



STAFF EMPLOYMENT MANUAL

Title: 6.0 Employee Relations

Chapter: 6.08 Progressive Discipline

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While the University of Hartford retains all rights traditionally associated with the doctrine of employment at will, the University may, using its discretion, apply the standards of progressive discipline as a supervisory tool in an effort to address, correct and sustain acceptable job performance. The following shall serve as guidance only and shall not convey any procedural rights to any employee.

1. Standards of Progressive Discipline

The objective of progressive discipline is that it be timely, administered without undue delay, and that it be progressive and appropriate. The severity of the current offense, weighed along with the employee's past work and attendance record as a whole, determines, in the final analysis, any given disciplinary action. Any level of discipline may be initiated depending upon the degree and circumstances of the infraction. Each situation, therefore, must be judged on its own set of facts.

Progressive discipline is defined as taking increasingly more severe measures in response to repeated malperformance, and includes these progressive steps:

1. verbal warning;
2. written warning;
3. suspension and/or final written warning;
4. dismissal.

The **criteria** for effective discipline includes:

- a. communicating to the employee the seriousness of a wrongful course of conduct;
- b. communicating to the employee what is expected as acceptable conduct;
- c. informing the employee of the consequences of continued wrongful conduct; and
- d. allowing reasonable time and providing assistance, feedback and a time frame for the employee to improve and sustain acceptable conduct.

Where appropriate, a meeting should be held between the supervisor and the employee to discuss the discipline. However, when it is not possible or appropriate to meet, discipline will be mailed to the employee's last known address.

HRD should be contacted for advice concerning the progressive steps of the disciplinary process.

2. Disciplinary Measures - The Progressive Steps

The reasons for taking disciplinary measures at the University are twofold: to correct unsatisfactory work-related behaviors and thereby improve overall job performance; and, as a general deterrent to conduct that interferes with the effectiveness of others and/or the University as a whole. There are four recognized levels of discipline; each is progressively more severe, with dismissal as the final measure.

a. Verbal Warning

This is the least severe, and has no permanency if the desired change of behavior is effected. It should be documented but is not considered part of the official personnel file unless subsequently

incorporated into a written warning. (See also **6.11, Access/Disclosure - Employee Records/University Property**).

b. **Written Warning**

The severity of a written warning depends upon the infraction, the seriousness of the conduct in question and the employee's overall record, including prior discipline. It is documented in the employee's official personnel file and becomes a part of his/her permanent record. A second or repeated warning for the same conduct is always considered more severe than the initial or preceding warning.

c. **Suspension (With or Without Pay) and/or Final Written Warning**

The severity of this action speaks for itself, and varies with the length of suspension. Suspension for more than three days is considered an exception, and suggests that dismissal might be in order.

An employee on a suspension and/or a final written warning is not eligible to participate in the job posting process except when warranted and with the advance written approval of the supervisor, HRD and the appropriate Officer.

d. **Dismissal**

The University may, at its sole discretion, deviate from the order of progressive disciplinary actions and utilize whatever form of discipline is deemed appropriate under the circumstances, up to and including immediate dismissal.

No dismissal will occur without the prior approval of the Executive Director of HRD or designee. (See also **6.10, Termination of Employment**)

The standards of progressive discipline do not apply to an employee on orientation status (or any extension thereof).