

STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Scope and Purpose	This document outlines the disciplinary procedures applying to all students at Belfast School of Theology (BST).
Policy Owner	Head of Education (with coordination from Head of Operations)
Policy approval and review	This Policy is approved by the Board and will be reviewed at the end of each academic year or more often as required.
Date last reviewed	June 2026
Date next review	June 2027

The following procedures are to be followed in the event of an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct of BST.

1. Introduction

1.1 The expectations in regard to conduct of students at Belfast School of Theology are set out in the BST Code of Conduct, which is included in the BST Handbook and Moodle. The disciplinary procedures which follow will be instigated in situations where a significant breach of the Code of Conduct, or commonly agreed standards of behaviour, has occurred or is alleged to have occurred.

1.2 Less serious breaches will be handled through the normal pastoral oversight relationships within BST, in most cases through the student's Programme Leader.

- 1.3 **Students of BST, who are registered on programmes of the University of Cumbria**, will, in their capacity as students of the University, be subject to the University of Cumbria's disciplinary regulations in relation to academic matters. In relation to matters of general conduct they will be subject to the BST Code of Conduct.
- 1.4 **All other students of BST** will be subject to the BST Code of Conduct.
- 1.5 Every effort will be made to ensure that action taken under the Student Disciplinary Procedures is fair. Students who become subject to the procedures will be given the opportunity to state their case and to appeal against any decision of the Disciplinary Committee that they consider to be unfair or unjust.

2. Misconduct

- 2.1 Indicative examples of conduct which would make a student liable to disciplinary action include the following:
- a. conduct which constitutes a criminal offence
 - b. indecent or immoral behaviour
 - c. abusive behaviour or harassment or bullying
 - d. dangerous behaviour or physical assault
 - e. significant breaches of the Student Code of Conduct
 - f. deliberate or reckless damage to BST property or misuse of BST property or facilities
 - g. objectionable or insulting behaviour
 - h. disruption of, or improper interference with, the education or support activities and functions of BST
 - i. fraud, deception or dishonesty in relation to BST, its programmes, its activities or its personnel



- j. failure to comply with a reasonable instruction relating to discipline issued by a member of staff acting with the authority of the Principal
- k. failure to abide by BST rules and procedures in relation to health and safety, internet use and security
- l. failure to pay fees
- m. bringing BST into disrepute

3. Disciplinary authority

- 3.1 The Principal is the designated disciplinary officer of BST in matters relating to the discipline of students of BST. He or she may nominate another senior colleague to act on his or her behalf in this capacity. Reference to the Principal in these procedures signifies also reference to persons so nominated.

4. Criminal offences

- 4.1 Where the alleged misconduct, if proved, would also constitute an offence under criminal law, BST will take account of the procedures set out under the University of Cumbria's Student Disciplinary Regulations:
- a. Where the alleged offence may be dealt with internally, it will be so dealt with or the Principal may at his or her discretion defer action until the police and courts have dealt with the matter.
 - b. In all other cases no internal disciplinary action will normally be taken other than the possibility of suspension until the matter has been reported to the police and either a prosecution has been completed, or a decision not to prosecute has been taken.

c. BST under statute is required to report certain matters to the legal authorities.

d. Any sentence by the court on the same facts will be taken into account in any sanction imposed under BST's internal procedures.

5. Disciplinary process

5.1 A student will only be disciplined after careful investigation of the facts and having had the opportunity to present his, or her, side of the case. A student who is the subject of an allegation of misconduct may be suspended with immediate effect, where appropriate, from the residential and/or worshipping community of BST by the Principal, pending the conclusion of the disciplinary process. This is without prejudice to the outcome of the disciplinary process and should not be regarded as disciplinary action or sanction of any kind.

5.2 The student has the right to be accompanied by a fellow student, family member or BST member who may act as a witness or speak on his, or her, behalf at all stages of the formal disciplinary and appeal procedures. No legal representation will be permitted at this stage of the process.

5.3 If a student is disciplined, he or she will receive an explanation of the sanction imposed and will have the right to appeal against the finding and the sanction.

6. Summary dismissal of case

6.1 Allegations of misconduct should be made to the Principal in writing. The Principal may dismiss the allegation immediately if he or she believes, acting

reasonably, that there is no case to answer or that it is, for some other reason, appropriate and reasonable to do so.

7. Preliminary interview

- 7.1 If the allegation is not dismissed, a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will invite the student for an interview, indicating in advance that an allegation has been made which he or she wishes to investigate. Particularly in cases of alleged serious misconduct, it is important that opportunity is given to the student to respond in a considered manner. However, the period for a written submission may not exceed 5 working days.

The SLT member, together with a colleague, will interview the student. The purpose of the preliminary interview is to hear the student's initial response to the allegation of misconduct.

The SLT member will also interview any other parties deemed relevant to the complaint.

Following the interview, the SLT member will write to the student with his or her decision as to whether there is a case to be answered, or whether no further steps need be taken.

- 7.2 If the SLT member decides to take the process further, he or she may deal with the case summarily without recourse to a Disciplinary Committee, where he or she considers, acting reasonably, that it is appropriate to do so and where the student, who is subject to the allegation, agrees that it should not be referred to a Disciplinary Committee. This will normally only happen where there is an admission of guilt from the student and the penalty does not involve the discontinuation of studies. Otherwise, the case will be referred to a Disciplinary

Committee. Any decision taken will be communicated to the student in writing and recorded on the student's file.

8. Disciplinary Committee

- 8.1 The Disciplinary Committee will be composed of the Principal (or his or her nominee), who will chair the committee, and two or four other members, as determined by the Principal, including another member of the BST Teaching Staff. The Disciplinary Committee will be gender balanced.

The committee will not include members of the BST Board of Directors who may constitute an Appeals Committee under these procedures.

The Principal will appoint an appropriate member of the BST staff to act as secretary to the Disciplinary Committee, who will issue all notices as appropriate and arrange for notes of the proceedings to be taken. The secretary will invite the student, giving at least 5 working days' notice in writing, to attend a meeting with the committee and make representation. The secretary will also notify the student of his or her right to be accompanied by another student of BST or a family member.

- 8.2 The committee will act impartially and will base their decision on any evidence presented. Students will be given a full opportunity to state their case and call any witnesses.
- 8.3 The Chair will produce a written report of the outcome of the hearing, setting out the alleged misconduct, a summary of evidence received, the decision of the committee regarding guilt with grounds for the decision and the penalty, if any, imposed, which will be communicated to the student who is the subject of the disciplinary action as soon as is reasonably possible, but in any event normally

within 10 working days unless the BST calendar or annual leave makes this impracticable.

9. Appeals

- 9.1 A student who wishes to appeal against the decision of the Disciplinary Committee shall notify the secretary to the Disciplinary Committee, (see 8.1 above), in writing within 5 working days of receipt of the decision, stating his or her reasons on which the appeal is based. Such an appeal may be made solely on the grounds of incorrect procedure in the disciplinary hearing or new evidence coming to light subsequent to the disciplinary hearing.

The Chair of the BST Board of Directors will nominate three persons to form an Appeals Committee of whom at least two members should be members of the BST Board. The chair of the committee will be appointed by the Chair of Board and may be him or herself. The Appeals Committee will include at least one male and one female.

The student is entitled to appear before the Appeals Committee in person. This option must be notified in his or her written submission. In this event at least 5 working days' written notice of the date, time and venue will be provided.

No member of the Disciplinary Committee shall be present or take part in the hearing of the Appeal. The Appeals Committee shall be informed of the situation where the decision of the Disciplinary Committee was not unanimous.

If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, he or she may appeal to the Northern Ireland Public Services' Ombudsperson.

10. Communication

- 10.1 All correspondence concerning proceedings under the Disciplinary Policy will be sent to the student at the last term-time address notified by the student to BST and to their BST email address. Correspondence may also be sent to the student's last notified home address, as appropriate.

Students are responsible for maintaining the accuracy of personal information including home, term-time and email addresses. Messages sent at any time to the postal address last notified by the student or, during term-time, to a student's BST email address will be considered as sufficient to discharge BST's obligation to provide due notice.

11. Sanctions

- 11.1 Where a student is found guilty of misconduct and he or she is to be penalised, that penalty shall, so far as possible, be commensurate with the seriousness of the misconduct.