SPARSHOLT COLLEGE GROUP | SPARSHOLT CAMPUS | ANDOVER CAMPUS | UNIVERSITY CENTRE SPARSHOLT

University Centre Sparsholt

Student Conduct Policy

Our Mission

Raising Aspirations, Unlocking Potential, Advancing Futures

Our Values

Excellence, Passion, Teamwork, Integrity, Innovation,

Sustainability, Valuing Others and Supportiveness

Sparsholt College Group

The Sparsholt College Group includes Sparsholt College, Andover College, University Centre Sparsholt, Sparsholt College Services, Westley Enterprises and Andover Town Football Club. Policies apply to each part of the Sparsholt College Group unless specified otherwise.

The University Centre Sparsholt Student Conduct Policy was approved by the Board of Governors in 2026 and supersedes previous versions.

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Originator:	Dean of Higher Education
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UNIVERSITY CENTRE SPARSHOLT
STUDENT CONDUCT POLICY

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UNIVERSITY CENTRE SPARSHOLT
STUDENT CONDUCT POLICY

1. Introduction

University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) policies align with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good practice framework. The core principles for this policy include: accessibility; clarity; proportionality; timeliness; fairness; independence; confidentiality; and improving the student experience.

The policy concerns both academic and non-academic misconduct and these are dealt with separately in this policy. However, there are shared elements with the policies.

The OIA define the two disciplinary procedures as follow:

- **academic disciplinary procedures**, for dealing with academic misconduct such as plagiarism, inappropriate use of AI, contract cheating, cheating in examinations or formal assessments, falsifying data, breaching research or ethics policies, and collusion; and
- **non-academic disciplinary procedures**, for dealing with misconduct such as antisocial, abusive or threatening behaviour, sexual misconduct, violence, harassment, hate crimes, behaviour likely to bring the provider into disrepute, damage to property or abuse of facilities, causing a health or safety concern, and other behaviour that might also be a criminal offence. Activities likely to result in non-academic disciplinary procedures are typically highlighted in UCS and College Group policies or laid out in the student handbook issued to all UCS students on an annual basis.

2. Conduct Expectations

At University Centre Sparsholt, we strive to create an enjoyable and safe environment for all members of our diverse UCS community. As a student, it is essential that you conduct yourself appropriately in all your daily activities, including interactions with fellow students, staff, and external organizations.

During your time here, we expect you to:

- Act safely and consider the safety of others
- Treat everyone with civility, consideration, and respect
- Adhere to UCS policies, rules, regulations, and all applicable laws

You have a responsibility to respect all community members and represent UCS positively both on and off-campus. This expectation is particularly crucial while on campus, during fieldwork or placements, or when involved in any UCS-related activity.

Good conduct includes:

- Acknowledging the diversity of the UCS and wider Sparsholt College Group community and refraining from discrimination

- Being honest, considerate, and courteous to others
- Avoiding behaviors that could be perceived as harassment, bullying, or coercion, both within and outside the University
- Acting responsibly and respecting UCS and Sparsholt College Group property
- Showing consideration for others
- Complying with the law and avoiding activities or behaviors (including on social media) that could damage UCS's reputation

Specific guidelines include:

- Smoking or vaping only in designated smoking shelters
- Consuming alcohol responsibly and only in designated areas: the bar and inside HE residential blocks on the Sparsholt campus. Non residential students cannot bring alcohol onto campus.

By following these guidelines, you help maintain a positive and respectful environment for everyone at University Centre Sparsholt. If, however, these ways of working are not adhered to, then we will look to seek redress using the processes outlined in the rest of this document.

3. Disciplinary Procedures

3.1 For each of the two disciplinary procedures outlined within this policy, these share three levels of escalation.

3.2 **Level 1** aims to provide a swift resolution to support both the student and the individual raising the concern. It might be that this is concluded by means of an informal resolution. We would aim to resolve this stage within 10 working days of receipt.

3.3 **Level 2** is appropriate when either level 1 actions have not resulted in an acceptable level of change or when a formal investigation is required to establish the facts and to determine the appropriate course of action. This may be due to the seriousness of the allegation or its complexity. We would aim to conclude level 2 concerns within 20 working days.

3.4 **Level 3** is the highest level of escalation within the misconduct policy and engages a panel to review the evidence available and to arrive at fair and appropriate outcomes. We would aim to conclude this level of the procedure within 20 working days.

3.5 At any point during levels 1 or 2, if it is felt that the matter would be better dealt with under a different policy or process, the student shall be informed that this is happening and informed of the reason behind the transfer of policy or process.

3.6 We recognise that not all cases of misconduct are as serious as each other, we have therefore reflected this by using 3 levels.

3.7 At each stage there is the option for escalation as well as the option to de-escalate the level and to dismiss the allegation.

4. Accessibility Statement

The Student Conduct Policy is designed to be accessible to all students. If you have any special needs that mean you are unable to use the Policy in the way set out in this document, please contact us at degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk to discuss how the process can be adjusted to fit your needs.

5. Precautionary Action

It may be necessary in certain circumstances to put in place interventions whilst a case is ongoing. Interventions do not set out to imply guilt or seek to punish. They are put in place to safeguard all parties as well as the broader college community as well as the reputation of the institution.

If there is serious concern, then the Dean of Higher Education may seek the temporary suspension of the student from residential accommodation on site, suspend the student from classes or from the institution. Where this takes place, the Dean will write to the student outlining the intervention being implemented as well as the reason for its implementation and accompanied with a copy of this policy.

6. How can I seek support?

If you need support during any stage of this process, there are many individuals you can go to for support, including:

- Wellbeing
- Personal Tutor
- University of Portsmouth Students Union,

In order to support you, we are able to pause proceedings for up to 5 working days to allow time for the students to seek appropriate support.

7. How will we contact you?

All official correspondence will be in writing, and this may be email and/or formal letter. We will write to you using your Sparsholt email unless agreed otherwise.

8. How will we conduct the meetings?

We will take all reasonable steps to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality that is sufficient to allow for an effective investigation. Individuals raising a concern should be aware that to facilitate a fair process, it may be necessary to identify the individual raising an allegation.

At each stage of the process, the meetings and decisions will be conducted by people who have had no previous involvement in the case and no reasonable perception of bias.

If a person or post holder named in this policy has a conflict of interest, is unavailable, or cannot reasonably be regarded as impartial because of the nature of the matter or their involvement at an earlier stage of the process, the Principal may appoint an appropriate replacement.

We will treat you with an appropriate level of dignity and respect and expect this courtesy to

be reciprocated.

Meetings may be conducted either in person or virtually and this will be set out in the meeting invitation by the meeting chair. All participants at a virtual meeting must appear on the screen at least at the beginning of the meeting to ensure the correct people are attending. Recordings may be made of virtual meetings by the host of the meeting, but these will only be retained until formal notes of the meeting have been agreed with all parties. No other recordings may be made of either a virtual or face to face meeting.

9. Notification of meetings

For all meetings, a notetaker will be in attendance.

The chair will write to the student giving five working days' notice of a meeting. Within that letter will be outlined:

- The nature of the alleged academic offence along with the evidence being considered.
- A copy of this policy
- Notification of the right to be supported in that meeting by a fellow student, a Portsmouth student union representative, or a friend.
- Who will be attending the meeting and their role in the process.
- The meeting sets out to raise the concerns, to take steps to mitigate and take appropriate action to address the concerns and provide support as appropriate.

If the student fails to attend the meeting without good reason and notification, then the meeting may take place in their absence. Normally one attempt at re-scheduling the meeting is encouraged.

10. Burden of Proof

In arriving at a conclusion, we operate on what is known as the "balance of probabilities". That is, it is more likely that not that something happened, and these conclusions will be backed up with appropriate evidence. As this is not a legal process, legal representation is not deemed to be necessary or appropriate at any stage of this process.

11. The Right to Appeal

At each stage there is the right of appeal, upon notification in writing of the outcome at any stage, you can follow our **academic appeals process** which requires an appeal to be lodged within 10 working days of notification from us of the outcome of this process.

12. Criminal Offences

Where a matter is disclosed to us, we will consider whether this information should be passed to the police, particularly if the safety of students, staff or general public is at risk.

In cases where there is suspicion that a criminal offence has been committed, the institution reserves the right to refer the issue to the Police and suspend the student pending the outcome of police enquiries and/or continue with these procedures. A member of the

Strategic Leadership Team will make this decision.

It is our policy to refer all criminal offences to the police force, to support the victim in making a complaint and to co-operate fully in any enquiries.

13. Complaints

Complaints about the way the procedure is implemented should be made in writing to feedback@sparsholt.ac.uk and an appropriate manager at the appropriate level to investigate the complaint will be assigned to the case. A copy of the UCS Complaints and Feedback Policy is located on the website at https://www.sparsholt.ac.uk/policies-reports/ under Policies.

14. Training and Monitoring

All staff who chair hearings will be given sufficient training to fulfil this role effectively.

Level 3 cases will be reported (as a numeric total) annually to the Quality and Standards Committee as part of the annual Higher Education Report.

15. How will we use this policy for Improving the Student Experience?

It is important that we as an institution use this process to reflect and to make appropriate changes to improve so that we can continue to:

- Promote positive behaviours
- Safeguard the interests and safety of students and staff
- Capture learning to ensure that:
    - Decisions are made consistently
    - Decisions are made at the appropriate level
    - Appropriate action is taken on issues identified
    - Information gathered is used to improve guidance and support for students

Types of Misconduct – Academic Misconduct

16. Breach of Academic Regulations

This process is administered within the UCS administrative team who can be contacted at degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk

The OIA defines a breach of assessment regulations as

: "Any action by a student which gives or has the potential to give an unfair advantage in an examination or assessment, or might assist someone else to gain an unfair advantage, or any activity likely to undermine the integrity essential to scholarship and research."

Examples of academic misconduct given by the OIA and recognised by this Policy include:

- Plagiarism - presenting someone else's work or ideas as the student's own;
- Self-plagiarism - submitting the same work that the student has already submitted for another assessment when this is not permitted;
- Taking a copy of another student's work without their permission;
- Falsifying data, evidence or experimental results;
- Collusion - working with someone else on an assessment which is intended to be the student's own work;
- Contract cheating - where someone completes work for a student who then submits it as their own (including use of essay mills, AI or buying work online);
- Arranging for someone else to impersonate a student by sitting their examination;
- Cheating in examinations (or other formal assessment), including possession of unauthorised material or technology during an examination, and attempting to access unseen assessment materials in advance of an examination;
- Submitting fraudulent extenuating circumstances claims or falsifying evidence in support of extenuating circumstances claims (this may also be considered a non- academic disciplinary matter);
- Breaches of research and ethics policies - e.g. carrying out research without appropriate permission.

Any individual, be they a member of staff, an external party or a student can make an allegation in relation to a suspected breach of academic regulations by a student. This allegation should be made to degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk who would log the allegation and assess the case within five working days. In order to proceed the following is required:

- For the individual being accused of the academic offence is clearly identified and that what is alleged is a breach of academic regulations.
- That evidence of the academic offence is provided.

The team handling the complaint will also determine the appropriate starting point (Stages 1-3) of the process is appropriate for the alleged offence. A chair will be appointed but ordinarily it will be as follows:

- Stage 1: A chair (a Subject Leader), individual raising the allegation supported by the personal tutor.
- Stage 2: A chair (the Senior Curriculum Lead) supported by the individual raising the allegation supported by the personal tutor and/or HE wellbeing as appropriate.
- Stage 3: A chair (Assistant Principal or Dean of HE) with a panel made up of two other individuals from the institution. The individual bringing the case will be invited to present the case but is not part of the panel.

For all meetings, a note taker will be in attendance.

The chair will write to the student giving five working days notice of a meeting. Within that letter will be outlined:

- The nature of the alleged academic offence along with the evidence being considered.
- A copy of this policy
- Notification of the right to be supported in that meeting by a fellow student, a Portsmouth student union representative or a friend.
- Who will be attending the meeting and their role in the process.
- The meeting sets out to raise the concerns, to take steps to mitigate and take appropriate action to address the concerns and provide support as appropriate.

If the student fails to attend the meeting without good reason and notification, then the meeting may take place in their absence. Normally one attempt at re-scheduling the meeting is encouraged.

Upon its conclusion, the outcome will be communicated in writing to the student and the individual(s) raising the concern.

Level 1 – Academic Offence

The Administrators overseeing the process would assign the allegation to an appropriate curriculum lead who would convene a meeting involving the student under investigation as well as the individual raising the allegation. Present would also be the success coach and if appropriate, a member of the wellbeing team.

UCS encourages a restorative approach and would seek an early resolution of the matter. If the matter can be swiftly dealt with to the satisfaction of both parties, then no further action is required. In arriving at a resolution, the chair would take into consideration any mitigation, whether this was a first offence and consider if any remorse was demonstrated when deciding on an outcome.

Examples of level 1 Offences	**Suggested actions for first offences**
• Plagiarism • Not adhering to exam procedures (e.g. mobile phone in pocket). • Other attempts to deceive • Failure to use Turnitin after a first warning.	• Additional support (e.g. plagiarism awareness, how to search for information, note taking etc). • Warning held or record for one academic year • Reduction in marks, normally discounting plagiarised sections or questions impacted by the offence.

If the matter cannot be resolved, or it is too serious to resolve informally then the chair should refer to matter to level 2 of the process.

Written confirmation as to the outcome of the meeting will be provided to the student under investigation within 5 working days of the meeting along with notes of the meeting.

Level 2 - Academic Offence

If resolution at the first stage cannot be achieved such as for multiple offences or for more serious cases, then the Senior Curriculum Lead would chair the next stage and launch an investigation. Present at the meeting would be the module lead /subject lead or personal tutor for the student, the individual bringing the allegation and wellbeing as appropriate to the case. Wellbeing support is offered to all students prior to the meeting.

The chair will write to the student as described earlier. They would also provide a brief rationale for this being considered at stage 2.

Following from this meeting, it may be necessary to write to and meet with other parties in the process of investigating the concern raised.

Once the investigation is concluded, the chair will review the evidence and decide on the balance of probabilities, whether there has been a breach of the academic regulation by the student under investigation.

A report will be circulated outlining the concerns raised and the outcomes of the investigation along with recommendations for next steps including support for the student as appropriate.

The Outcome can be:

- that the matter is resolved and sanctions applied. If this is agreed by both parties, then the matter is deemed to be closed.
- that there has been a breach of the regulations and the matter needs to referred back to level 1 or escalated to level 3 due to the nature of the offence.
- that there is no case to answer and the matter is closed.

Examples of academic misconduct considered under level 2	**Types of sanctions typically applied**
• Repeated level 1 offence • Attempts to evade detection using Turnitin • Purchase of an online assessment (first offence) • Found with notes on person during an exam	• Warning issued to student - held on their record until completion of their current course • Mark for assessment/module reduced • Student **required** to undertake support to ensure that future occurrences do not arise

Level 3- Academic Offence

If the outcome of stage 2 is to escalate the matter to stage 3, then the matter will be referred to the Dean of Higher Education who will consider if there is a case to answer at this level. It is possible at all stages for the case to be considered as a lower level.

If the Dean of HE believes there to be a case to answer as a level 3 offence, then they will convene a panel of typically 3 individuals with the Dean or Assistant Principal chairing the panel supported by a note taker who is not a panel member. No individual on the panel shall have been involved in any preceding steps of this investigation.

In the meetings both the individual bringing the accusation as well the student being accused will be offered the opportunity to bring their case and defense accordingly. Neither are part of the decision-making process in relation to an outcome. The panel will also be offered the opportunity to ask questions for clarification of those two individuals. Both parties will be able to offer concluding remarks to the panel before the individual bringing the case and the student retire for the panel discussion, deliberation, and outcomes.

Upon its conclusion, the outcome will be communicated in writing to the student and the individual(s) raising the concern.

There are three possible outcomes for stage 3:

- appropriate sanctions put in place and the case is resolved to the satisfaction of all parties and the case will be closed;
- the student has been found to have committed an academic offence but the case is referred back for consideration as a stage 1 or 2 offence.
- the student is considered not to be in breach and the matter will be closed.

Types of Academic Misconduct typically considered under Phase 3 (Level 3 offences) (this is not an exhaustive list)	**Types of level 3 sanctions typically applied**
• Repeated level 2 offence (including repeated level 1 offences)	• Mark for the module reduced to 0 • Marks for the whole year reduced to 0 • Student is suspended from their studies for a period of time • Student is excluded from the institution

Following the meeting, the Panel will communicate in writing to the student :

- *a summary of the major points made during the meeting;*
- a concise statement of the Panel's findings;
- in the case of any finding that a student's academic conduct is unacceptable, the actions required in line with a level1, level 2 or level 3 Academic Offence and the arrangements for its application;
- appropriate support available for the student and where appropriate the person who reported the breach of academic regulations;
- an explanation of the student's right of appeal.

Where appropriate, the Panel will communicate in writing to the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body associated with the student's course the conclusion of the process and any actions expected of the student which affect the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body.

Types of Misconduct – Unacceptable Behaviour

17. Unacceptable Behaviour

This process is administered within the HE administrative team who can be contacted at degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk

The way that we deal with unacceptable behaviour follows the same general rules as that used to deal with academic misconduct. Each stage will involve different individuals to address the perception of either conscious or unconscious bias.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as behaviour that could be reasonably perceived to cause upset, distress or harm to another person or an organisation.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour given by the OIA and recognised by this Policy include:

- Antisocial behaviour;
- Inappropriate, abusive or threatening behaviour, including on social media;
- Compromising the safety of and/or wellbeing of staff, other students, or visitors;
- Sexual misconduct;
- Violence, harassment and hate crimes;
- Behaviour likely to bring the provider into disrepute, such as disruptive behaviour in the community;
- Internet access abuse, such as visiting inappropriate websites, uploading/ downloading inappropriate content, propagation of computer viruses;
- Disruptive behaviour on the provider's premises, such as setting off fire alarms or obstructing access to buildings or rooms;
- Damage to the provider's property or abuse of its facilities;
- Causing a health or safety concern;
- Relying on forged, falsified or fraudulent documentation, and other forms of deception that are intended to gain an advantage, for example submitting fraudulent extenuating circumstances claims or falsifying evidence in support of extenuating circumstances claims (the last may also be considered an academic disciplinary matter);
- Other behaviour which may also constitute a criminal offence.

As described in section 4 above, it may be appropriate to suspend the student or to restrict their access to certain facilities or services whilst the investigation is ongoing in order to protect the wider student population.

The conduct of meeting, the communication with the student under investigation follows the same general processes as described for those in breach of academic regulation.

Stage 1- Unacceptable Behaviour

Any individual from within the institution and member of the public can raise a concern regarding the behaviour of a student. This should be initially to degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk Upon establishing whether there is a case to answer, a suitable chair will be identified and ordinarily this would be a subject leader who will be supported by the personal tutor. The individual under investigation will receive the option of support before, during and after the meeting from wellbeing.

The aim is to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of both parties and therefore no further action is required. This outcome will be communicated to the student in writing along with an outcome being communicated to the individual raising the initial allegation of unacceptable behaviour.

Level 1 is for first time offences and due consideration is taken of extenuating circumstances, recognising that honestly and remorse are often helpful in moving forward. It is also recognised that there will be some judgement necessary as to the severity of the allegation as well as the appropriateness of the sanction.

Types of unacceptable behaviour considered at this stage (this is not an exhaustive list)	**Types of sanctions for stage 1 first offence**
• Minor damage to premises. • Inappropriate use of social media. • Behaviour which disrupts teaching • Disruptive Behaviour in accommodation and the community. • Disorderly, threatening, or offensive behaviour or language; • Failure to respond to requests to moderate behaviour • Smoking/vaping in non smoking areas.	• Warning issued to student - held on their record for 12 months • Student to issue an apology to the person who the behavioural offence relates • Student to make good any damage caused, which may include financial reimbursement

Stage 2 – Unacceptable Behaviour

Stage 2 is used when escalation is required following stage 1. It is also used for more complex cases where an investigation is required rather than being able to seek resolution quickly in a single meeting. It is also appropriate when there are repeated stage 1 offences documented. The case will be ordinarily assigned to the Senior Curriculum Lead who will conduct the investigation.

The chair will seek to:

- determine whether unacceptable behaviour has taken place;
- whether it was the student(s) who was responsible for this behaviour;

- whether there were any factors for consideration which resulted in the behaviour;
- whether the investigation will consider Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body expectations associated with the Student's course.

The Investigator will meet the party who makes the complaint. During this meeting, the Investigator will confirm how the investigation will be undertaken, the scope of the investigation and discuss what the complainant believes a positive resolution would be. The complainant may wish to provide details of evidence and other persons involved (who may be interviewed).

The Investigator will write to the student(s) whose behaviour has been drawn into question inviting them to a meeting with the Investigator. This correspondence will confirm the following:

- the alleged breach and scope of the investigation;
- details as to how the investigation will be undertaken;
- any supporting evidence of the alleged breach;
- a copy of the Student Conduct Policy;
- details of, and offer to make a referral to, additional support services available to the student;
- right to be accompanied at the meeting by a Supporter who could be a student/staff union representative, colleague, in the case of students a family member or friend.

Upon conclusion of the meeting the notes of the meeting will be shared with the student. Following the above meeting the Investigator will write to any other persons who they have identified as being necessary to meet with for the purposes of gathering evidence.

The Investigator will draft a report which will set out the scope and phases of the investigation, meetings that took place and evidence considered. The report will provide an assessment of the concerns raised and recommendations for next steps including support for those involved.

There are three possible conclusions noted in the report arising from Level 2 Investigation. These are as follows:

- the matter is resolved to the satisfaction of all parties and the case will be closed;
- the student's behaviour has been considered as unacceptable. The Investigator shall decide whether it should be dealt with as a Phase 1, Phase 2 or Phase 3 Behavioural Offence. If considered a Phase 3 Behavioural Offence the matter should be escalated to Phase 3 of this process;
- the student has not been considered to be in breach and the matter will be closed.

Types of unacceptable behaviour considered at this level (this is not an exhaustive list)	Types of sanctions for level 2
• Bullying and/or harassment • Violent Behaviour • Significant damage to University premises (including Halls) • Repeated Phase 1 Behaviour • Major breach of other University Regulations	• Warning issued to student - held on their record until completion of their current course • Student to issue an apology to the person who the behavioural offence relates • Student to make good any damage caused, which may include financial reimbursement • Student required to undertake training to ensure that future occurrences do not arise • Student to agree to a contract of acceptable behaviour, a breach of which can result in automatic referral as a Phase 3 Behavioural offence • Student is excluded from accessing specific services for a limited period of time

Stage 3 – Unacceptable Behaviour

For stage 3 allegations, the matter will be referred to the Dean of Higher Education who will consider if there is a case to answer at this level. It is possible at all stages for the case to be considered as a lower level.

If the Dean of HE believes there to be a case to answer as a level 3 offence, then they will convene a panel of typically 3 individuals with the Dean or Assistant Principal chairing the panel supported by a note taker who is not a panel member. No individual on the panel shall have been involved in any of the preceding steps of this investigation.

In the meetings both the individual bringing the accusation as well that the student being accused will be offered the opportunity to bring their case and defence accordingly. Neither are part of the decision making process in relation to an outcome. The panel will also be offered the opportunity to ask question for clarification of those two individuals. Both parties will be able to offer concluding remarks to the panel before the individual bringing the case and the student retire for the panel discussion, deliberation, and outcomes.

Types of unacceptable behaviour considered at this level (this is not an exhaustive list)	Types of sanctions for level 3
• Fraudulent application to the course • Repeated Phase 2 behaviour • Selling drugs to students or staff • Sexual misconduct • Violence and hate crimes • Behaviour which may also constitute a criminal offence • Use of Drugs on campus	• Student is suspended from their studies • Student is excluded from accessing specific services/premises of the University • Student is excluded from the University permanently

Following the meeting the Panel will communicate in writing to the student :

- a summary of the major points made during the meeting;
- a concise statement of the Panel's findings;
- in the case of any finding that a student's behaviour is unacceptable, the actions required in line with a level 1, level 2 or level 3 unacceptable behaviour offence and the arrangements for its application;
- appropriate support available for the Student and where appropriate the person who reported the breach of academic regulations;
- an explanation of the student's right of appeal.

Where appropriate, the Panel will communicate in writing to the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body associated with the student's course the conclusion of the process and any actions expected of the student which affect the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body.