

## Disciplinary Policy

<b>Owned and maintained by:</b>	Human Resources
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### Introduction

Audit Scotland is committed to excellence in our audit work and the activity needed to support great public audit. Colleagues across the organisation demonstrate commitment, integrity, and professionalism in the way they go about delivering on their objectives and engage with others, including clients and stakeholders.

On occasion, the performance contribution or behaviours of an employee may mean that the use of this disciplinary policy is required. Audit Scotland's primary aim is to help individual members of staff improve but, if over time this is not the case, more serious levels of disciplinary warnings may be necessary as detailed below.

Due to the dedication and engagement of our workforce, the formal elements of this policy are seldom needed. However, when it is used, Audit Scotland will always act in accordance with good employment practice.

See [appendix 1](#) for a guide to performance management principles for managers and employees.

Our disciplinary policy has been formulated in consultation with the Staff Union (PCS) and takes account of the Code of Practice issued by the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). The policy is not contractual and may be varied from time-to-time following consultation with the PCS.

The policy is not intended to intrude upon your private conduct except in circumstances where this may interfere with the discharge of your employment duties or the good reputation of Audit Scotland.

### Informal process

Minor cases of misconduct and most cases of poor performance are best initially dealt with by informal advice and counselling rather than through this policy. Sometimes an informal warning may be issued by the manager detailing what needs to be done to improve, how performance or conduct will be reviewed and over what period. The aim of an informal warning is to encourage you to improve but you will also be made aware of what action will be taken if you do fail to improve your performance or conduct. An informal warning is not part of the formal disciplinary process, although a record may be retained locally by your manager or where appropriate, HR.

A member of the HR team can provide support in shaping informal conversational messages, and some useful guidance can also be found on our [SharePoint page](#).

## Investigation and disciplinary interviews

Depending upon the nature of the disciplinary concern, an investigation may be carried out by the relevant investigating manager and/or an appropriate member of the HR team. Having investigated all the facts, the investigating manager will decide whether to drop the matter, deal with it informally or arrange for the matter to be dealt with formally under this policy.

In certain circumstances, Audit Scotland reserves the right to suspend you with pay (except where you are appealing against a dismissal in which case you may be reinstated if your appeal is successful) while an investigation is undertaken. The period of suspension will be as brief as possible and the decision to suspend you in this circumstance will in no way to be considered disciplinary action. Such action is undertaken only with the prior approval of Human Resources and you will receive a letter explaining the decision, the likely duration and the reason for the suspension.

Following the investigation and whenever disciplinary action may be considered necessary, a disciplinary hearing will be held with you. The person who will hear and determine the outcome of the disciplinary hearing is detailed below. However, the person bringing forward the disciplinary action/presenting the case will not be the same person that determines the outcome. You will be presented with the facts and given the full opportunity to state your case and present any mitigating circumstances.

Prior to the disciplinary hearing you will be:

- Given advance notice of the hearing and an opportunity to agree a mutually convenient time.
- Informed of the allegations/complaints against you.
- Given an opportunity to be accompanied by a companion. You have a statutory right to be accompanied by a fellow worker or trade union official to certain disciplinary hearings. Your companion will be able to address the hearing and confer with you but cannot act or answer questions on your behalf.

Where you are unable to attend a disciplinary hearing and you provide a good reason for failing to attend, the time and/or date of the hearing will be rearranged. Unless there are special circumstances which result in you being unable to attend the rearranged hearing, the rearranged hearing will take place in your absence. Your companion may attend in such circumstances and will be allowed the opportunity to present your case. You will also be allowed to make written submissions in such a situation.

It should be noted that a disciplinary hearing does not necessarily result in a disciplinary warning being issued.

If the investigation and initial disciplinary interview stages indicate there is a basis for further action, then the following steps will be taken. These steps normally occur sequentially but, where appropriate, Audit Scotland has discretion to advance the procedure. These procedures may also be amended in exceptional circumstances such as where you are absent through sickness or to accommodate any disabilities you may have.

If you have less than twelve months' continuous service with Audit Scotland, the steps are:

- Final written warning

- Dismissal

When a final written warning has been issued within the first twelve months of service, it shall continue to take effect in the event of any subsequent disciplinary measures which may be reinstated in line with any earlier disciplinary outcome and agreed timescales.

If you have more than twelve months' continuous service with Audit Scotland, then the following steps apply:

### **Formal verbal warning**

In the case of minor infringements, you will be given a formal verbal warning. You will be informed of the reason for the warning, that it constitutes the first stage in the disciplinary process and that you have a right of appeal. A note of the verbal warning will be retained on your HR file but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a period of six months.

Your line manager's manager is normally authorised to deal with all matters including the issue of a formal verbal warning.

As an indication only, the type of issues which would normally lead to you receiving a formal verbal warning include, but are not limited to:

- Poor work performance.
- Poor timekeeping such as an excessive flexitime debit.
- Absence without a satisfactory explanation.
- For the avoidance of doubt, while there is some degree of latitude in considering what may or may not be regarded as discourteous behaviour, turning on the facts of each case, no behaviour relating to the undermining of a protected characteristic or Audit Scotland's commitment to diversity and equality will be tolerated.

### **Written warning**

If the infringement is of a more serious nature or you have not met the standards following a formal verbal warning, you will be given a written warning. You will be informed of the reason for the warning and that you have a right of appeal. A note of the written warning will be retained on your HR file but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a period of twelve months.

Your line manager's manager is normally authorised to deal with all matters including the issue of a written warning. They will also inform the Head of HR, HR Assistant Manager or a Senior HR Advisor in advance of any written warning being issued.

### **Final written warning**

If the infringement is of a more serious nature or you have not met the standards following a written warning you will be given a final written warning. You will be informed of the reason for the warning and that you have a right of appeal. A note of the final written warning will be retained on your personnel file but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a period of twelve months. Where misconduct has been very serious, it may be appropriate for the warning to continue for a longer specified period.

An Audit Director or Director in partnership with and in the company of the Head of HR and/or HR Assistant Manager is normally authorised to deal with all matters including the

issue of a final written warning. On approval of the Head of HR, delegation may be given to a Senior HR Advisor to deal with any such matter which may result in the issue of a final written warning.

As an indication only, the type of issues which would normally lead to you receiving a final written warning without the prior use of earlier stages of warnings include, but are not limited to:

- Falsification of expenses or overtime claim.
- Unauthorised use of an Audit Scotland vehicle.
- Attendance at work while under the influence of alcohol (out with the alcohol policy) or drugs.
- Breach of safety regulations or causing danger to persons or property.
- Failure to comply with a reasonable instruction.
- Sending material that contains language which is offensive to others.
- Failure to follow Audit Scotland's policy and procedures relating to Information Security regarding use of unlicensed software; repeated loss of Audit Scotland data or equipment due to lack of care; wilful personal data breach.
- Bringing Audit Scotland into disrepute.
- An act of professional incompetence.

For each/any of these disciplinary stages you will receive details of the action you should take to improve your performance or conduct, the targets to be met and the timescale for improvement. It will be made clear that any further misconduct or failure to meet these targets will result in further disciplinary action.

### **Dismissal after final written warning**

Where you have failed to meet the required standard after a final written warning and following a further investigation and/or disciplinary interview, you may be dismissed. You will receive written confirmation of dismissal containing details of the appropriate period of notice, reason for the dismissal and your right of appeal.

Where appropriate, Audit Scotland may consider alternatives to dismissal including:

- Demotion to a more suitable available job.
- Transfer to another office or business group.

A member of Audit Scotland's Executive Team in partnership with and in the company of the Head of HR or HR Assistant Manager is normally authorised to deal with all matters including the decision to dismiss you.

## Gross misconduct and summary dismissal

Certain acts of misconduct are considered sufficiently serious by Audit Scotland that such cases warrant summary dismissal without prior warning or notice. Such action will only take place following a full investigation and after having heard the employee's explanation.

A member of Audit Scotland's Executive Team in partnership with and in the company of the Head or HR or HR Assistant Manager is normally authorised to deal with all matters including the decision to summarily dismiss you.

In the event of summary dismissal, you will, within seven days, receive from the Head of HR or the HR Assistant Manager a letter setting out details of the dismissal. This will include the effective date of dismissal, the reason for the decision to dismiss and details of your right to appeal.

As an indication only, the type of issues which would normally lead to you receiving summary dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- Conviction for an offence or criminal act which affects your ability or suitability for continued employment with Audit Scotland or your acceptability to other employees.
- Gross misconduct such as stealing, embezzlement, corruption, physical violence, fighting, indecency or divulging of controlled/personal information.
- Actions which may result in expulsion from a professional institute.
- Actions that bring Audit Scotland into disrepute.
- Acts of gross professional incompetence.
- Serious breaches of safety regulations, causing danger to persons or property.
- Unreasonable refusal to comply with a request or instruction during the course of a properly constituted investigation.
- Acts of incitement or actual acts of discrimination, harassment/bullying or victimisation because of gender, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, age, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief or disability.

Failure to follow Audit Scotland's procedures relating to information security as set out in the Information Security Management Policy, including:

- Accessing, downloading, storing or forwarding inappropriate material from the Internet (eg, chain letters, indecent material or pornography).

## General principles and guidelines relating to all stages of the disciplinary procedure

Managers involved in the disciplinary process will ensure that:

- Matters are dealt with as quickly as possible.
- All facts are carefully investigated.

- You receive details of the complaint against you and copies of all relevant evidence before any disciplinary hearing.
- The Head of HR/HR Assistant Manager is informed of any action more serious than a formal verbal warning before it is issued.

## Gross misconduct and summary dismissal

- When deciding upon what type of disciplinary action should be taken, your general record, length of service and special circumstances are considered.
- There is no discrimination on the grounds of, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief and disability.
- You have the opportunity to fully state your case before decisions are reached.
- You are informed of your rights, particularly those relating to appeal or your right to be accompanied.
- You receive an explanation for any disciplinary action and confirmation in writing.
- The disciplinary policy is used to encourage you to improve your conduct or performance to meet the acceptable standard.

## The appeal process

If you are not satisfied with a disciplinary decision which results in a warning or dismissal, you may appeal. Your written request for an appeal must be received by the person who undertook the disciplinary process or the Head of HR within fourteen days of the date of the outcome letter.

The appeal must include details of the basis upon which you are making the appeal.

Arrangements will be made to hear your appeal as soon as practically possible, normally within seven days. You have the right to be accompanied by a companion who should be a colleague or trade union representative. Your companion will be able to address the hearing and confer with you but not answer or act on your behalf. Spouses/partners or solicitors are not normally suitable as companions.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to suspend you with pay pending an appeal unless the appeal is against a decision to dismiss. If you have been dismissed, your employment will be terminated whether or not you appeal. If your appeal is successful, you will be reinstated with no break in your continuity of employment.

Following the conclusion of an appeal hearing, no further right of appeal is possible within Audit Scotland.

Any appeal will normally be held by a senior member of Audit Scotland who has not been previously involved with your disciplinary case except in the case of an appeal against dismissal which will be heard by a member of Audit Scotland's Executive Team in the presence of those involved in the disciplinary process. Appeals against dismissal will follow the format shown in [appendix 2](#).

In the event of an appeal being made by a member of the Executive Team, our standing orders set out the process for hearing these.

A member of the HR team will normally be present at appeal hearings to advise upon procedural issues.

Appeals will result in either:

- The original decision being upheld with disciplinary action being confirmed.
- The original decision being overruled and any disciplinary action being withdrawn.
- Confirmation of the original decision to a large extent but with a less severe sanction.
- Replacing that originally imposed.

You will normally receive written confirmation of your appeal within seven days other than in exceptional circumstances.

### **Further information**

Details are contained within the ACAS Code of Practice on Discipline and Grievance which can be found on the ACAS web site. Alternatively, a copy can be provided to you by the HR team upon request.

## Appendix 1

### **Guideline principles on performance management for staff and managers**

Having informally discussed performance issues with a member of staff, you would expect a Performance Improvement Letter (PIL) covering past and future performance to be in place prior to the disciplinary policy being invoked. The PIL should be thorough and include details of where improvement is required and the agreed monitoring period. At the expiry of this period, you would normally expect another conversation to be carried out.

If performance does not improve following the use of a PIL, the disciplinary process will be invoked and steps followed as set out above. A performance improvement action plan will be drawn up and used to support this process.

For a reminder of the PIL process see the Sharepoint intranet site:

<https://auditscotland.sharepoint.com/sites/HR/SitePages/3D.aspx>



## Appendix 2

The following sets out the principles and process for the conduct of the Audit Scotland Executive Team Member during a hearing of an appeal against dismissal.

The Executive Team representative hearing the appeal will determine whether any witness statements should be obtained, whether these should be read out at the meeting or whether witnesses will be asked to attend. The Executive Team representative will also determine the sequence/order in which witnesses are asked to attend the meeting to ensure that witnesses are less likely to be influenced by what they might otherwise hear during the earlier proceedings of the appeal hearing.

The manager will state the case against the dismissed employee setting out the basis upon which the dismissal has taken place.

- The employee and their representative will have the opportunity to question the manager or the managerial witness(es) about the case.
- The member of the Executive Team will have the same opportunity.
- The employee or their representative will state the case against the decision to dismiss.
- The manager and the managerial witness(es) will be permitted to question the employee about the case.
- The member of the Executive Team will be permitted to also question the employee about the case.
- The manager will sum up the case for Audit Scotland for the decision to dismiss being upheld.
- The employee and their representatives will have the opportunity to sum up the case for the decision to dismiss being overturned.
- Both parties will retire to allow the member of the Executive Team to consider their decision.
- The member of the Executive Team will convey their decision either in the presence of both parties and, if more time is required, in writing in accordance with the disciplinary policy.