

‘the advice hub’

Your Union Your Support

Guide to a...

Disciplinary

2013-14

Disciplinary

It is possible that during your time at Heriot-Watt University you may find yourself facing disciplinary proceedings. If this happens, you can seek advice and representation from the Students' Union Advice Hub located between the student shop and the bank.

This guide is a very basic summary of what you should expect but for more

information, please read the documents relating to student discipline <http://www.hw.ac.uk/registry/discipline.htm>.

Although the University may draw your attention to this in your induction and details should be in your student handbooks, it is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with these.

Offences – Misconduct

The definition of misconduct is improper interference, in the broadest sense, with the proper functioning or activities of the institution, or those who work or study in the institution; or action which otherwise damages the institution.

Offences are categorised as follows:

- Academic misconduct (including plagiarism, collusion and examination irregularities as defined in your student handbook) – subdivided into category A or B offences.
- All other offences (non-academic misconduct) – subdivided into Major and Minor offences depending on the apparent gravity and the penalty which might be imposed if the allegation is substantiated.

Examples of non-academic misconduct include:

- Violent, indecent, disorderly, threatening or offensive behaviour or language whilst on University

premises or engaged in any University activity;

- Smoking in unauthorised areas
- Using illegal substances
- Use of offensive or improper language, behaving in an offensive or improper way or display of unwanted conduct which on the grounds of colour, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, nationality, race, religion or sexual orientation, has the effect of (i) violating another person's dignity or (ii) creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for students or employees of the University of visitors of the University;
- Misuse or unauthorised use of University premises or items of property, including computer misuse.

For a full (but not exhaustive) list of University misconduct, please refer to Regulation 50 Student Discipline at <http://www.hw.ac.uk/registry/discipline.htm>.

What will happen?

Academic Misconduct (Category A and B offences)

Plagiarism, collusion and examination irregularity are considered to be academic misconduct. If a member of staff suspects you of any of these they will notify the Head of School (or nominee). Your case will then be classified as a Category A or B offence based on its apparent gravity and the penalty which might be imposed if the allegation is substantiated.

A Category B offence is often a first time offence and is dealt with within your School. You will get a letter or email outlining the allegation and asking you to attend a meeting with selected members of academic staff within your School. You will be asked to confirm your attendance (if it is convenient) and submit a statement. You do not have to attend the meeting but it looks better if you can go and give them your side of the story in person.

You will be informed in writing of the outcome of the meeting within one to two weeks. You have the right to appeal the decision within 10 working days of receiving the outcome.

A Category A offence will be referred to the University Discipline Committee. A category A offence can be a repeat offence, where an offence is denied, where the penalty to be imposed could alter a degree clarification or the progress of a course, or where a student is being asked to withdraw from University.

You will be contact in writing ten days prior to the hearing, informing you of the time and date. You will be asked to confirm your attendance, confirm whether you will be accompanied by anyone and you will be asked to provide a statement relating to the offence. You will need to respond in writing five days before the hearing.

The Discipline Committee usually comprise five or six academic members of staff, sometimes someone from your course to provide details of how your course works, and the president of the Students Union (with your permission). The Committee provides you with an opportunity to put forward your side of the story and present any supporting evidence and they will consider all aspects relating to the case. Once you have spoke to the Discipline Committee they will ask you to leave the room while they make a decision. You will then be asked to return where you will be told their decision. The decision will also be sent to you in writing within three or four working days. You may have the right to appeal this decision within 10 days.

Non Academic Misconduct (Major and Minor Offences)

Cases of minor non academic conduct are usually dealt with by the department where the incidence occurred, for example, misuse of the library or library resources will be dealt with by the Librarian; misuse of University computing facilities by the Director of IT and Computing Services. All other incidents involving unacceptable behaviour on campus or in residences will be dealt with by the Academic Registrar.

All Major incidences will be referred to the Discipline Committee. In some cases if they case relates to breaking the law the incident may be reported to the Police. Steps will be taken to gather all the facts prior to any action being taken and you will be invited to the hearing and asked to write a statement. Major incidences will be dealt with in a similar way to Category A offences (see above). Being referred to the Discipline Committee, whether it's Category A or B offence, or a Major or Minor incidence, can be a

daunting experience. The student advisors in the Students' Union Advice Hub are here to support you and help prepare you for the hearing. We can even come along to the meeting with you to give you some support on the day.

Further Questions?

For more detailed information on Discipline, please see the University website: <http://www.hw.ac.uk/registry/discipline.htm> or come in and talk to an advisor in the Advice Hub.

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