

## STUDENT CONDUCT POLICY

<b>Title:</b>	STUDENT Conduct Policy
<b>Policy Number:</b>	SA 16/ 2018
<b>Effective Date:</b>	2018
<b>Issuing Authority:</b>	Academic Board

### 1. PRELUDE

The world in which we live is fragile, yet full of possibilities. If the fundamental principles of personal behavior are applied by all, those possibilities will become realities to a point that dazzle us with awe. Each member of the university community, student, faculty and staff, is responsible to establish a value system that develops habits for effective living.

While the university expects all to exhibit exemplary conduct in accordance with the published rules and regulations, not all will live up to that expectation. Any form of misconduct hampers the university effort to foster quality-centered education and build exemplary nurturing environment for values to live by. Any form of disruptive behavior or improper and unacceptable misconduct when it occurs should be dealt with seriously and promptly and take appropriate and measured disciplinary actions against the complicit in accordance with established criteria to protect the sanctity of the university community and that others are deterred from committing the same offense.

### 2. OVERVIEW

This policy outlines the rules governing general student conduct and the procedures to be applied by the proper authorities having jurisdictions of dealing with acts of misconduct.

Misconduct as pertains to this policy is of two forms, Academic and Nonacademic. The Director and Staff of the Student Affairs Office have the responsibility to manage the process of misconduct cases through the University Student Disciplinary Committee (USDC).

All cases of misconduct must be reported to the Student Affairs Office.

Whenever a student is charged with Non-Academic Misconduct, a disciplinary meeting will be scheduled with the Student Affairs Office.

Any student charged with misconduct is urged to consult with the Student Affairs Office or the Chairperson of the University USDC to be informed of the procedures that will be followed and to receive assistance in preparing a defense.

### 3. GENERAL POLICY

1. RHU expects and holds accountable all students to apply the highest of academic and moral standards and uphold the principles of honesty, integrity, tolerance, empathy and respect at all times.
2. All persons associated with the university are expected to abide by the **University Honor Code** and to aid in its enforcement by reporting violations of it.
3. All University constituencies are expected to report any violation of university policies to the related authorities
4. All University constituencies have the authority to execute those policies by the related disciplinary authorities according to the established due process, firmly and fairly.
5. Any disciplinary proceedings should be sought only in the existence of tangible evidence.
6. In all proceedings, the confidentiality and secrecy of the proceedings must be respected by all involved.

### 4. AUTHORITY

1. The President of the University has the authority to immediately dismiss any student or employee responsible for instigating major disturbance that compromises the University operation or integrity.

2. The Students Affairs Office has Jurisdiction over students' misconduct cases. Any University student, faculty member, or staff member who witnesses such misconduct should report it to the-immediately.
3. The Student Affairs Office is granted the authority and given the responsibility to enforce student dismissal or suspension disciplinary measures.
4. The USDC has the authority to levy appropriate sanctions against a student according to established University Rules and Regulations.

## **5. NON-ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

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### **Forms of Misconduct**

Non-Academic Misconduct includes action such as theft, damage, or unauthorized use of University property, the disruption of University activities on or off campus, disorderly conduct on University property, or violations of University regulations as set forth in the Student Manual.

Improper or disruptive behavior may include but is not limited to:

- A speech, action or threatening and dangerous behavior that seriously distracts others from the task at hand; or the hindrance of others' work by failure to complete one's own.
- A speech or action that is not part of the learning process and that creates an atmosphere of hostility, intimidation, ridicule, or anxiety among other students, staff or instructors.
- An action that impedes the delivery of University services.
- A falsification of identification or provision of false information to any University employee or representative performing his/her duties.
- An action that abuses University property, abuse of buildings and grounds, misuse of computer system policy, and abuse of services by using them for unauthorized purposes.
- Actions which are inarguable violations of Lebanese Law;
- Actions which are considered as aiding, inciting, or abetting as an accomplice in the commission of any of the foregoing acts.

### **Threatening and Dangerous Behavior**

Threatening or dangerous behavior may include but is not limited to:

- Assaulting, harassing, threatening, physically or verbally abusing or intimidating another member of the University community;
- Acting in a way that endangers the health, safety or well-being of others;
- Damaging, misusing or removing RHU property or the property of students or University employees, or threatening to do so.
- Violating the Lebanese Law.
- Aiding, inciting, abetting or acting as an accomplice in the commission of any of the foregoing acts.

### **Violation of RHU Copyright Policy**

It is an RHU policy that any copies of copyrighted course materials are not permitted on campus. Examples of copyrighted materials include textbooks, articles, presentations, videos, websites, and handouts. Both hard and electronically formatted copies are not permitted. Students are expected to use only original materials as approved by the administration of RHU on campus. Moreover, students must not use any RHU equipment (for example, photocopiers, and/or computers) to make copies of any copyrighted material.

### **Misuse of Computer System Policy**

The RHU establishes the following declaration of student Computer rights and responsibilities:

- Computer users shall use only the computer resources that they have been authorized to use by the University.
- Computer users shall use the University's computer and network facilities in a responsible manner consistent with RHU's instructional, research, and administrative goals.
- Computer users shall access RHU computer facilities only with an authorized username and password. Students are responsible for and are forbidden from authorizing others to use their accounts.
- Computer users shall not access, alter, copy, move or remove information, proprietary software or other files, without prior authorization from the appropriate University data trustee or security officer.

- Computer users shall respect the privacy of others. It is forbidden to make copies, write information in anyone else's computer files, or use the computing facility irresponsibly or in a way that might needlessly interfere with the work of others.
- Computer users shall respect the integrity of computer systems available through the network.
- Computer users shall respect the legal protection provided by copyright and use licenses. It is forbidden to make copies of a licensed computer program to avoid paying appropriate license fees.
- Computer users shall refrain from engaging in wasteful practices. They shall not send chain letters through electronic mail, print multiple copies of files, or unnecessarily hold laboratory workstations when others are waiting for these resources.
- Computer users shall report any violation of these guidelines by any individual to the Information Technology Department.

The unauthorized or improper use of the computer facilities at RHU constitutes a violation of University policy and will subject the violator to disciplinary and/or legal action. In the event that computer users violate this policy, they shall be subject to disciplinary action, including:

- A warning that such misuse should cease.
- A requirement that the user pays for computer and network resources.
- A denial of user's access to computer and network resource(s) temporarily or permanently.
- Other University Student Disciplinary actions that are deemed appropriate.

Questions regarding this policy should be addressed to the Information Technology Department.

#### **Abuse of Library Conduct Policy**

Students are expected to abide by the following Library conduct guidelines and regulations to be eligible to use the Library services:

- Smoking, food and drink are strictly prohibited in the library.
- Cellular phones are not allowed in the library. All users are requested to turn off their cellular phones in the library.
- Conversation, noise, and other forms of disruptive behavior are strictly forbidden in the Library.

Any abuse of the RHU Library conduct policy will result in penalties that can sometimes lead to the termination of the student's Library access and use of Library services. The Library reserves the right to remove borrowing privileges and ban any disruptive user from the Library premises.

#### **Abuse of Buildings and Grounds**

RHU students are expected to preserve their campus and maintain public property in good shape. Any abuse of buildings, grounds or physical properties is deemed a violation of RHU Buildings and Grounds Policies and will be dealt with in accordance with the penalties mentioned under Student Conduct Policy section.

RHU students should preserve their campus and maintain public property in good shape. Students must avoid doing the following on the green squares:

- Playing games (football, basketball)
- Putting chairs and table
- Walking on the green lawns when wet
- Leaving beverage cans to spill out and harm the soil
- Replacing the wooden chairs
- Throwing cigarettes

RHU provides students with the most conducive setting for learning. Students are expected to treat the classrooms, laboratories and physical assets on RHU campus with full consideration to RHU property. Thus, they are not allowed to spoil or move the tables, chairs, boards, overheads, screens, lab equipment, photocopying machines, or any other resource.

Fire extinguishers are there for emergency purposes, and students are not allowed to misuse them.

#### **Procedures and Appeals**

At their own discretion, employees who observe improper behavior have the right to intervene and deal with the situation. In class, the instructor may make similar decisions as appropriate.

All members of the University community who observe serious examples of improper behavior outside class should report these incidents, including the names of witnesses, immediately to the Student Affairs Office who will deal with the incident and inform the complainant of any outcomes.

In minor incidents of improper behavior in the classroom, the instructor may refer the situation to the Department Chair and/or Student Affairs Office. The instructor may also immediately employ any of the sanctions described below.

Whenever a non-academic misconduct is levied against a student, the student meets with the Student Affairs Office to resolve the issue. If both parties agree on the facts and the penalties to be imposed, they **sign a Statement of Agreement** indicating no further actions are needed.

If no agreement is reached and the Student Affairs Office judges that the allegations are severe enough to warrant further hearings, has the authority to:

- (1) Issue an injunction to temporarily or permanently suspend the student after consultation with the president (in cases where the integrity of the institution is compromised),
- (2) Arrange for a meeting of the University Student Disciplinary Committee to deliberate the case within a week and brings it to term.

Depending on the form of improper behavior, the student will be subjected to one or more of the following:

- a) Excluding a student from a class and consider the exclusion as an absence.
- b) Restricting or excluding a student from certain University activities or denial of access to certain areas of the University or to the use of certain facilities or equipment.
- c) Issuing a disciplinary probation to the student or a notice that further incidents of improper behavior may result in more severe sanctions.
- d) Requiring the student to complete a number of community service hours in coordination with the Student Affairs Office.
- e) Forbidding the student from enrolling or re-enrolling in a course or courses except with written conditional permission signed by both the Department Chair and the Instructor.
- f) Forcing the student to withdraw from or receive an "F" grade in one or more courses. This measure will be communicated in writing to the students.
- g) Suspending the student immediately from the University through a written communication in more severe incidents of improper behavior.

### **Disciplinary Probation**

A disciplinary probation puts conditions on the student's continued attendance at the University whereby further infringement of University rules and regulations will most probably result in the student's dismissal.

### **Appeals**

If the USDC's decision is to suspend the student, he/she has the right to appeal the decision to the President within one week. If the appeal is not successful, the suspension ruling will be recorded on the student's academic record for the duration of the suspension period in case of temporary suspension, or permanently in case of permanent suspension.

Individuals who wish to appeal may do so and be assured that democratic principles of justice will be observed, including the right for representation at all hearings. All written communication informing the students of sanctions will outline the possible appeal procedure.

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## **6. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

### **Forms of Academic misconduct**

Academic Misconduct includes actions such as cheating, plagiarizing, interfering with the academic progress of other students. Cheating is an act of deceit, fraud, distortion of truth, or improper use of another person's effort to obtain an educational advantage.

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's or source's words and/or ideas as if they were one's own. It ranges from plagiarizing an entire assignment to plagiarizing specific passages within an assignment without acknowledging the source. Course outlines provide students with a clear definition of cheating and plagiarism

and a statement of the sanctions that the student would be subjected to as a result of cheating and/or plagiarism.

### **Possible Actions**

Colleges may develop their own sanction for first-time cases of cheating and plagiarism or they may refer to the University sanctions below on such cases. Colleges must inform students of the applicable sanctions.

First or second incidents of cheating or plagiarism deemed by a department/instructor to be particularly serious will be dealt with in accordance with the University policy.

Depending on the severity of the Academic misconduct levied against a student, the student and the instructor tries to resolve the issue and agree on a course of action.

If the student does not feel that the matter can be resolved with the instructor, s/he may opt to bring an informal complaint to the Chairperson of the concerned department who acts as the Student Ombudsman to try to resolve the case informally in consultation with the Dean of the College or s/he may request a meeting of the USDC to consider the case.

Depending on the misconduct, the instructor may choose to:

1. Give reduced credit or no credit for the work in question.
2. Issue a warning.
3. Lower the overall course grade.
4. Give a failure grade in the course.
5. Turn the case over to the USDC.

The Instructor discusses his/her decision with the student and informs him/her of his/her right to appeal the decision to the USDC if s/he chooses to do so.

The instructor shall submit a brief written report of the case and any action taken to the Dean of the college, the Chairperson of the department, and the student. A copy is also sent to the Registrar if the penalty involves the course grade.

Reports on misconduct cases will be kept on file until the student graduates.

If a student appeals a decision and the appeal is successful, the report on the case will be removed from record and the initial decision will be reversed.

### **Bringing a Case to the University Student Disciplinary Committee**

If an informal resolution could not be reached, the case of misconduct may then be referred to the USDC in the following cases:

1. A student accused of Academic Misconduct and feels that an instructor has been unfair or has imposed a penalty too severe may appeal to the USDC.
2. An instructor may refer a case to the USDC if he/she feels strong burden in reaching a decision especially in cases that warrant student's suspension or expulsion from the University. The instructor should provide all facts of the case to the Committee and inform the committee of any actions that has been taken and his/her recommendations for further penalty. The Committee's recommendation on the case would be final.
3. If a student is involved in more than one instance of Academic Misconduct, the Director of Student Affairs Office may bring the case to the University Student Disciplinary Committee.

### **Hearings before the USDC**

#### ***General Procedures***

The following procedures highlights the steps involved in a hearing process and establishes the framework to ascertain the relevant facts of the case and safeguard the rights of the accused. The hearings shall be conducted in a transparent, respectful manner to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of all parties involved and provide a venue to reach a fair conclusion of the matter.

1. The party requesting a hearing shall submit a report about the case to the Chairperson of the Committee. The Chairperson gives copies to the Director of Student Affairs Office and to all persons involved in the case and shall invite the other parties involved to submit written rebuttal statements. The Chairperson shall schedule a hearing date and notify all parties, calling the procedures herein described to their attention so

that they will be aware of their rights and of the conduct of the hearing. All this shall be accomplished within a few days.

2. The Chairperson or the accused through the Chairperson may request that any member of the Committee whose opinion in the case may be biased for any reason be excused from the hearing.
3. The Committee hears all the facts, examines the evidence, and listens to the witnesses' testimonies on both sides of the case, and base their findings on the merits of the case at hand only.
4. After the close of the hearing, the Committee will privately consider the case, call additional meetings if necessary, and render a final judgment that requires the concurrence of the majority of the members.
5. The Committee then notifies all parties of the decision, prepares a brief written statement, and sends copies to all parties and to the Director of Student Affairs Office. The statement is made a part of the student's personal (not academic) record.
6. In cases of appeals, the Committee may decide to affirm the original action, reduce the penalty, or exonerate the student, but under no circumstances the Committee can add to the penalty.
7. A recording of the hearing will be made.

If the Committee's decision is to suspend the student, s/he has the right to appeal the decision to the president and may continue to enroll in classes until the appeal process concludes. Grounds for appeal include unfairness of the hearing proves, the findings are not accurate and not supported by evidence, the penalty too severe, or because the students wants to plead for special consideration.

### ***Committee Actions***

For appeals of Instructors actions, the Committee may uphold the action of the instructor, may decide that the student is innocent, or may decide that the student has been too severely penalized, but cannot change a grade.

In the case of a student appealing a suspension by the Student Affairs Office, the Committee may affirm the suspension, may change the duration of the suspension, or may remove the suspension and recommend that the substitutes other penalties or that no penalties be assessed. The Committee may not levy additional penalties.

If a hearing is initiated against a student and the Committee finds the student innocent, the Committee may recommend to reversing any actions taken against the student. If the student is found guilty of the charged s/he is accused, the Committee, in consultation with the Student Affairs Office, and depending on the severity of the charges, may assess any of the following penalties: decide to reprimand the student, recommend to the instructor to lower the student's grade or give him a failing grade, refer the case to civil authorities, suspend the student or dismiss him from the University.

The Committee shall inform in a written statement of all involved in the case of the decisions and the associated penalties. In case of suspension, the Committee notifies the Student Affairs Office, the Registrar, and the Chairperson of the Admissions Committee of the suspension.

In all other cases, the decision of the Committee is final except a decision to suspend may be appealed to the USDC.

### ***Suspension by the University Student Disciplinary Committee***

If the student is temporarily suspended, the student will normally be permitted to submit a written petition to the Student Affairs Office after the suspension period who in turn submits a recommendation to the USDC for final action.

In unusual cases, such as repeated misconduct, personal injury, or serious violations of law, the Committee may impose permanent suspension, thus ruling out readmission.

A suspension ruling will be recorded on the student's academic record, unless the case is successfully appealed. In the case of temporary suspension, this record will be removed at the end of the suspension period. In the case of permanent suspension it will remain permanently.

A student who is suspended forfeits all rights to a refund of any portion of fees paid and will remain liable for all monies owed. See TUITION AND FEES.

The Committee may stipulate that the University will not accept TRANSFER CREDIT earned at another school by a student during the period of suspension from the University.

The Chairperson shall report all instances in which the Committee has suspended a student at the next regular Committee Meeting.

## ***Appealing a Suspension***

### **Overview**

The grounds for appeal will generally be (but are not limited to):

- a. That the hearing was not fair (because of biases of members of the USDC, etc.)
- b. That the findings of the hearing were not accurate (because evidence was overlooked or improper evidence taken into account.)
- c. That the findings were accurate but the penalty too severe (because mitigating circumstances were not taken into account.)
- d. That the student accepts the findings and the penalty as just but wishes to plead for special consideration.

### **General Procedures**

1. A student who is suspended and wishes to appeal this ruling must submit a written appeal to the Chairperson of the University Student Disciplinary Committee within five business days of the Committee's ruling.
2. The Chairperson will provide the student with a copy of the minutes or a recording of the hearing.
3. Within five business days of receiving the minutes or recording, the student must make a written appeal to the President of the University, who will distribute copies to the Director of Student Affairs Office, the Chairperson of the University USDC and other persons involved.
4. The case will be heard at either a regular or special University Meeting at the discretion of the President, who will preside at the appeal.
5. All parties in the case will be permitted to appear at the hearing to make statements and answer questions. The student may be accompanied by a faculty member or other person affiliated with the University whom the student selects to serve as counsel.
6. The proceedings will begin with a report by the Chairperson of the University Student Disciplinary Committee, summarizing the previous hearing(s). Then the parties involved shall make their statements of appeal and answer questions from the USDC. Since this is an appeal and not a re-hearing, witnesses will not be re-heard nor evidence reviewed. The focus will be on errors in the previous hearing, unfairness, or mitigating circumstances.
7. With all parties dismissed, the USDC shall discuss its decision. Any faculty member directly involved in the case will be excused from this final deliberation. The decision shall be arrived at by simple majority vote. At the request of any faculty member, the vote will be by secret ballot.
8. The decision will be announced to all parties and a written report will be prepared by the University Secretary, with copies to all parties and a copy to the student's personal record in the Office of the Student Affairs Office.
9. The Chairperson will provide the student with a copy of the minutes or a recording of the hearing.
10. Since the University has granted authority to the USDC to dismiss students, the USDC's decision shall be final.

### ***Committee Action Options***

1. The USDC may affirm the action to suspend.
2. The USDC may mitigate the penalty, changing permanent suspension to temporary suspension or reducing the terms of suspension.
3. The USDC may substitute another penalty for suspension.
4. The USDC may remand the case to the University USDC for re-sentencing (i.e., specifying that a penalty other than suspension be assigned).
5. The USDC may remand the case to the University USDC for re-hearing (in cases where there seem to have been serious improprieties in the hearing).
6. The USDC may remove all penalties.
7. The USDC may not levy penalties in addition to those already imposed.

## **7. University Student Disciplinary Committee (USDC)**

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When an incident of improper behavior is particularly serious or when it presents danger to students or others, an instructor or supervisor of University-sponsored activity has the prerogative to initiate the involvement of RHU Student Disciplinary Committee (USDC).

The complaint is communicated in writing to the Office of Student Affairs through proper procedures and channels.

The Office of Student Affairs is responsible for calling for USDC meetings, recording minutes, and delivering conclusive results to all concerned parties.

The USDC members consist of regular members, ex-officio, and observers. *Regular members* are appointed at the beginning of every term by RHU president, the *Ex-officio* consists of a representative of the Office of Student Affairs, and the *Observers* are 1-2 non-voting students who are usually assigned by USDC on occasion of any disruptive incident.

The USDC is responsible for managing critical forms of student disruptive behavior that is likely to impede proper performance of RHU functions: academic, administrative and extra-curricular activities. All disciplinary and behavioral complaints are communicated in writing to the Office of Student Affairs. The latter would call for an assembly of the USDC in order to investigate the altercation. USDC is also responsible for conducting all hearings and deliberations in consideration of the democratic rules of justice that require contemplating all intricate specifics of the whole disruptive event. After arriving at conclusive results, the Office of Student Affairs delivers outcomes to all concerned parties.

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## 8. Approval and Review

**Approved by RHU Administrative Board on October 22, 2024**