Student Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP

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Summary of Contents
This SOP sets out guidance for SERC staff and students regarding expectations for student/trainee behaviour and performance and actions for dealing with failures to comply.

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1.0 Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix 1 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, you can click here to view the change history.

2.0 Glossary of Terms

APM Assistant Programme Manager (Training)

DHOS Deputy Head of School

HOS Head of School

HTPA Head **of** Training Programmes and Apprenticeships

e-ILP On-line Individual Learning Programme

PTP On-line Personal Training Plan

SSO / TSO Student Support Officer or Training Support Officer (TSO)

SOP Standard Operating Procedure

Programme of Study: a collective term to describe the different aspects of a student's studies e.g. a programme may include a vocational course, employability modules and essential skills.

Programme Co-ordinator: the member of staff who is assigned to a specific group of students to support and guide them as they study at SERC.

Campus Manager: this person is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the Student Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary SOP at their designated campus. In doing so the Campus Manager will work in collaboration with the Heads of School and their staff to ensure a consistent approach across all areas.

3.0 Guidance for Staff and Students

3.1 Introduction

SERC has the responsibility for creating a peaceful and positive learning environment so that all learners can focus on their learning without disruption. At the same time, SERC must ensure that staff have the opportunity to work with learners in safety, in compliance with legal requirements and without unnecessary distraction. To ensure that this is facilitated student behaviour and performance needs to be monitored and managed.

From time to time appropriate disciplinary action may need to be taken when student behaviour fails to meet an acceptable standard. The College is committed to fair, equitable and practical Disciplinary Procedures which at all times will be applied in a professional manner by the appropriate members of staff.

The process for managing student performance, behaviour and discipline will take account of the needs of the student and will be applied in a manner that will support the development of appropriate, positive, respectful behaviours and successful learning.

Guiding Principles

Staff are responsible for motivating students to perform successfully and for managing student behaviour. While different student groups may require different approaches towards the management of performance and behaviour, the guiding principles for the staff of SERC are to:

1. *Establish clear expectations for student performance and behaviour;*
2. *Provide the students with assistance and support in meeting those expectations;*
3. *Introduce measures to address unacceptable behaviour.*

SERC's terms and conditions provide students with information about the College's policies, procedures and regulations. By accepting an offer of a place and/or enrolling, students agree to comply with and be bound by these terms, which includes the performance and behaviour requirements set out in this procedure.

In applying this SOP, the College will:

- Act fairly, consistently and proportionately;
- Promote positive behaviour and successful learning;
- Consider individual circumstances and mitigating factors;
- Take account of safeguarding and welfare concerns;
- Consider reasonable adjustments where required;
- Ensure decisions are made on the balance of probabilities;
- Protect the rights of all members of the College community.

3.2 Scope

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) applies to all students, both full time and part time, that are enrolled at SERC including:

- All FE students
- All HE students
- Apprentices and Trainees - engaged through the Training Organisation
- Students with special educational needs
- School Partnership students
- Participants on programmes provided by the Business Services Unit

It also applies regardless of whether students are attending their classes on campus, working online remotely, on a student visit trip or while on placement.

This procedure applies to all student disciplinary matters and the action taken under the Formal Disciplinary Procedure follows 2 distinct pathways depending on the nature of the issue. Further detail is provided in Section 5 of this SOP.

The Formal Disciplinary Procedure follows 2 pathways:

Pathway 1 *relates to issues within the classroom environment (eg attendance, performance or behaviour)*

Pathway 2 *relates to all other Conduct breaches outside the classroom*

3.3 Expectations for Behaviour and Performance

SERC sets out the standard of conduct that is expected of all students in the Student Code of Conduct (see Appendix 2), which can also be found in the FE and HE Student Handbooks.

This SOP provides additional details below on the behaviour and performance requirements SERC expects students to comply with and guidance on the appropriate actions the College will take where a student fails to comply with these expectations.

3.3.1 The attendance, performance and classroom behavioural requirements of their programme of study.

At the start of each academic year, students are informed about the attendance, performance, and behaviour expectations for their programme. During induction, they receive guidance on how they are expected to conduct themselves in class and during all college activities. The exact requirements may vary depending on the programme of study.

This guidance typically includes:

- Meeting minimum attendance requirements
- Notifying staff appropriately when absent
- Submitting work on time and meeting deadlines
- Demonstrating appropriate classroom behaviour
- Following rules on breaks and the consumption of food/drink
- Appropriate use of mobile phones, tablets and other devices
- Correct use of PPE and adherence to uniform requirements
- Showing respect for peers, including listening, avoiding disruption, not swearing, and being punctual
- Respecting equality and diversity while participating in all college activities.

Breaches of these requirements will be dealt with in line with **Pathway 1** of this SOP.

3.3.2 SERC Curriculum Policy and Quality Assurance procedures and the requirements of Examination and Awarding Bodies (Assessment and Examinations Malpractice)

During induction, students are informed of the specific assessment and examination regulations relevant to their programme. Further guidance is available in FE/HE Handbooks, SERC Curriculum and Quality Assurance policies, and on awarding body websites.

Key regulatory areas covered include:

- Submission and assessment of coursework
- Plagiarism and academic integrity
- Extenuating circumstances procedures
- Examination rules
- Appeals processes

Any non-compliance with these regulations is managed in accordance with both SERC Quality Assurance procedures and awarding body requirements. Incidents must be reported initially to the Deputy Head of School, who will consult the Quality, Excellence and Development Unit. The Head of Quality, Excellence and Development ensures all cases are handled in line with the relevant college and awarding body policies and procedures. Following consideration under awarding body and College quality assurance procedures, disciplinary action may also be considered under the appropriate disciplinary pathway when deemed necessary.

3.3.3 The Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedures

The SERC Anti-Bullying SOP identifies the different forms of bullying, including emotional, physical, racist, sexual, homophobic, verbal, cyber-bullying (including social media), and bullying related to disability.

Any staff member who becomes aware of, or suspects, bullying must report it via the **Cause for Concern App**. Such incidents are normally dealt with by a member of the Safeguarding Team, working alongside relevant staff such as Tutors, DHOS, Student Support Officers, or Training Programme managers, in line with the Anti-Bullying SOP.

Once the situation has been reviewed, the Safeguarding Team will decide whether disciplinary action is required and, if so, ensures the matter is managed under **Pathway 2** of this SOP.

Where an incident raises safeguarding concerns, these will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding, Care and Welfare SOP. Disciplinary action may be deferred until safeguarding actions have been completed where appropriate.

3.3.4 Health and Safety Rules and Guidance

All students must follow the College Health and Safety Policy and rules in full.

Common examples of non-compliance include:

- Not following fire evacuation instructions
- Dangerous behaviour on campus
- Bringing items that could harm others
- Interfering with tools, equipment, or machinery
- Careless driving or failure to follow parking regulations
- Smoking in prohibited areas
- failure to comply with infection prevention and control measures

Any breach of Health and Safety rules must be recorded and reported immediately. These incidents may be dealt with under Pathway 1 or Pathway 2 depending on the circumstances eg a student regularly failing to wear PPE should be dealt with via **Pathway 1,** whereas

dangerous behaviour in a communal area should be reported to the Duty Manager who will take appropriate action under **Pathway 2** of this SOP.

3.3.5 The Acceptable ICT Use Policy

The Acceptable ICT Use Policy outlines the standards of behaviour expected when using college ICT systems. Any breach of these rules must be reported to the Deputy Head of School (DHOS)/ Duty Manager/Campus Manager who will take appropriate action under **Pathway 2** of this SOP.

Examples of non-compliance include:

- Accessing, creating, displaying, storing, transmitting, or printing obscene, offensive, or distressing material
- Creating or sending defamatory content
- Sharing material that infringes copyright
- Sending unsolicited commercial or advertising messages
- Unauthorised access to SERC or JANET systems
- Sharing, publishing, stealing, or destroying confidential information (including passwords and personal data)
- Using another person's account or password
- Creating or sending material intended to defraud or support criminal activity (e.g., phishing)
- Making covert audio or video recordings without consent
- Using systems to cheat, plagiarise, or steal work
- Running a business using college IT systems without permission

3.3.6 Substance Misuse

All staff and students must take reasonable steps to prevent the use or misuse of controlled drugs, alcohol or other substances on college premises. Procedures for responding to incidents are outlined in the SERC Substance Misuse SOP.

Any suspected or confirmed incident of substance abuse must be reported immediately to the Duty Manager, who will take appropriate action in line with **Pathway 2** of this SOP.

3.3.7 Promoting respectful behaviour

The College requires students to behave in a fashion that ensures that the rights and freedoms of other students, college staff, contractor staff, local business owners, and local residents are respected.

Respect for Others (Students, Staff, Contractors, Placement Providers)

All students and staff (including contractor employees) have the right to work and learn without experiencing inappropriate behaviours that cause distractions or interruption to their activities. Any incident must be reported immediately to the Duty Manager or Campus Manager, who will take action under **Pathway 2** of this SOP and may involve the PSNI where necessary.

Examples of inappropriate behaviour include:

- Aggressive or threatening language/body language
- Physical assault

- Repeated disruption of the learning environment
- Theft or vandalism
- Making false accusations about another student or staff member
- Inappropriate or harmful posts on social media
- Vexatious allegations against staff, students, placement providers or contractors

Conduct occurring online, including through social media, messaging applications, artificial intelligence platforms and other digital communication tools, may be subject to disciplinary action where there is a sufficient connection to the College, its activities, its students, staff, contractors, placement providers or reputation.

Respect for Neighbours and the Local Community

Local businesses and residents have the right not to experience disruption due to student behaviour. Misconduct occurring on the way to or from college, or behaviour that causes distress or inconvenience to local businesses and residents, may be considered a breach of this SOP. Reports are referred to the Duty Manager/Campus Manager for action under **Pathway 2** of this SOP.

Examples include:

- Aggressive, abusive, or threatening behaviour
- Physical assault
- Inappropriate or inconsiderate parking
- Behaviour that harms the college's reputation

Respect for College Property and Equipment

The College has responsibility to ensure that all tools, equipment and other resources are maintained for their intended purpose. Any student found to be damaging such tools and equipment or other resources will face disciplinary action. Incidents of this nature should be reported to the Duty Manager / Campus Manager who will take action in line with **Pathway 2** of this SOP.

Summary table of the key behaviour/performance requirements as set out in section 3.3

Category	Key Requirements/ Expectations	Non-compliance examples	Reporting/ Action
Attendance, Performance & Classroom Behaviour	Minimum attendance; notifying absence; deadlines; classroom behaviour; PPE/uniforms; respect & equality	Poor attendance; disruption; missing deadlines; misuse of phones; not using PPE.	Handled under **Pathway 1** by programme staff.
Assessment & Examination Malpractice	Follow awarding body rules; plagiarism rules; exam regulations.	Plagiarism; exam misconduct; dishonest practices.	Report to **DHOS** → **Quality, Excellence and Development Unit** → follow awarding body procedures.

Anti-Bullying	Emotional, physical, racist, sexual, homophobic, verbal, cyber, disability-based bullying.	Any bullying behaviour.	Report via **Cause for Concern** → Safeguarding → **possible Pathway 2** action.
Health & Safety Compliance	Follow all Health & Safety policies.	Ignoring fire instructions; dangerous behaviour; smoking breaches; infectious disease breaches.	**Pathway 1** by programme staff **for classroom breaches**. **Breaches outside classroom** - report to Duty Manager → **Pathway 2** action..
Acceptable Use of IT	Follow ICT acceptable use policies.	Obscene/abusive material; hacking; password misuse; fraud; unauthorised access; plagiarism.	Report to DHOS/Duty Manager/Campus Manager→ **Pathway 2** action.
Substance Abuse	Follow SERC Substance Misuse SOP.	Use/possession/distributing alcohol, drugs or controlled substances while engaged in SERC activity	Report to Duty Manager/Campus Manager → **Pathway 2**
Respect for Others	Respectful behaviour towards staff, students, contractors.	Aggression; assault; disruption; theft; social media harassment.	Report to Duty Manager/Campus Manager → **Pathway 2**; may involve PSNI.
Respect for Neighbours & Community	Appropriate behaviour to/from College and on placements.	Threatening behaviour; assault; poor parking; damaging behaviour that causes, or is likely to cause, serious reputational damage to the College.	Report to Duty Manager/Campus Manager → **Pathway 2** action.
Respect for Property & Equipment	Proper use of tools, equipment and resources.	Damage to equipment or property.	Report to Duty Manager/Campus Manager → **Pathway 2** action

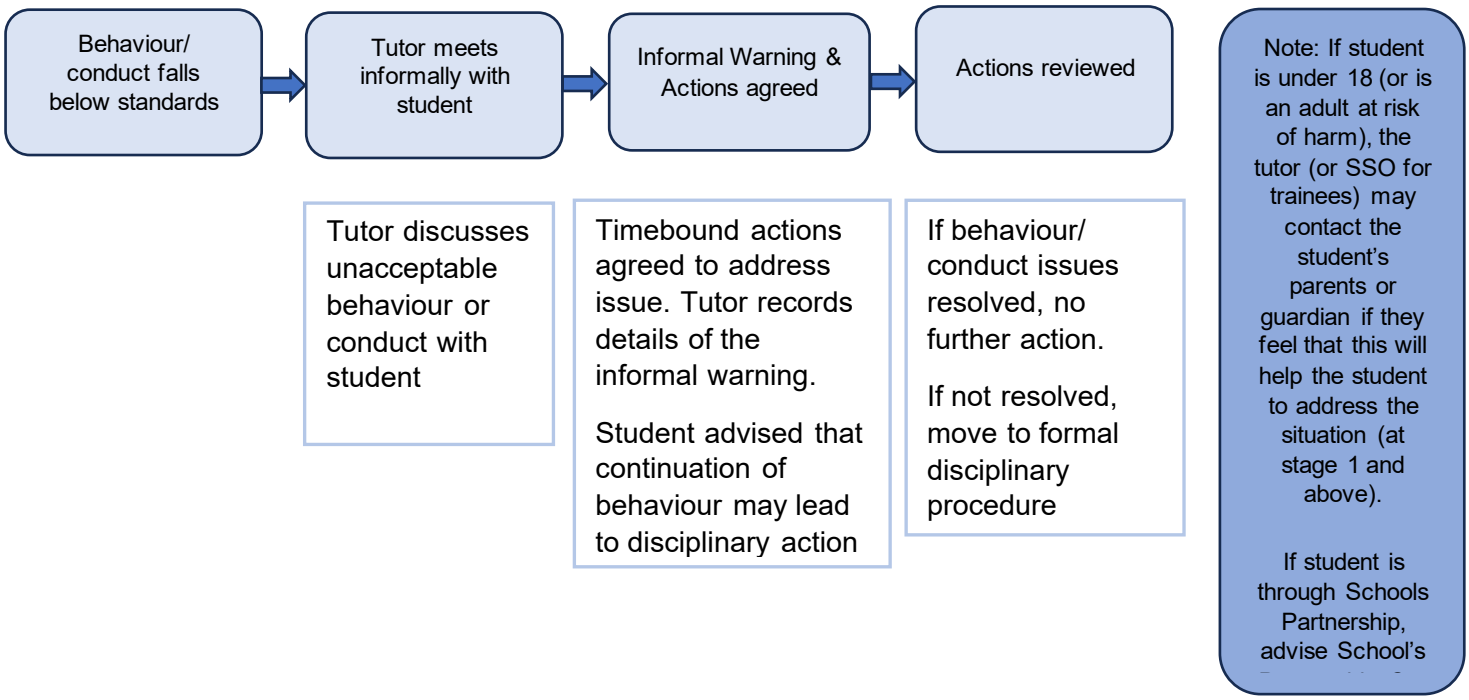
4.0 The Informal Disciplinary Procedure

Tutors are responsible for establishing clear expectations for student attendance, performance and behaviour expectations associated with their programme and providing students with assistance and support in meeting those expectations.

Should a student or trainee display conduct or behaviours which fail to meet the acceptable expectations of their programme, their tutor will in the first instance discuss the matter with the student individually on an informal basis and complete a timebound action plan. Examples of these types of behaviours are provided in Appendix 3 and an **Informal Warning and Action Plan template** is provided in Appendix 7.

Notes of any informal warning should be recorded and retained by the tutor and may need to be reviewed should this be escalated to the next level. A student may have more than one informal warning recorded.

Informal Disciplinary Procedure Overview



Where the informal approach has not resolved the conduct or behaviour concerns, or where the matter is of a more serious nature, the formal procedure will be initiated.

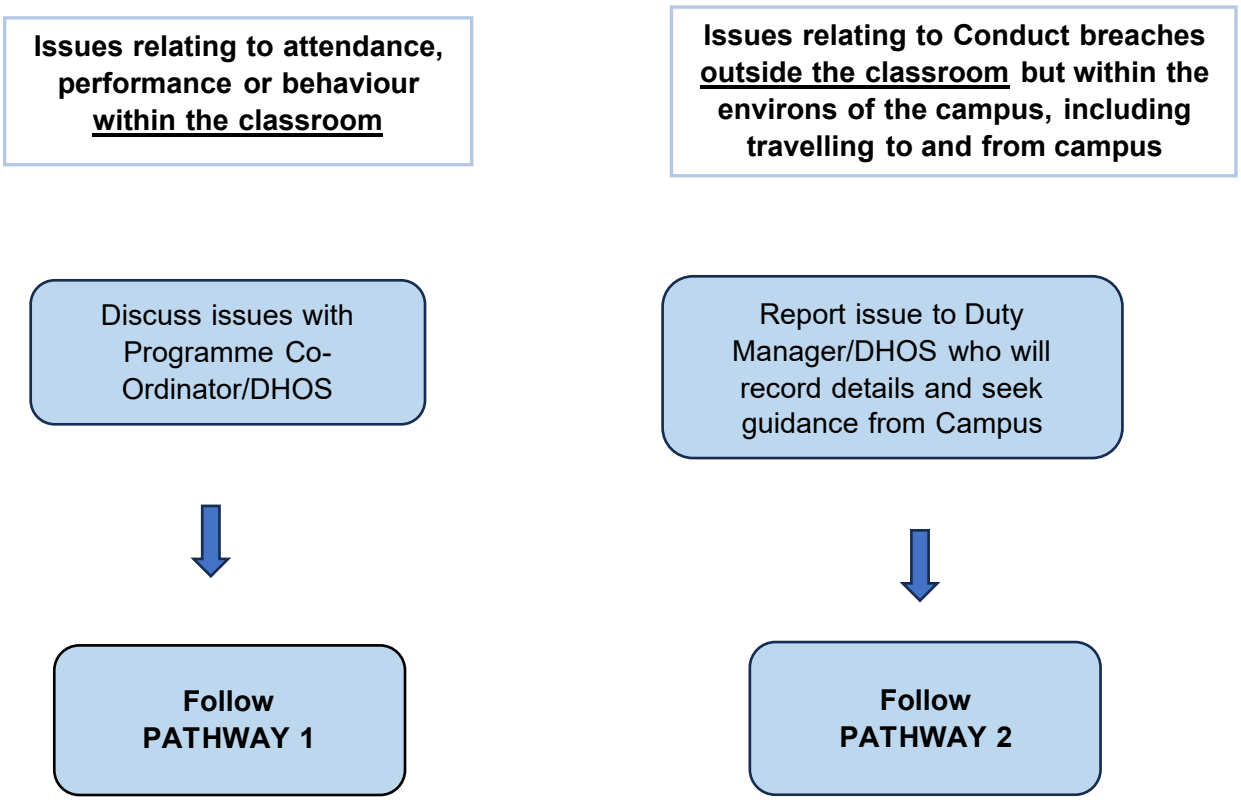
5.0 The Formal Disciplinary Procedure

5.1 Overview of the formal procedure

Where the informal procedure has failed to resolve the conduct or behaviour issues, or where the issue is more serious in nature, the formal procedure will be invoked. Examples of these types of behaviours are provided in Appendix 3.

Action taken under the Formal Procedure follows 2 distinct pathways depending on the nature of the issue: issues within the classroom

environment (eg attendance, performance or behaviour) follow Pathway 1 and issues relating to all other Conduct breaches outside the classroom follow Pathway 2 as detailed below:



5.2 Disciplinary Pathway 1: Attendance, Performance, Behaviour issues within the classroom

Where the informal procedure has failed to resolve the attendance, performance or behaviours issues within the classroom, or where the incident is deemed to be of a more serious issue, the formal procedure will be invoked.

Depending on the nature of the issue, a period of Time Out may be considered in conjunction with the Campus Manager, more details on Time Out can be found in Section 6.2.

Disciplinary Pathway 1

Actions for dealing with attendance, performance and behaviour issues within the classroom will normally be dealt with as detailed below. Staff responsibilities for each level of warning are detailed in Table 1. Should the issue be of a more serious nature, the DHOS should seek advice from the Campus Manager who, in conjunction with the Head of School will identify next steps.

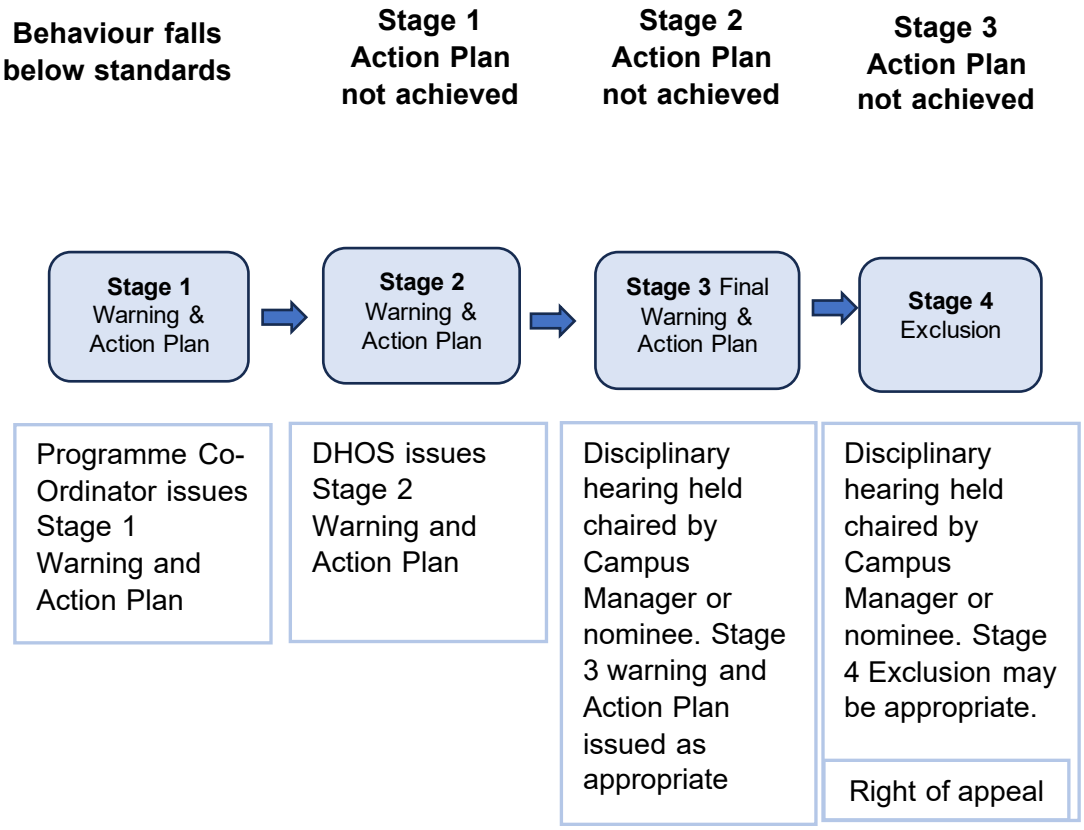


Table 1: Staff responsibilities for each level of warning

Level of Warning	Staff involved in providing details of issue	Formal Disciplinary Hearing convened?	Staff responsible for issuing warning
Stage 1 Warning	Tutor	No	Programme Co-Ordinator
Stage 2 Warning	Tutor/Programme Co-ordinator	No The DHOS / APM / HTPA should meet with the student (and their parent / guardian as appropriate) formally to discuss the concern	DHOS
Stage 3 Final Warning	Tutor/Programme Co-ordinator/DHOS	Yes	Chair of Disciplinary Panel*
Stage 4 Exclusion	Tutor/Programme Co-ordinator/DHOS	Yes	Chair of Disciplinary Panel*. NB *exclusion must be confirmed with the Deputy Principal Curriculum or nominated member of CMT*

* Disciplinary Panel to comprise of Senior member of School Staff eg HOS, PL or DHOS, and a Campus Manager. Chair will normally be the Campus Manager.

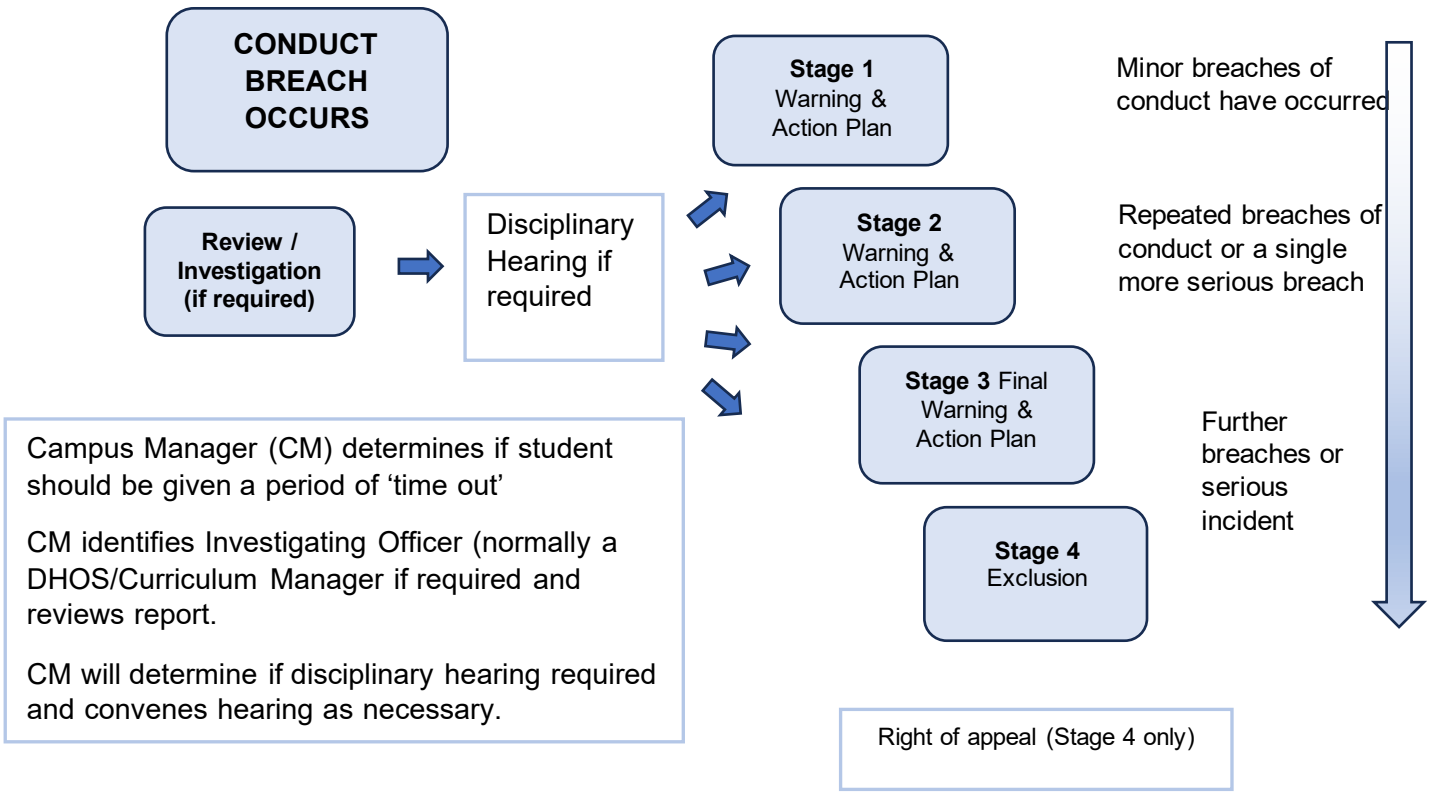
Warnings issued to the student should be recorded on the Student Portal by the Chair of the Disciplinary Panel.

5.3 Disciplinary Pathway 2: Conduct Breaches outside the classroom

Actions for dealing with conduct breaches outside the classroom are detailed below. Conduct issues outside the classroom include behaviour in communal areas, online environments, placements, educational visits, transport-related incidents and interactions with members of the public connected to College activities.

In normal circumstances these stages are followed sequentially. However, in certain situations, particularly those involving serious disciplinary breaches, it may be necessary to commence at Stage 2,3 or 4.

Depending on the nature of the issue, a period of Time Out may be considered in conjunction with the Campus Manager, more details can be found in Section 6.2 of this SOP.



Warnings issued to the student should be recorded on the Student Portal.

* Disciplinary Panel to comprise of Senior member of School Staff eg HOS, PL or DHOS, and a Campus Manager. Chair will normally be the Campus Manager.

6.0 Implementing the formal disciplinary procedure

The following sections of this document are for use by the Campus Managers/Investigating Officers as they complete the disciplinary process.

6.1 Review / Investigation

For issues relating to **Pathway 1** Attendance, Performance or Classroom behaviours, a formal review / investigation will not normally be necessary; it is sufficient for the tutor in conjunction with the Programme Co-ordinator to review the situation and determine if a Stage 1 is required based on the available information. A DHOS in conjunction with the programme co-ordinator will issue a Stage 2 warning in Pathway 1 situations.

Where an incident relating to **Pathway 2** breaches of conduct is reported, the Campus Manager will identify an appropriate person to review / investigate the alleged misconduct where necessary, establish facts and make recommendations, before further action is taken.

Where the precise details of the incident are clear and not in dispute, the Campus Manager may decide that a full review / investigation is not required.

In identifying a suitable person to review / investigate the alleged misconduct the Campus Manager will take into consideration the curriculum area, the sensitivities around the issues including potential conflicts of interest to ensure that a high degree of impartiality is maintained. DHOS/PLs may be requested to undertake reviews / investigations into issues relating to another School or campus as required by the Campus Manager.

The Campus Manager will provide the Investigating Officer with the following:

- Terms of Reference;
- Details of what specifically is to be reviewed / investigated;
- Names of witnesses (if known);
- Timeframe;
- Contact details.

The Investigating Officer should refer to **Appendix 5 Guidance for Completing a Review / Investigation** and should complete the review / investigation report template provided within it which summarises the key points and provides a recommendation to the Campus Manager for consideration.

The Campus Manager will consider the review / investigation report and decide if it is necessary for disciplinary action and if so, will convene a panel for the Disciplinary Hearing.

If the Campus Manager decides it is not necessary to convene a disciplinary hearing, he or she may do one of the following:

- take no further action
- ask an appropriate Deputy Head of School (or nominated member of staff) to warn/counsel the student informally
- issue a Stage 1 warning for inappropriate conduct.

If the student is enrolled at the College through the Schools Partnerships provision, then the Deputy Head of School Partnership should be advised of the concern regarding the student's behaviour.

6.2 Time Out

'Time Out' is a precautionary measure which is used to remove a student from the College premises and activities so that a review / investigation can take place without prejudice and/or to protect the safety and mental wellbeing of those involved. It means short term, total removal from all College premises and activities.

'Time Out' is not a disciplinary sanction and will be invoked only where it is considered essential to do so.

Time Out can only be instigated with the agreement of a Campus Manager following discussion with the relevant staff from within the student's school.

Further details on the process for enacting a period of 'Time Out' can be found in **Appendix 4.**

6.3 Illness / Welfare Issues

Where a student's behaviour would normally give rise to action under the Disciplinary Procedures, but the College has reasonable grounds to believe that a health, wellbeing, or welfare concern may be a contributing factor, the College may require the student to undertake a period of temporary withdrawal, or 'time-out' under the *Wellness to Study* procedure. This arrangement will remain in place until the College is satisfied that the student is fit to resume their studies and that any associated disciplinary matters can be appropriately considered. Any period of temporary withdrawal will be managed in accordance with the *Wellness to Study* procedure set out in the Safeguarding, Care and Welfare SOP. Upon the student's return, the College reserves the right to recommence, continue, or initiate disciplinary proceedings where deemed appropriate.

6.4 Special Educational Needs / Disability

Where a student has disclosed a Special Educational Need or disability to the College, the College will take steps to determine whether any alleged misconduct is related to the student's specific needs. Advice in these situations should be sought from Campus Manager or the Head of Learner Welfare prior to any disciplinary action being taken. In such cases the student may be asked to take a precautionary period of "time-out" while the situation is reviewed and appropriate arrangements put in place.

Before any formal process is applied, the College will consider whether the behaviour is partly attributable to a disclosed disability, neurodivergent condition, mental health condition or other protected characteristic. Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments should be considered and implemented to ensure the student is not disadvantaged by the disciplinary process itself, for example allowing the presence of a support worker during meetings or considering behavioral support interventions alongside or instead of to formal disciplinary sanctions where appropriate. Advice should be sought from Learning Support and/or the Learning Support Co-ordinator where appropriate.

Disciplinary action which includes "Time Out" will not be delayed where safety concerns exist, however reasonable adjustments will be considered throughout all stages of the process.

6.5 Disciplinary Hearing

The decision to establish a disciplinary hearing will be made by the Campus Manager, based on the details/evidence of the incident as prepared by the Investigating Officer.

The disciplinary panel is charged with conducting the disciplinary hearing and has the responsibility of assigning an appropriate level of warning (up to and including exclusion) to an individual student for breaching the College's acceptable behaviour requirements. In doing so, any mitigating circumstances presented by the student or by staff on the panel should be fully considered.

In all cases disciplinary decisions will be made on the balance of probabilities, based upon the available evidence.

6.5.1 Notification of Disciplinary Hearing

Any student(s) invited to attend a formal disciplinary hearing shall be entitled to:

- Receive at least five (5) working days' written notice of the disciplinary hearing unless agreed otherwise by all parties
- A clear statement in writing from the Campus Manager of the alleged misconduct.
- Make representations (orally and in writing).

Be accompanied and represented by a person of their choice (who may be a representative from the College SU, a family member or a friend or a SERC member of staff). Legal representation is not normally permitted as this is an internal College procedure.

If a student is under 18 or recognised as an adult at risk then a parent / guardian or other authorised person will be contacted and invited to attend.

An invite to formal disciplinary hearing template is provided in **Appendix 8.**

The Chair of the Disciplinary Panel should be informed by the student or their representative in advance of the disciplinary hearing who is attending as their representative.

6.5.2 Composition of Disciplinary Hearing Panel

In normal circumstances disciplinary hearings will involve the staff identified in **Appendix 3** and will involve an appropriate member of the College.

Disciplinary Panel to comprise of Senior member of School Staff eg HOS, PL or DHOS, and a Campus Manager. The Campus Manager will normally chair the panel.

It is this Panel only which will reach a decision, having reviewed the available information presented by the Investigating Officer, who may also be present at the request of the Chair.

Should the Disciplinary Hearing conclude that a Stage 4 Exclusion is to be awarded, the Chairperson will confirm this with a Deputy Principal Curriculum or nominated member of CMT before notifying the student of the outcome in writing.

The Disciplinary Hearing Protocol is detailed in **Appendix 6** of this SOP.

6.6 Disciplinary outcomes and warnings

6.6.1 Disciplinary outcomes

If the student against whom the allegation is made chooses not to attend, the hearing may, at the discretion of the Chair, continue in their absence.

Notification of the disciplinary outcome will be given to the student at the hearing and the notice itself will be sent to the student by the DHOS / TO Administrator (or their nominee) normally within five (5) working days of the hearing.

All warnings shall be recorded in the Student Portal. In receiving a Stage 1,2 or 3 warning, actions will be identified that the student must take to prevent further occurrences of unacceptable behaviours.

For **Training Organisation trainees**, the tutor should notify the relevant Training Support Officer (TSO) who will issue the warning and record it on the e-PTP, with notification to the Department as necessary.

For students enrolled through the **Schools Partnership** provision, the Deputy Head of School Partnership should request that staff from the student's school address the behavioural issue with the student.

Warnings at Stage 1,2 and 3 will remain live for the duration of the programme unless other programme guidelines exist (eg Training Organisation, Business Services). A Stage 4 (Exclusion) will be time bound to a maximum of 5 years.

The stages of the formal disciplinary procedure are detailed below and templates for the issuing of each stage are located in **Appendices 9-13.**

6.6.2 Levels of disciplinary warning

Level of Warning	**Pathway 1 – Attendance, Performance, Behaviour issues in the classroom**	**Pathway 2 – Conduct issues outside the classroom**
Stage 1	Significant or repeated breaches of attendance, performance or classroom behaviour issues. **Issued by Programme Co-ordinator**	Issued for minor conduct breaches by **Campus Manager or nominee**
Stage 2	If concerns continue two weeks after a Stage 1 warning, or sooner where there is a significant further incident, the Programme Co-ordinator will notify the **Deputy Head of School (DHOS)** and APM/HTPA through the TSO (for Training Organisation trainees) who will then meet formally with the student, and their parent/guardian where appropriate, to discuss the ongoing concerns. This meeting will normally lead to the issuing of a **Stage 2 warning**, along with a **time-bound action plan**—typically two	In instances other than minor conduct breaches, the issuing of a Stage 2 Warning may be appropriate. In receiving a Stage 2 warning actions will be identified that the student must take to prevent further occurrences of unacceptable behaviours. **Issued by Campus Manager or nominee and in conjunction with the** APM/HTPA through the TSO for Training Organisation trainees

	weeks—setting out the specific steps the student must take to improve.	
Stage 3 Final	If the student fails to demonstrate all of the improvements in behaviour, performance or attendance set in the Stage 2 action plan a disciplinary hearing will be arranged with the student, their representative and DHOS / APM / HTPA and/or Programme Co-ordinator. **This meeting will normally be chaired by a Campus Manager.** This meeting will normally result in the issuing of a Stage 3 Final Warning and a time bound action plan detailing the actions the student needs to take to improve.	If during the life of a Stage 2 Warning a student commits a further disciplinary offence, a Stage 3 Final Warning may be issued following a disciplinary hearing. The Disciplinary Panel will comprise of Senior member of School Staff eg HOS, PL or DHOS, and a Campus Manager. The Campus Manager will normally Chair the Panel. TO staff will be invited to join the panel in cases involving TO students / trainees. Equally, in instances of a serious conduct breach it may be appropriate for a Stage 3 Final Warning to be issued without the student having previously received a prior Stage 2 Warning. In receiving a Stage 3 warning actions will be identified that the student must take to prevent further occurrences of unacceptable behaviours.
Stage 4 Exclusion	If the student has failed to engage with the terms of the action plan set at Stage 3 and has not improved their behaviour, performance or attendance in any way then the Programme Co-ordinator will arrange a further disciplinary hearing with the student, their representative and DHOS / APM / HTPA and/or Programme Co-ordinator. **This meeting will normally be chaired by a Campus Manager (or their nominee).** This meeting may result in the issuing of a Stage 4 Exclusion which will be time bound (to a maximum of 5 years). Should the Disciplinary Hearing conclude that a Stage 4 (Exclusion) is to be awarded, the disciplinary Chair will confirm this with a Deputy Principal or nominated member of CMT before notifying the student of the outcome in writing. The outcome of the Disciplinary Hearing will also be reported to the Deputy Principal of Curriculum.	In some instances, following a disciplinary hearing, it may be appropriate for a Stage 4 Exclusion to be issued which will be time bound (to a maximum of 5 years). Examples of this may include: • Serious violence • Distribution of illegal drugs • Possession of offensive weapons • Serious bullying • Significant safeguarding concerns • Serious discriminatory behaviour The Disciplinary Panel will comprise of Senior member of School Staff eg HOS, PL or DHOS, and a Campus Manager. The Campus Manager. will normally Chair the Panel. TO staff will be invited to join the panel in cases involving TO students / trainees.

		Should the Disciplinary Hearing conclude that a Stage 4 Exclusion is to be awarded the disciplinary Chairperson will confirm this with a Deputy Principal Curriculum or nominated member of CMT before notifying the student of the outcome in writing. The outcome of the Disciplinary Hearing will also be reported to the Deputy Principal of Curriculum.

6.6.3 Exclusion

Should the Disciplinary Hearing determine that a Stage 4 Exclusion is appropriate, the Chairperson of the hearing will first confirm the decision with the Deputy Principal Curriculum, or a nominated member of the College Management Team (CMT), before formally notifying the student of the outcome in writing within 5 working days of the hearing having taken place.

The exclusion of a student from the College will be for a specified period, as recommended by the disciplinary panel, and will not exceed five years. The Chairperson of the disciplinary panel will determine and record the duration of the exclusion, ensuring that it remains within the maximum five-year limit.

All Stage 4 exclusions will be recorded on the Student Management System in accordance with the College Records Retention Schedule and Data Protection requirements. Applications received during the exclusion period will be referred to the Head of Learner Welfare for review before any decision is made.

Students who have been excluded following a disciplinary hearing will be expected to comply with the terms of their exclusion before re-applying to the College.

6.6.4 Alternative Options

In completing and reviewing the action plans that are issued as part of the Stage 2 or Stage 3 Warnings the DHOS in conjunction with the Campus Manager may consider the following actions regarding the student's continued engagement with the programme of study. This may involve the student being:

a. Offered a reduced programme, or;
b. Advised to pursue an alternative programme of study.

It is the responsibility of the DHOS / APM / HTPA to ensure that the student's enrolment records are updated including the student portal. The Campus Manager is responsible for ensuring that all Stage 3 and Stage 4 documentation is retained in compliance with SERC Data Protection policies.

In all cases when making decisions, all staff must give consideration as to the effect that the student's failure to perform and behave appropriately is having on the continued satisfactory progress and learning of the other students in the class group.

6.6.5 Other penalties

In addition to, or in substitution for, any formal warning, a disciplinary hearing may impose one or more of the following penalties:

- the student gives a written undertaking as to his/her subsequent conduct within the College;
- the student gives a written or verbal apology;
- reimbursement of proven costs associated with damage or loss caused by the student's actions;
- withdrawal of privileges, e.g. exclusion from the College services, The Library or computer network, or such other sanction which the College considers appropriate.

6.6.6 Other circumstances leading to exclusion

A significant breach of the action plan or other serious offence during the currency of a final warning may lead to exclusion based on the appropriate information being provided to a Campus Manager for consideration. Any action leading to exclusion will be ratified a Deputy Principal Curriculum or a nominated member of CMT.

7.0 Appeals

7.1 The Right of Appeal

A student against whom formal disciplinary action has been taken at Stage 4 (under either Pathway) shall have the right of appeal. The right to appeal is only available in the situation where the student can demonstrate one or more of the following:

- The SERC procedures were not correctly followed in determining the outcome;
- Additional relevant information or evidence has come to light that, had it been known at the time of the disciplinary sanction, would have led to a different outcome;
- There was demonstrable bias or prejudice in the decision reached;
- The sanction was excessive or inappropriate given the nature of the issue.

The right to appeal in these circumstances is only available to a student for 5 working days after being issued with the Formal Warning.

7.2 Appeal against Stage 4 (Exclusion)

The request for such an appeal shall be made in writing, giving full supporting evidence, to the Principal and Chief Executive within five working days of receipt of the decision. This evidence should clearly state the grounds for appeal.

Should the Appeals Panel determine that the grounds for appeal meet the criteria outlined in section 7.1 then an appeal meeting will be arranged. Should the Appeals Panel determine that the grounds for appeal does not meet the criteria outlined in section 7.1, they will inform the Principal and Chief Executive and a letter will be sent to the appellant to inform them of this decision, outlining the reasons why.

The Principal and Chief Executive will appoint an Appeals Panel consisting of two senior staff members who have had no prior involvement in the matter. The recommendations of the Appeals Panel will normally be accepted unless there is a compelling reason not to do so.

Normally appeals will be heard within 14 working days of the appeal being lodged, unless varied by mutual agreement.

In the case of an appeal against a Stage 4 Exclusion, the exclusion shall not be confirmed until the appeal has been determined, but the student will not attend the College until the outcome of the appeal has been determined.

7.3 Appeal Panel

The Appeal Panel, as appointed by the Principal and Chief Executive or their nominee, will normally consist of two senior members of College staff who have had no previous involvement in the case or the original disciplinary hearing.

The Disciplinary Appeals Panel will summarise their findings and make a recommendation to the Principal and Chief Executive for their consideration. On reaching a decision, the Principal and Chief Executive will nominate a member of staff to liaise with the student/student's family as appropriate to implement the outcome of the appeal. This is likely to be the person who chaired the appeals panel.

The Appeal Panel may:

- uphold the decision,
- substitute a lesser sanction,
- overturn the decision.

The outcome decision of the appeal will be final.

7.4 Appeal Hearing Guidance

All appeals shall be held in line with the terms of the Disciplinary Hearings Protocol (Appendix 6). It should be noted that a student may be accompanied and represented by a person of their choice, who may be a representative from the College Students' Union, a family member or a friend, or a SERC member of staff. Legal representation is not normally permitted under this internal disciplinary process. If a student is under 18 or deemed to be an adult at risk then a parent / guardian / or other authorized person should be contacted and invited to attend

8.0 Support for students

SERC recognises that any disciplinary process may cause a level of anxiety and concern to the students. The Lena by Inspire Student Counselling service is available to all students on 0800 098 8816. This free and independent service provides immediate and confidential support, and is available all day, every day (i.e. 24/7).

Students may also seek independent advice from the Students' Union or another independent advisor of their choosing.

The Students Union can also be contacted for support and can signpost or refer students to agencies and services which best meet their needs. They can be contacted at studentsunion@serc.ac.uk.

9.0 Records

All files relating to an individual student's disciplinary process will be retained on the college IT network and in accordance with GDPR.

10.0 Criminal Offences

Where a student suspected of committing a criminal offence has been reported to the police, the College may deal with any breach of the Student Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP arising out of the same allegations in line with this procedure.

In serious situations the appropriate Campus Manager will refer the issue to the College's Risk Assessment and Management Plan Process. As a result of this, the College may:

- Exclude the student for a sufficient period of time to allow the criminal justice process to reach a conclusion
- Place restrictions on the student pending the outcome of the criminal justice process
- Allow the student to continue to participate in College activities in line with an agreed management plan
- Enable the issue to be dealt with in line with the Student Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP

The College may defer such action if to proceed might in any way hinder a criminal investigation. The College recognises that any offence which may attract a community penalty or custodial sentence should normally be dealt with initially by the courts. Following a criminal conviction, if it has not already done so, the College may then continue with its own disciplinary procedure.

Following the imposition of a penalty by the court, the College will give careful consideration as to whether or not it is appropriate for the student to return to college. In such circumstances the student will be required to disclose their conviction in line with the terms of the Safeguarding, Care and Welfare SOP.

Failure to disclose a conviction where disclosure is required under College policies, safeguarding arrangements or programme requirements may be treated as a disciplinary offence.

11.0 Barring notice

A Deputy Principal or other member of CMT of the College may direct one of the Campus Managers to issue a Barring Notice to any member of the public (ie not a student) whose presence or behaviour on College property is inappropriate, distracting or unsafe for the students, staff and contractors of the College. Such a notice may also be issued to excluded students who fail to exclude themselves from College premises. Once issued a copy of the notice will be retained by the College and, if necessary passed to the PSNI for enforcement. A copy of the Barring Notice is provided in Appendix 14

12.0 Notes

If in any case it has not been possible (for whatever reason) to comply fully with this SOP, then provided that both sides in the case are aware of the non-compliance and are nonetheless willing for the procedure to continue then such non-compliance shall not invalidate the decision reached.

These procedures shall from time to time be subject to review in the light of operating experience and/or changing circumstances.

The disciplinary process, once entered into, is confidential to all parties. Therefore, it is essential that any individual involved in the process respect this paramount need for confidentiality. Breaches of such confidentiality may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

13.0 Communication Plan

This Procedure will be uploaded to the College intranet and referred to in staff induction and training.

14.0 Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually, or when the need for change has been identified.

Appendix 1: Document Change History

Version	Date	Change Detail
1.0	March 2024	Transferred to new Accessibility Template
1.1	January 2025	Responsible Owner updated to “Head of Welfare and Pastoral Care”
1.2	June 2026	Significant Changes throughout SOP to include: Processes have been revised to simplify and clarify the process that staff need to follow particular in relation to classroom management issues. There have been clarifications around the composition of the Disciplinary Panels. There have been clarifications around direct roles of staff to carryout reviews/investigations Used the word “Reviews/investigations to reflect that many cases do not need an extensive investigation - a simpler review process is adequate in these cases.

Appendix 2: Student Code of Conduct

This code sets out the standard of conduct that SERC expects of all students so that everyone enjoys a safe, healthy and inclusive learning environment. Good conduct means acting with honesty, being considerate and showing respect for yourself and others as well as taking responsibility for your actions. It means treating everyone you meet with courtesy and avoiding any actions which may cause offence or harm to others.

Good conduct **In class** means…

- Attending every class, being punctual, and notifying staff of any absence
- Submitting coursework on time and making sure the work is all your own - do not copy from others, text books or the internet
- Complying with Awarding Body and Examination regulations relating to submitting coursework, plagiarism and exam arrangements.
- Behaving appropriately in the classroom
- Adhering to guidance from tutors on mobile phones/devices, breaks and consumption of food/drink in the classroom
- Showing respect for other students eg allowing others to speak, not causing disruption and not swearing
- Complying with guidance on appropriate use of the College IT systems

Good conduct **In and around SERC** means…

- Showing respect for property and facilities by disposing of litter properly and not damaging any tools, equipment or other resources
- Driving and parking appropriately on campus grounds and with consideration for others
- E-scooters (and their batteries) may not be brought into any of the campus buildings due to the Fire Regulations that the College must comply with
- Not behaving in a way that damages the reputation of the College
- Not bringing offensive weapons or items which could harm others into College
- Adhering to the College's No Smoking Policy which includes e-cigarettes
- Conforming with all Health and Safety rules and instructions such as fire evacuation, safe use of machinery and the wearing of Personal Protective Equipment or the correct uniform
- Not consuming, possessing or distributing alcohol or drugs while engaged in SERC related activity

Good conduct **Towards Others** means…

- Recognising the diversity of our College community by treating everyone with respect and not discriminating against anyone who is different from you.
- Respecting the rights and freedoms of other students, staff, college contractors, local residents and business owners
- Actively discouraging bullying and harassment and reporting any incidents that you see. Speak out against racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice
- Not making comments which are abusive, threatening, discriminatory, harassing, defamatory or likely to damage the safety, wellbeing or reputation of members of the College community

- not displaying clothing, symbols, emblems, images or tattoos that are reasonably capable of causing intimidation, harassment, hatred or serious offence to others.

Our commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive environment extends to ending Violence Against Women and Girls and everyone has a role to play in preventing such violence and in supporting those affected by it. We have a zero-tolerance approach to any behaviour, language or action that constitutes harassment, abuse or violence against women and girls, and we expect you to speak up and seek support from college staff if you witness or are made aware of any incidents.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct will be addressed using the SERC Student Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP.

Appendix 3: Examples of behaviour and levels of warning

The table below provides guidance for the purposes of consistency, however it should be noted that each case will be reviewed on its own set of circumstances in order to determine the most appropriate level of sanction.

Repeated misconduct may result in a student being moved through the warning stages sequentially.

Students/trainees may be placed at any level of warning depending on the circumstances associated with their behaviour. This will be determined by the:

- seriousness of the incident
- risk that other students and staff were exposed to
- potential impact on the learning of others
- potential impact on the reputation of the college as an environment in which everyone is safe and respected
- any aggravating or mitigating circumstances

Disciplinary Level	Staff responsible for issuing warning	Examples of behaviour that may attract a warning at this level – for guidance only
Informal Stage	Tutor / Programme Co-ordinator / Training Support Officer (TSO) / Student Support Officer (SSO)	• Absence/lack of punctuality • Refusing to follow instruction • Disruptive behaviour • Minor breach of Health & Safety procedures
Stage 1 warning	Programme Co-ordinator / Training Support Officer (TSO) / Student Support Officer (SSO)	• Repeated absence / lack of punctuality; • non-compliance with course work submission requirements; • Refusing to follow Staff instructions. • Behaviour likely to disrupt the learning of others. • Relevant breach of H&S Policy; • Other minor breach of Code of Conduct
Stage 2 Warning	DHOS / Assistant Programme Manager (TO) (by exception Campus Manager / HOS)	• Regular unacceptable language and demeanour towards staff; • Behaviour likely to bring SERC into disrepute; • Inappropriate use of Social Media in relation to other students and staff or in relation to College activities; • Examination offences, as defined in the College Assessment Regulations; • The making of vexatious claims against staff or other students; • Discrimination (racial, religious, gender, learning disability or sexual nature) • Aggressive, threatening behaviour or body language; • Breach of H&S Policy, including failure to comply with infection prevention and control measures

Stage 3 Final Warning	Campus Manager/ PL/HOS as a Disciplinary Panel	• Physical assault to another person; • Proven and systematic bullying offences; • Examination offences, as defined in the College Assessment Regulations; • Breach of H&S Policy, including failure to comply with infection prevention and control measures • The making of serious vexatious claims against staff or other students; • Behaviour which brings, or may bring, the College into disrepute; • Theft or damage to the College property, caused intentionally or recklessly; • Misuse or unauthorised use of the College premises or items of property, including computer misuse; • Discrimination (racial, religious, gender, learning disability or sexual nature) • Being under the influence of alcohol or other substances on College grounds. • Harassment, abuse, intimidation or violence directed towards women and girls.
Stage 4 Exclusion	Campus Manager/ PL/HOS as a Disciplinary Panel To be approved by Deputy Principal or nominated member of CMT	• Violent, indecent, disorderly, threatening or offensive behaviour or language whilst on the College premises or whilst engaged in any College activity; • Action which causes injury or impairs safety on the college premises; • Inappropriate use of social media in relation to staff or other students; • Significant breach of H&S Policy, including failure to comply with infection prevention and control measures • Distribution of banned substances; • Criminal offences where these offences involve other members of the College or directly affect the interests of the College; • Repeated or serious harassment, abuse, intimidation or violence directed towards women and girls; • Examination offences, as defined in the College Assessment Regulations.

Appendix 4: Guidance for Time Out

'Time Out' is a precautionary measure which is used to remove a student from the College premises and activities so that a review / investigation can take place without prejudice or to ensure the safety of all involved. It means short term, total removal from all College premises and activities.

'Time Out' is not a disciplinary sanction and will be invoked only where it is considered essential to do so.

The fact that a student has had a period of 'Time Out' shall not be taken into account by any subsequent disciplinary hearing.

'Time Out' means total removal from all College premises and activities which may include temporarily revoking the student's IT access depending on the nature of the incident

Wherever possible, and while maintaining the safety and welfare of other students and staff, arrangements will be made to minimise the disruption to the students' programme of study, e.g. as far as possible arrangements will be made to allow such a student to complete outstanding academic work and sit examinations.

During a period of 'Time Out' a student / trainee may be instructed to have no contact of any kind with a named person or persons involved in the incident.

The Campus Manager should notify the HOS/DHOS with an instruction that the student(s) should be recorded as 'authorised absence' until further notice.

Process for enacting a 'Time Out':

It is key that when a 'Time Out' is necessary that the wellbeing of the student is fully considered. Therefore:

If the student is present, the Campus Manager, who should be accompanied by another member of staff, will meet the student and instruct them in person of their 'time out' and clarify the following key points:

1. The reason why 'Time Out' is being used. However, no discussion of the detail of the potential disciplinary allegations will occur at this time.
2. That 'Time Out' is not a disciplinary sanction. Time Out will normally be for up to 7 calendar days and may be extended where reasonably necessary to complete the investigation. Any extension must be authorised by a Campus Manager and communicated in writing.
3. The outcome of the review / investigation will determine whether disciplinary action is necessary.
4. Advise that the student will be contacted by the member of staff who is leading the review / investigation to arrange a meeting with the student to obtain details of the alleged incident.
5. Emphasise that they must not enter any College grounds until the review / Investigation process has concluded except to attend further meetings as part of the investigation process.

6. Advise student not to make contact (including social media) with any other students/parties involved in the alleged incident and subsequent review / investigation process
7. Advise the student about the availability of Pastoral Care support e.g. through Inspire Students.
8. Contact the next of kin if the student is under 18 years of age or a vulnerable adult and arrange for the parent to make arrangements for the student to get home safely.

If the student is not on-site, the Campus Manager should attempt to make contact with them by telephone. However, if contact cannot be made, a letter will be issued before the end of the same working day. It must include the details of points 1 to 7 as outlined above. If the student is under 18 or an adult at risk of harm, the College should contact the next of kin/emergency contact to inform them of the situation. It may be appropriate to provide details of support services e.g.Lena by Inspire Students at the time of this contact.

Please refer to 'Time Out' letter template below.

Time Out Letter Template

[Date]
[Name]
[Address]
[Address]
[Postcode]

Dear **[student/trainee name]**

Re: 'Time Out' from College with immediate effect

I regret to inform you that it is necessary to instruct you to take a period of 'Time Out' from the South Eastern Regional College with immediate effect. This 'Time Out' is to allow a full investigation to be carried out in relation to the following incident/allegation:

[Brief description of incident allegation]

This 'Time Out' is for a period of 7 days (although it may be extended if necessary). During the 'Time Out' you are not permitted to enter the grounds of any SERC Campus unless it is for the purpose of meeting the Investigation Officer. Should the College require additional time to complete this review / investigation, you will be notified by phone/letter in advance of the date shown above.

Your register will be marked as 'Authorised Absence' until the conclusion of the review / investigation and your return to College. If you are in receipt of EMA, payments will not be affected for the duration of this 'Time Out'.

Class notes are available on Moodle which you can access through the student intranet using your student log-in and password.

A 'Time Out' may cause a great deal of anxiety and concern both to you and your immediate family. I would like to make you aware that the LENA (by Inspire) Students Counselling service is available to you on 0800 098 8816, if you feel that you would benefit from immediate and confidential support. This service is available all day, every day (i.e. 24/7).

Yours sincerely,

[name]

[Job Title]

Appendix 5: Guidance for Completing a Review / Investigation

This outlines the process to follow when undertaking reviews / investigations relating to the performance or behaviour of a student(s). The over-riding principles in every case is for a fair, open and transparent review / investigation with no potential for allegations of conflicts of interest or impartiality in the actions of the person completing the review / investigation.

The following procedure must be adhered to in order that all investigations are conducted in a fair, consistent and confidential manner.

Who should review / investigate?

Once it has been considered necessary for a review / investigation to take place, the Campus Manager will appoint an Investigator eg an appropriate Deputy Head of School, Duty Manager, APM.

The Campus Manager will provide the investigator with an outline of the issues involved in the case and will highlight any particular questions that need to be addressed during the investigation.

Role of Reviewer / Investigator

The role of the Reviewer / Investigator will be to:

- gather all the relevant facts promptly before people's memories fade;
- establish the exact nature of the incident and record any appropriate evidence
- summarise findings and make recommendations by completing the investigation outcome template;
- present evidence at any subsequent disciplinary hearing and answer questions as required;
- Attend any appeal hearing as a witness, as required.

Guidance for Completing the Review / Investigation

In completing a review / investigation, it is good practice to work out the sequence of events that led to the incident and to highlight the actions of the individuals involved.

In preparing the sequence of events, the investigator should:

- take details and statements from the people that were involved and from identified witnesses;
- review any appropriate documentary evidence that is available (e.g. timetables, attendance records);
- review CCTV coverage, if available;
- if appropriate, consider information from the IT system e.g. sources on the College network.
- take statements as soon as possible after the incident. It is not normal practice for the person making the statement to be accompanied, although the investigating officer can make a judgement on this, for example if a student involved has special educational needs;
- if during the process of the review / investigation it becomes clear that there are gaps/inconsistencies in the information available, then the investigator should highlight these. If no suitable information is available, this should be noted;
- be mindful that the depth of the investigation should be appropriate for the incident in question;
- identify any individual who refuses to co-operate with the investigation;

- as part of the review / investigation, and to assist any subsequent disciplinary panel, note any extenuating circumstances relating to those involved. (Learning Support staff may assist with such information as appropriate);
- complete the review / investigation within an appropriate timeframe such that timely disciplinary action can be taken without causing major disadvantage to the student. A review / investigation will normally be completed within 10 working days, where reasonably practicable.
- in concluding the review / investigation, the investigator should briefly summarise the incident, highlight the key facts, and make a recommendation as to the appropriate disciplinary action, if any;
- return the completed report to the Designated Manager involved and ensure that the details remain confidential;
- ensure that all review / investigation matters are treated as confidential, and that all students assisting with a review / investigation should be advised of this.

Evaluating

In evaluating the evidence, the Investigator must:

- Review all the evidence and determine if there are any gaps in it;
- Take a view on all disputed relevant matters. It is important to note that while absolute certainty is desirable, it is not necessary. It is sufficient to form an opinion based on the balance of probabilities. If this cannot be done, further information may need to be sought;
- Be mindful that direct witness evidence (particularly from eye witnesses), who have no evident reason to be biased either way, will usually be stronger than indirect evidence;
- Take into account that evidence which is inconsistent with documents produced at the time is questionable and that evidence which contains inherent contradictions of its own is questionable, as is evidence which is vague or omits significant details;
- Consider the demeanour of witnesses at interview and the impact on the weight given to their evidence;
- Consider whether others may have influenced the witnesses;
- Remember that different individuals perceptions of the same events may differ, particularly when emotions are running high;
- Weigh up all the evidence and decide whether there is a “case to answer” i.e. whether it is likely that the misconduct did occur;
- Anonymous witness evidence should only be relied upon in exceptional circumstances.

Reporting

At the conclusion of a review / investigation, the investigator will write up their findings in the template provided below and return it together with copies of the statements, interview notes and other evidence that has been collected to the Designated Manager. In completing this template, the investigator is required to summarise the key points of their findings and to provide their considered opinion as to where fault (if any) lies. Any mitigating circumstances should also be noted. This should be followed by a recommendation as to the disciplinary action that the investigator would consider appropriate for each student involved. If the evidence is insufficient to allow a conclusion to be reached, the investigator should state this. The investigator may conclude, based on the evidence that they have collected that there is no case to answer.

The Designated Manager may meet with the investigator to discuss the outcome of the review/investigation so as to help them identify the appropriate arrangements, if any, for any subsequent disciplinary action.

Template for Review / Investigation Report

Title/Issue:

Date of incident:

Investigating Officer:

Date report completed:

BRIEF SUMMARY OF INCIDENT (including student /trainee names)
DETAILS OF HOW REVIEW / INVESTIGATION WAS COMPLETED (include the names of those interviewed)
KEY FINDINGS
RECOMMENDATIONS
EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES (IF APPLICABLE)

Signed (Investigator): _____ Date: _____

Appendix 6: Disciplinary Hearings Protocol

1. The Disciplinary Panel will consist of the Chair and another appropriate member of staff (but not the person who conducted the review / investigation). It is this Panel only which will reach a decision, having reviewed the available information presented by the Investigator, who may also be present at the request of the Chair.

2. The Chair will explain the purpose of the hearing and the extent of their delegated powers in taking decisions on behalf of the College and the disciplinary sanctions which are a possible outcome to the hearing.

3. The Chair will ascertain the names and roles of all present and who is to be the spokesperson for the student (him/herself or a representative) throughout the hearing. Where appropriate the Chair will confirm, for the record, that a student has chosen not to be represented by a friend or representative (who may be a member of SERC staff) or that a representative is to speak on behalf of an individual in their absence. In certain instances, the hearing will proceed in the absence of both the student and their representative. Where this occurs, it will be confirmed and explained for the record.

4. The allegation(s) against the student will be read out by the Chair.

5. The Chair may ask questions for clarification at appropriate stages.

6. The student (or representative) may then respond to the details put forward and seek any clarification if necessary. The Chair may exercise their right and discretion to end any discussion and to proceed to concluding the hearing at any time.

7. When the Chair is satisfied that all relevant information has been submitted everyone, except the Panel, will withdraw from the room to allow the Panel to consider the case.

8. The Chair will inform the student and their representative of the outcome of the hearing, unless further clarifications need to be sought, in which case the student will be notified in writing by post within 3 working days and provided with details of the Appeal process. Information regarding the sanction awarded to a student will not be shared with other parties involved in the disciplinary. The Chair of the Panel will ensure that all relevant documentation is completed and that the student Portal updated accordingly and the relevant HOS notified.

9. At disciplinary meetings students will not be permitted to have solicitors in attendance; the processes in this SOP are internal and will be treated as such.

Appendix 7: Informal Warning & Action Plan template

Informal Warning & Action Plan

Student/Trainee Name	**Student/Trainee Programme**	**Date issued**
College Representative Name	**College Representative Position**	
Reasons for informal warning	**Actions Agreed** *Detail the actions required to resolve the issue*	**Review Date**

It is hoped there will be no need for further action, however if there is not an immediate and sustained improvement in your conduct/performance/attendance, further action will be taken under the formal disciplinary procedure.

I acknowledge receipt of this warning given to me on and understand its implications.

_____ _____

Student/Trainee Signature ***Date***

_____ _____

College Representative Signature ***Date***

Appendix 8: Invite to Formal Disciplinary Hearing template

[**Date]**
[Name]
[Address]
[Postcode]

Dear **[student/trainee name]**

Further to the review / investigation meeting held on **[DATE],** I am writing to invite you to attend a formal disciplinary hearing as detailed below:

Date:
Time:
Location:

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the following allegations relating to your behaviour:

[INSERT DETAILS]

Present at the meeting will be [**NAME], [JOB TITLE**], and **[NAME], [JOB TITLE**]. In accordance with the Student Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP you are entitled to be accompanied and represented at the disciplinary hearing by a person of your choice, such as a family member, friend, a SERC member of staff or SERC Students' Union representative.

Please refer to the Student Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP for further information (copy attached). Please note that if you do not attend the meeting and have not asked for another date or time, the meeting may go ahead in your absence and a decision reached.

Yours sincerely,

[NAME]
[JOB TITLE]

Appendix 9: Stage 1 Warning and Action Plan Template

Student/Trainee Name	**Student/Trainee Programme**
College Representative Name	**College Representative Position**
This is to confirm that a **Stage 1 Warning** was given to you on _____ and has been noted on your record. This reason for this warning is:	
Actions agreed with timescales: **Review Date:**	
➢ It is hoped that there will be no need for further action, however if there is not an immediate and sustained improvement in your conduct/performance/attendance, further action will be taken under the formal disciplinary procedure. ➢ This warning will remain live for the duration of your programme, unless other programme guidelines exist.	

I acknowledge receipt of this warning given to me on and understand its implications.

_____ _____

Student/Trainee Signature ***Date***

_____ _____

College Representative Signature ***Date***

Appendix 10: Stage 2 Warning and Action Plan Template

Student/Trainee Name	**Student/Trainee Programme**
College Representative Name	**College Representative Position**
This is to confirm that a **Stage 2 Warning** was given to you on _____ and has been noted on your record. This reason for this warning is:	
Actions agreed with timescales **Review Date:**	
➢ It is hoped that there will be no need for further action, however if there is not an immediate and sustained improvement in your conduct/performance/attendance, further action will be taken under the formal disciplinary procedure. ➢ This warning will remain live for the duration of your programme, unless other programme guidelines exist.	

I acknowledge receipt of this warning given to me on and understand its implications.

_____ _____

Student/Trainee Signature ***Date***

_____ _____

College Representative Signature ***Date***

Appendix 11: Stage 3 Warning and Action Plan Template

Student/Trainee Name	**Student/Trainee Programme**
College Representative Name	**College Representative Position**
This is to confirm that a **Stage 3 Warning** was given to you on _____ and has been noted on your record. This reason for this warning is:	
Actions agreed with timescales: **Review date:**	
➢ It is hoped that there will be no need for further action, however if there is not an immediate and sustained improvement in your conduct/performance/attendance, further action will be taken under the formal disciplinary procedure which may lead to Stage 4 Exclusion. ➢ This warning will remain live for the duration of your programme, unless other programme guidelines exist.	

I acknowledge receipt of this warning given to me on and understand its implications.

_____ _____

Student/Trainee Signature ***Date***

_____ _____

College Representative Signature ***Date***

Appendix 12: Stage 4 Exclusion Letter Template

[Date]
[Name]
[Address]
[Postcode]

Dear **[student/trainee name]**

Re: Exclusion from College with immediate effect

I regret to inform you that it is necessary to exclude you from College with immediate effect for the reasons provided below:

[Brief Description]

Duration of Exclusion
Based on the nature of the offence(s), you are excluded for XX months/years [delete as appropriate]. You will be eligible to re-enrol as a student from [date month year]. You may contact the College for Careers advice and attend interviews based on course applications no sooner than 4 months before this date. You should not be present on College grounds for any other purpose.

Conditions of Re-Entry to the College
There may be occasions where the College requires the student to take appropriate steps before they return to College e.g. counselling or other support measures.

Please see details below:

[Brief Description of actions or delete if not applicable]

If you are dissatisfied with the decision, you have the right to appeal to the Principal and Chief Executive. Should you wish to appeal this decision, your appeal must be submitted within 5 working days of the date of this letter and addressed to:

Principal and Chief Executive
Student Appeals
SERC, Lisburn Campus
Castle Street
Lisburn
BT27 4SU
Alternatively, you may email the Principal and Chief Executive's PA on vhealy@serc.ac.uk with 'STUDENT APPEAL' in the email subject field

Exclusion can be a stressful time for both you and your family, therefore, we would like to make you aware of the Lena by Inspire Student counselling service which is available 24/7, if you require confidential and immediate support. Their contact number is 0800 098 8816

Yours sincerely
[Name]
[Position]

Appendix 13: Stage 4 Exclusion Letter Template – Training Organisation

Dear **[Trainee]**

I regret to inform you that it has become necessary to end your period of training at:
……
with effect from …… due to……...
……
……
Because of this you will not be permitted to re-enter training under Training for Success programme until a period of 8 weeks has elapsed since your last day of training. If, at that stage, you are eligible to re-join and wish to do so, you will be required to sign an undertaking that you will abide by the normal code of conduct and attendance stipulated by the Training Organisation.

You have a right to appeal against this decision. If you wish to do so, you should write to the Head of Training Programmes Branch, Department for the Economy, 5th Floor Adelaide House Adelaide Street Belfast BT2 8FD trainingforsuccess@economy-ni.gov.uk stating the full grounds of your appeal. Your appeal must be received within 21 calendar days of issue of this letter.

I have arranged for you to see a Careers officer at ……..….
on …… at ……. am / pm

Alternatively, you may wish to appeal directly to the Principal and Chief Executive against the College's decision. If you wish to do so, you should write to the Principal and Chief Executive's Personal Assistant at SERC, Downpatrick Campus, 102 Market Street, Downpatrick, Co Down, BT30 6LZ within 5 working days of the issue of this letter so that an appointment can be made to discuss the matter.

Yours sincerely

[Name]
[Job Title]

_____
COPY TO: TRAINEE, TRAINEE'S RECORD AND CAREERS OFFICER

Appendix 14: Notice of Barring Template

[Name]
[Address]
[Address]
[Postcode]

[Date]

Notice of Barring from Premises and Grounds of South Eastern Regional College
You are hereby notified that with effect from the date of this Barring Notice, you are not permitted on any property of South Eastern Regional College or any of the properties relating to its subsidiary activities.

Effect of this Notice
This means that you are not permitted to enter, at any time or for any purpose, any of the premises, grounds, stores or parking areas under the ownership or control of South Eastern Regional College.

In the event you choose to ignore this notice and enter onto any South Eastern Regional College properties for any reason, you will be considered a trespasser and may be reported to the PSNI and may be subject to appropriate legal action.

Use of this Barring Notice
You should be aware that copies of this Notice will be retained and relied upon by South Eastern Regional College, for the purposes of enforcing this Barring Notice and / or any other purpose relating to this incident, to include use in any future criminal or civil proceedings, which might be required.

Period of Exclusion

This Notice will remain in force and effect until _____

Barring Notice Issued by:
Signature: _____
Name (PRINTED):_____
Position: _____

Witness:
Signature: _____
Name (PRINTED):_____
Position: _____

RECIPIENT
Signature: _____
Name (PRINTED):_____

EFFECTIVE DATE _____

If the Recipient refuses to sign this Barring Notice, the Witness must also complete the section below:

I, _____ (Name of Witness) hereby confirm that on _____ (Date) I served _____ (Name of Recipient) with a copy of this Barring Notice.

Service recorded on CCTV? Yes / No

Police Service of Northern Ireland Officer present? Yes / No

Signature: _____

Name (PRINTED): _____

Notes
Original to be retained by South Eastern Regional College
Copy to be provided to Recipient