



Higher Education Student Disciplinary

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2	Updated to include section on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment	Dr F. Keissarian	June 21
2.1	Updated to include reference on Employer Involvement	Dr F. Keissarian	June 22
3	Policy reorganised with clear sections; roles updated; procedure revised to three stages; gross misconduct clarified; appeals process strengthened, including employer involvement and discrimination grounds.	J. Simpson	Sept 25

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1. Introduction

Ada, The National College for Digital Skills is committed to fostering an academic environment that is respectful, inclusive, and conducive to learning, personal growth, and intellectual development.

The Student Disciplinary Policy outlines the standards of conduct expected from all students and apprentices and provides a fair and transparent framework for addressing violations.

This policy aims to promote integrity, accountability, and mutual respect within the College community, ensuring that students and apprentices can thrive in a safe and supportive educational setting. It serves as a guide for students and apprentices, faculty, and staff to understand behavioral expectations, the processes for addressing misconduct, and the potential consequences of breaching College regulations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all enrolled students, including apprentices, and covers misconduct alleged to have occurred on College premises or behavior which brings Ada into disrepute. This includes conduct during work-related activities (workplace), college educational visits, and the use of ICT, including e-safety issues.

Judgments made in respect of students at the College will be entirely consistent with this policy, and responsibility for any resulting disciplinary action remains with the College.

Apprentices follow the same disciplinary procedures, with the College informing and liaising with the sponsoring employer as appropriate.

Students with additional needs may be particularly vulnerable to disciplinary action. Ada will, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding any student with additional needs.

Disciplinary sanctions should be considered very carefully, and a student should not be disciplined for an incident directly related to their additional need. Under the Code of Practice 2014, “behaviour” is no longer considered a category of need and has been replaced by social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH). The College should engage proactively with relevant agencies to support students with additional needs, including those with SEMH difficulties, involving the local authority as appropriate.

3. Consultation

Consultation has taken place with members of the Apprenticeship Team, Student Support, and curriculum teams.

4. Definition

The process and measures used by the university to address student misconduct, promote accountability, and maintain a safe and respectful learning environment. Ada reserves the right, where circumstances dictate, to make variations to the procedural aspects of this policy. Ada may make such variations, subject to informing the student/apprentice concerned and subject always to considerations of fairness.

5. Procedure

Ada reserves the right to make changes to the staff involved at each stage due to specific circumstances or the availability of staff. If a meeting is chaired by someone other than as indicated, it will ordinarily be someone of equal or higher authority.

A student or apprentice can enter the disciplinary process at any point, depending on the severity of the misconduct or failure to adhere to Ada's expectations. For acts of gross misconduct will usually result in a Stage 3 meeting.

Stage 1 – Informal discussion initial concern

Minor lapses from acceptable standards of behaviour should be dealt with informally by staff as part of their general management of students and apprentices and the learning process via a verbal warning. Concerns can be issued by any member of staff and must be recorded in data@ada.ac.uk.

Stage 2 - Continuing concern

If a student or apprentice fails to respond to an initial informal warning, or if minor concerns persist, the matter will progress to Stage 2. At this stage:

- The student or apprentice will be invited to a formal meeting with their tutor, programme leader, or designated staff member.
- The concerns will be discussed in detail, and the student or apprentice will be given the opportunity to respond.
- An action plan may be agreed, setting clear expectations for improvement and timescales for review.
- A written record of the meeting and agreed actions will be kept on file.
- Employers (in the case of apprentices) may be informed if appropriate.

Stage 3 – Misconduct Panel

If concerns continue or a serious incident occurs, the case will be referred to a Misconduct Panel. At this stage, the panel will be chaired by the Director of

Apprentices, The College's senior member of staff for apprenticeships.

- The student or apprentice will be formally notified in writing of the alleged misconduct and invited to attend a hearing.
- The Misconduct Panel will normally include senior members of staff and, where appropriate, representation from Student Support.
- The student or apprentice has the right to be accompanied.
- Evidence will be presented, and the student or apprentice will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegations.
- The Panel may decide on appropriate sanctions, which could include:
 - A final written warning
 - Temporary suspension
 - Exclusion (temporary or permanent, depending on the severity of misconduct)
- The outcome will be confirmed in writing and recorded on the student or apprentice's file.

6. Suspension

Suspension is not a disciplinary action and should not be confused with exclusion. A student or apprentice may be suspended at any point in the disciplinary process, particularly in cases of possible gross misconduct, until a disciplinary meeting or panel is held.

The decision to suspend is made by the Director of Apprenticeships. Suspension is normally used for one of the following reasons:

- To provide a 'cooling off' period for students or apprentices involved in an incident.
- Where a student's or apprentice's continued attendance at the College presents a risk to others.

- Where a student's or apprentice's continued attendance at the College is likely to hamper any investigation prior to a disciplinary meeting.
- If a student or apprentice is suspended, the Programme Leader will arrange for them to keep up with work as far as possible.

During the suspension period, students/apprentices must not be on College premises without the prior permission of the Director of Apprenticeships who suspended them. Students' ID cards will be retained by the relevant Director conducting the suspension.

7. Employer Involvement

Ada reserves the right to inform employers regarding serious issues relating to apprentices. However, if we are aware of any conflict of interests or rights, the case will be discussed and considered by the Director of Apprenticeships before a decision is reached regarding contact.

8. Appeals

The purpose of this stage is to give the student or apprentice an opportunity to present any mitigating circumstances that were not raised during the Stage 3 Misconduct Panel or to highlight any procedural irregularities.

An appeal against a Stage 3 decision must be submitted in writing to the Dean and Director of Operations and Growth who has not been involved in the earlier stages of the process. Appeals must be lodged within 10 working days of the outcome letter being issued.

While the appeal is being considered, the student or apprentice will remain excluded. Appeals can only be made on specific grounds:

- new mitigating evidence not available to the Stage 3 panel
- allegations of unfair discrimination
- or evidence of procedural irregularities

The appeal will be reviewed by the Dean (or nominated deputy). They will consider the written appeal alongside the original investigation records, panel minutes, records, and any other relevant documentation.

The student or apprentice will be invited to attend the appeal hearing and may be accompanied. Employers of apprentices must also be informed and invited. A minute taker may be present at the discretion of the Dean and Director of Operations and Growth.

After the appeal has been considered, the Dean and Director of Operations and Growth or deputy may either uphold the original decision or replace it with a more appropriate outcome. The final decision will be communicated to the student or apprentice at the appeal hearing or, if further reflection is needed, in writing within five working days.

9. Examples of Gross Misconduct

- Causing damage to any College buildings, equipment, books, furnishings, or resources
- Unauthorised interference with software or data belonging to or used by the College
- Theft of property or any other dishonest acts
- Being in possession of, or under the influence of, alcohol on College premises or while taking part in any College activity
- Bullying, intimidation, taunting, verbal abuse, or the threat of violence towards

any member of the College community or partner organisation

- Sexual harassment or sexually inappropriate behaviours, either in person or online/digital
- Substance abuse, or being under the influence of illegal drugs, whilst on College premises or taking part in any College activity
- Ada has a zero tolerance to the carrying of offensive weapons, and such incidents will always result in a Stage 3 meeting
- Illegal or criminal acts which may have an adverse effect on the work of the College or on other learners (or which could bring the College into disrepute)
- Internal or external truanting
- Continual (more than four reports in a two-week period) vaping or smoking on Ada grounds