary hearing, typically within 10 working days of receiving the documentation outlined in section 2.5.
- If a mutually acceptable date cannot be set within 30 working days, the hearing will proceed under the assumption that the student contests the allegation.
- If the student fails to confirm attendance, the committee may still convene, provided there is confidence that the student has been properly informed.

3.2 Notification to Involved Parties

- At least 10 working days before the scheduled hearing:
- The complainant will be notified of the hearing details and asked to attend in person or remotely (e.g., via Google Meet or phone).
- The student will receive formal notice including:
 - A summary of the complaint.
 - A copy of FutureLearn's Code of Conduct.
 - Names of the complainant(s).
 - Names of any witnesses to be called.
 - Date, time, and location of the hearing.
 - The option to attend in person or via a suitable electronic method.
 - The right to be accompanied by a friend or student representative.
 - The opportunity to submit a written statement (due at least 5 working days before the hearing).
 - The responsibility to provide names of any witnesses they wish to call.
 - The requirement to inform the Academic Quality Lead or nominee if they plan to bring a companion.

3.3 Document Sharing

- No later than 5 working days before the hearing, both the student and the complainant will receive copies of all materials to be reviewed by the committee.

3.4 Expedited Hearings

- Students may request an earlier hearing if they believe it is in their best interest. If agreed, the timeline for notifications and submissions will be adjusted accordingly.

4.0 Disciplinary Hearing

4.1 The Student Disciplinary Committee shall consist of a minimum of two members appointed by the Head of Programmes. One member will be designated as Chair. An Academic Quality team member will attend all meetings to record minutes and maintain official documentation.

4.2 Privacy and Recording Protocol

To protect the confidentiality of all parties:

- The use of recording devices (e.g., mobile phones, digital recorders) during hearings is prohibited unless explicit permission is granted by FutureLearn.
- Permission may be considered as a reasonable adjustment for individuals with a documented disability.
- FutureLearn reserves the right to record proceedings for internal record-keeping. If a recording is made, both the student and complainant will be notified, and a transcript will be made available to all parties.

4.3 Students may be accompanied by a friend, adviser, or student representative who may speak on their behalf. Legal professionals (e.g., solicitors or barristers) are not permitted to act in a professional capacity during the hearing.

4.4 Joint Hearings and Witnesses

In cases involving multiple students, the panel may choose to hear cases jointly or separately. Witnesses may be called together or individually at the panel's discretion.

4.5 Hearing Procedure

The panel will hear evidence and representations in the following order:

1. Head of Programmes or nominee
2. Complainant
3. Witnesses supporting the complainant
4. Student or their representative
5. Witnesses supporting the student
6. Final statement from the complainant
7. Final statement from the student or representative
8. Final remarks from the Head of Programmes or nominee

4.6 The panel may impose time limits on verbal contributions and witness questioning.

5.0 Deliberation and Decision

5.1 Following its review, the Student Disciplinary Committee may take one or more of the following actions:

- **Dismiss the Case:** Determine that there is insufficient evidence to support the allegation and take no further action.
- **Issue a Warning:** Deliver either a verbal or written caution to the student regarding their conduct.
- **Temporary Suspension:** Suspend the student from their academic programme for a defined period, typically not exceeding six months.
- **Recommend Expulsion:** Advise the Director of Academic Affairs that the student should be permanently removed from the University.
- **Referral to Examination Board:** If expulsion is recommended, the Academic Quality Lead or their delegate will initiate a referral to the Subject and Award Board to assess whether any academic credit should be retained or revoked.
- **Removal from Representative Role:** If the student holds a representative position, they may be removed from that role as part of the disciplinary outcome.
- **Suggest Alternative Sanctions:** Propose other appropriate actions or remedies, subject to approval by the Director of Academic Affairs.

6.0 Stage Three: Review and Appeal

6.1 This section outlines the process by which a student may request a review of the outcome of a Stage Two disciplinary appeal. The review stage provides an opportunity to challenge the decision only under specific, limited circumstances.

6.2 A student may request a review of the Stage Two outcome if they remain dissatisfied with the decision. The request must be submitted within 10 working days from the date the Stage Two outcome letter is issued. Requests received after this deadline will not normally be considered.

6.3 A Stage Three review will only be considered on one or both of the following grounds:

- **Procedural Irregularity:** Evidence that the disciplinary process was not followed correctly, which may have affected the outcome.
- **New Material Evidence:** Information relevant to the case has become available that was not submitted earlier for valid and substantiated reasons.

6.4 Students must complete the Stage Three Review Form and submit it to quality@futurelearn.com within the specified timeframe. The submission must include:

- A detailed explanation of the grounds for review.
- Justification for why the Stage Two decision is considered unsatisfactory.
- Any supporting documentation or evidence relevant to the case.

6.5 The Registrar and Academic Quality Lead or their nominee will conduct an initial assessment to confirm that:

- The request was submitted within the required deadline.
- The grounds for review meet the eligibility criteria.
- The submission is complete and includes relevant supporting materials.
- An acknowledgment of receipt will be issued to the student within two working days.

6.6 The Director of Academic Affairs, not previously involved in the case, will conduct the review. The reviewer will have appropriate experience and impartiality. The reviewer will be supported by the Academic Quality Lead or their nominee throughout the process.

6.7 The appointed reviewer may, at their discretion, request further documentation, clarification, or evidence from the student to support the review. In such cases, the student will be notified in writing and granted a minimum of five working days to provide the requested information.

6.8 Following consideration of all relevant materials, the reviewer may reach one of the following conclusions:

- **Appeal Upheld (in full or in part):** The review determines that the appeal is valid, either entirely or in part, and proposes appropriate remedial action.
- **Appeal Rejected:** The review finds no grounds to support the appeal and confirms the original decision.

6.9 The student will be informed of the outcome of the Stage Three Review in writing within 20 working days from the date the review request was received. The decision of the Stage Three Review is final within FutureLearn's internal procedures. A Completion of Procedures Letter will be issued to the student, outlining their right to submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), should they wish to pursue the matter externally.

7.0 Institutional Follow-Up

7.1 In cases where the appeal is upheld, the reviewer will recommend any necessary corrective or remedial actions. A formal report detailing the case, and any resulting actions will be submitted to the Student Engagement, Quality and Programme Committee for review and to inform future practice.

8.0 External Review: Independent Adjudication

8.1 Students who have received a Completion of Procedures Letter and remain dissatisfied with FutureLearn's final decision may request an independent review through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

8.2 Eligibility for review is subject to the OIA's complaints scheme rules, which are available on their official website: www.oiahe.org.uk.

8.3 Any complaint submitted to the OIA must be lodged within 12 months from the date stated on the Completion of Procedures Letter.

9.0 Monitoring

9.1 The policy will be kept under review and formally reviewed every three years by the Academic Registrar.