

COLUMBIA COLLEGE | COLUMBIA ENGINEERING
SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES



STANDARDS & DISCIPLINE

OFFICE OF JUDICIAL AFFAIRS &
COMMUNITY STANDARDS

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COMMUNITY STANDARDS

Standards of Behavior

As members of the Columbia University community, all students are expected to uphold the highest standards of respect, integrity, and civility. These core values are key components of the Columbia University experience and reflect the community's expectations of Columbia University students. Students are therefore expected to conduct themselves in an honest, civil, and respectful manner in all aspects of their lives. Students who violate standards of behavior related to academic or behavioral conduct interfere with their ability, and the ability of others, to take advantage of the full complement of University life, and will thus be subject to Dean's Discipline.

The continuance of each student upon the rolls of the University, the receipt of academic credits, graduation, and the conferring of any degree or the granting of any certificate are strictly subject to the disciplinary powers of the University. Although ultimate authority on matters of student discipline is vested in the Trustees of the University, the deans of the colleges and his/her staff are given responsibility for establishing certain standards of behavior for their students beyond the regulations included in the Statutes of the University and for defining procedures by which discipline will be administered.

College and University Policies

Community members may find a number of College and University policies at:
<http://www.studentaffairs.columbia.edu/judicialaffairs/policy/>.

DEAN'S DISCIPLINE OVERVIEW

It is expected that all students act in an honest way and respect the rights of others at all times. Dean's Discipline is the process utilized by Columbia College, Columbia Engineering, and the School of General Studies to investigate and respond to allegations of behavioral or academic misconduct. The Dean's Discipline process is not meant to be an adversarial or legal process, but instead aims to educate students about the impact their behavior may have on their own lives as well as on the greater community.

The process is initiated when an allegation is reported that a student has violated Columbia College, Columbia Engineering, School of General Studies, or University policies. Students may be subject to Dean's Discipline for any activity that occurs on or off campus that impinges on the rights of other students and community members. This also includes violations of Local, State, or Federal law(s).

DEAN'S DISCIPLINE PROCESS

Reporting an Allegation of Misconduct

Community members may file an incident report with the Office of Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (OJA) electronically at: <http://www.studentaffairs.columbia.edu/judicialaffairs/referral/>.

When a complaint is received, OJA will determine whether or not Dean's Discipline is an appropriate response or if the complaint should be referred elsewhere. OJA will also determine whether or not more information is needed. Although the reporter will not participate in the hearing process, OJA staff may follow up with him/her upon resolution of the case.

- **Anonymity:** OJA staff will consider requests for anonymity made by a complainant or witness and, in compelling circumstances, may withhold the name of such person. Circumstances in which this request may be granted include a reasonably based fear of retribution, harassment, or any other inappropriate response to the disclosure of such individual's name.
- **Retaliation:** Retaliation against any person involved in an investigation, including witnesses or investigators, is strictly prohibited and may result in interim or permanent measures and/or disciplinary action. The University defines retaliation as any adverse action taken against an individual who has participated in any capacity in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under these policies or procedures.

Notice and Scheduling

If a Dean's Discipline hearing is to occur, the student is informed in writing of the complaint made against him/her. The student is also informed of the next steps in the process and his/her ability to review the allegation(s) prior to the hearing. Dates and times for disciplinary hearings are scheduled in consultation with the student's academic schedule to avoid conflict. A student's participation in the hearing process is mandatory. If a student fails to participate in the hearing process, a decision may be rendered in his/her absence.


- **Interim Measures:** In certain circumstances during the investigative process, OJA and/or other University administrators may place restrictions on a student prior to the conclusion of the hearing. Restrictions that may be placed on a student include, but are not limited to: restricting contact with another individual or people; restricting access to the residence halls or other buildings on campus; or suspending a student from participation in classes or events and/or organizations within the campus community. These interim actions will only be taken if it is determined that the student's behavior may make his or her presence on campus a danger to the normal operations of the institution, the safety of himself or herself or others, or to the property of the University or others.
- **Outside Proceedings:** If an investigation is occurring outside of the University community (as in the case of criminal investigations) the University may postpone the Dean's Discipline process until the conclusion of outside proceedings. However, interim measures may be taken immediately as indicated above. It should be noted that the results of the outside investigation are rarely considered within the context of the institutional investigation unless that investigation reveals behavior that is particularly egregious and damaging to the well-being of the University community. It is the responsibility of the student to notify OJA when the outside proceedings have been completed.

Preparing for the Hearing

If a student is notified that s/he is required to attend a Dean's Discipline hearing, s/he will be informed of the allegations. In preparation for the hearing the student should schedule a file review, prepare a written statement describing his/her perspective, and consult with his/her advising dean. Students are also encouraged to speak with staff members from Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) or other healthcare practitioners should s/he begin to feel overwhelmed while going through the process.

- **File Review:** A student is informed through the notice letter that s/he has the opportunity to review his/her file prior to the hearing. S/he may also discuss procedural information about the Dean's Discipline process with an OJA staff member. To schedule an appointment, s/he should contact OJA, via e-mail, at cc-oja@columbia.edu.
- **Written Statement:** The student is advised to prepare a written statement for the hearing process. This statement must be completed by the student and should outline his/her perspective on the allegations and the incident as a whole.
- **Consult with Advising Dean:** Since advising deans are trained to assist students with their participation in the Dean's Discipline process, it is recommended that the student schedule time to meet with his/her advising dean before the hearing. Although advising deans can answer questions about the hearing and are able to provide guidance in regard to general preparation for the hearing, the primary responsibility to prepare for the hearing belongs to the student.

The Hearing

- **Hearing Attendees:** With the exception of the student's  advising dean, the Dean's Discipline hearing may only be attended by the student and the hearing officers.
- **Hearing Officers:** Hearing officers are determined by the student's school affiliation. Students may not be accompanied by any other person (including, but not limited to a family member, friend, or attorney).
 - **Columbia College and Columbia Engineering:** Two staff members from OJA and/or other University administrators will conduct the hearing.
 - **The School of General Studies:** Two staff members from OJA and/or the Dean of Students Office from the School of General Studies will administer the hearing.
 - **Affiliates and Other Schools:** When the complaint also involves student(s) in Columbia University schools outside of Columbia College, Columbia Engineering, and the School of General Studies, efforts will be made to have the proceedings jointly adjudicated with representatives of each school involved. If joint adjudication is not possible, every attempt will be made to have the proceedings occur simultaneously and to notify each schools' officials of the results.
- **During the Hearing**
 - The student is presented with the information pertaining to the allegation that s/he has violated policy(ies).
 - The student will then submit his/her statement and present information on his/her behalf. Questions may be posed by both the student and the hearing officers to better clarify or understand the allegations as well as the student's perspective on the context, incident, and/or circumstances.

- Witnesses may not directly participate in the disciplinary process, but may submit a written statement documenting his/her account as it directly relates to the incident. Because the determination of responsibility is based on a student's behavior and not his/her character, character references are unnecessary.
- Any student participating in a Dean's Discipline hearing or submitting a witness statement is expected to be honest and forthcoming. Students who are found to be dishonest may be subject to additional disciplinary action.

Determining Responsibility

Following the investigation and the conclusion of the hearing, a determination whether the student is responsible for the violation(s) is rendered. Each student's case is determined individually by the hearing officers.

- **Standard of Proof:** The standard of proof used to determine outcomes is the "preponderance of the evidence" standard. This standard allows for a finding of responsibility if at the conclusion of the investigation the information suggests it is more likely than not that a violation occurred. University policies are action-based; therefore, intent is not a factor when making a determination of responsibility. Intent may be considered when a sanction is issued.

Sanctioning

If a student is found responsible for a policy violation, sanctions will be issued in consideration of the specific circumstances of the case, institutional precedent, disciplinary history, aggravating circumstances and community impact.

A violation of academic integrity compromises the intellectual foundation of our institution. To violate that principle is one of the most serious offenses a student can commit at Columbia University. A student found responsible for an academic integrity violation can expect to receive a minimum sanction of disciplinary probation and may be expelled from the University. Irrespective of the disciplinary outcome, faculty members reserve the right to assign grades as they deem appropriate.

Sanctions

The following sanctions allow a student to remain in good disciplinary standing:

- **Disciplinary Warning:** The student's behavior was in violation of policy and s/he has been educated regarding community standards. Additional violations of policy will result in further disciplinary action.
 - **Conditional Disciplinary Probation:** The student was found responsible for violating University policy. Due to mitigating circumstances, the student remains in good disciplinary standing on the condition that no future violations occur.
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The following sanctions indicate that a student is not in good disciplinary standing:

- **Disciplinary Probation:** The student was found responsible for a policy violation and is considered not in good disciplinary standing for a specified period of time. The student is permitted to continue academic progress at the University. Further violation(s) of University policies will result in additional disciplinary action.
- **Disciplinary Suspension:** The student is temporarily separated from the University for a specified period of time. During this period, the student is ineligible to participate in any Columbia University affiliated academic or extracurricular activities. Additionally, the student is not permitted to enroll in classes at any other institution for the purpose of transferring credit back to Columbia University.
- **Expulsion:** The student is permanently separated from the University and will not be permitted to return at any time.

NB: Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be notified when a student is no longer in good disciplinary standing. The University reserves the right to indicate disciplinary suspension or expulsion on a student's academic transcript.

A student may also receive the following additional sanctions which include, but are not limited to:

- **Suspension or permanent loss of housing:** A student who loses the privilege of housing at Columbia is also not permitted to visit the residence halls or University owned or affiliated brownstones for an indicated period of time.
 - **Access restriction from University facilities**
 - **Removal from activities or services** A student is restricted from participation in academic or extracurricular activities and/or University organizations or restricted from University services.
 - **Educational projects or assignments**
 - **Other sanctions** (e.g., loss of host/guest privileges, restitution, compensatory services, removal from the housing lottery, etc.)
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After the Hearing

Notice of Outcome

Once a finding and/or sanction is determined by the hearing officers, the student will be notified in writing within ten business days from the date of the hearing. S/he is also permitted to schedule an appointment to review the hearing officers' notes, type or take handwritten notes from his/her file, and/or attach his/her own written addendum to the hearing notes. Appointment requests should be made via e-mail to cc-oja@columbia.edu.

Requesting an Appeal

A student found responsible for violating policy has the right to request an appeal of the decision and the resulting sanction(s). This appeal should be submitted electronically within five business days from the date of the decision (or as indicated in the hearing outcome letter) and addressed to the specified appeal officer. There are three grounds upon which a request for appeal may be considered:

- The student has new information, unavailable at the time of the hearing.
- The student has concerns with the process that may change or affect the outcome of the decision.
- The student feels that the severity of the sanction is inappropriate given the details of the case.

Requests for appeal are considered at the discretion of the appeal officer and disagreement with the finding or sanction is not, by itself, grounds for appeal. Requests that do not appropriately address the ground(s) for appeal may be denied. If the appeal is considered, the appeal officer will determine if a change in decision is warranted. The appeal officer reviews the request and entirety of the student's file and does not meet with the requestor nor does s/he personally rehear the case. The appeal officer may change the sanction making it either less or more severe or may request a re-hearing of the case based upon information that is provided in the appeal request.

Regardless of the outcome of the appeal, the appeal officer will notify the student of the final decision in writing. This final decision is not appealable.

DISCIPLINARY RECORDS

Disciplinary Files

A student's disciplinary file is part of a student's educational record and is maintained by OJA. A disciplinary file generally contains a description of the alleged violation, supporting documentation, written statements, and official case-related correspondence.

File Retention

The University will maintain disciplinary files and release information contained in those files with appropriate permission for seven years from the date of the incident (or longer if the student continues beyond this seven-year period). After the maximum file retention period, the files will no longer be reportable except in cases resulting in suspension or expulsion which are retained indefinitely.

Privacy and Reporting

Disciplinary proceedings conducted by the University are subject to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, also called "The Buckley Amendment"). There are several important exceptions to FERPA that will allow the University to release information to third parties without a student's consent. For example, it is important to note that the release of student disciplinary records is permitted without prior consent to: University officials with legitimate educational interest such as a student's advising dean and to Columbia Athletics if the involved student is an athlete. The University will also release information when a student gives written permission for information to be shared. To read more about the exceptions that apply to the disclosure of student records information, please visit: <http://facets.columbia.edu/policy-access-student-records-ferpa/>.

Unless otherwise specified by the student, OJA will only disclose disciplinary records for students who were considered not in good disciplinary standing. This record includes the student's violation(s), the corresponding sanction(s), and the date of determination.

Students and alumni may inquire about his/her disciplinary record by visiting:
<http://www.studentaffairs.columbia.edu/judicialaffairs/services/>.

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