Guidelines for Managing Inappropriate Behaviour by Service Users

Introduction
1. These Guidelines set out the University’s approach to managing incidents where a service user (eg a student) exhibits behaviour which is considered unacceptable and inappropriate by the person engaging with them (whether by means of face to face contact, telephone, email, social networking or any other form of communication).

2. Examples of inappropriate behaviour might include angry, demanding, coercive or persistent customers who might be exhibiting unusual behaviours (even in the most subtle of ways), incidents of verbal or physical assault (eg shouting/swearing or pushing staff), harassment (eg an unacceptable number of visits/telephone calls/emails or inappropriate comments).

3. The University expects service users to treat staff with courtesy. This expectation is in line with the right of staff to carry out their normal work duties in a safe environment.

4. The University considers it important to make service users aware that inappropriate behaviour is not acceptable.

5. It is acknowledged that service users (eg students) will at certain times be under stress, for example from academic pressures, personal and medical difficulties and that they may act out of character at times. Staff may also need to be aware of any cultural issues.

6. The University reserves the right, where certain behaviour is considered to be unacceptable, to put on hold, restrict or withdraw access to various services for example by restricting access to various parts of the University campus (but not normally the University Health Service or the Counselling Service) or not progressing an appeal or complaint. Information about unacceptable behaviour may be passed on to other departments or external organisations as appropriate (in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant legislation).

How to Manage Inappropriate Action or Behaviour
7. It is entirely appropriate for a member of staff to indicate that they find certain behaviour unacceptable and bring a meeting or phone call to a close, first warning the customer that they intend to do so. It would also be appropriate for staff to reserve the right not to accept phone calls under certain circumstances.

8. Alternatively, support might be sought from a colleague or line manager if the member of staff recognizes that they can’t deal with the situation themselves. Panic alarms are available in certain areas and security staff may be alerted in case of need.

9. Persistent inappropriate behaviour needs to be managed differently, for example by means of working out a longer term plan for interacting with a user. Drawing up an agreement (setting out examples of acceptable behaviour) might be appropriate in certain circumstances, with a view to taking positive action to change behaviours. Suspending any interaction with a user, withdrawing services or restricting access to certain parts of the campus will only take place after consultation with relevant senior members of staff. A written explanation will also be sent to the user. In certain circumstances, action under the Harassment Guidelines or the Regulations as to the Discipline of Students might be considered.
10. A Notice of Inappropriate Behaviour may be issued to a student who is deemed to be behaving inappropriately. Separate guidelines for using the Notice are shown in Appendix A. Notices can be obtained from the Critical Support Team on support@sheffield.ac.uk.

11. If there are concerns about a student’s health, advice might be sought from the relevant members of staff (eg Mental Health Adviser).

12. Staff should make a record of any incident, noting the main action points and keeping their line manager and other relevant staff informed of the situation.

**Staff Support**

13. A member of staff who has been subject to an incident involving inappropriate behaviour may need the opportunity to talk about the situation afterwards with colleagues. Other means of support (such as counselling) might also be accessed, to allow closure of the incident.

14. Training in dealing with difficult circumstances is provided by Human Resources within their staff development programme. External training programmes are also available.

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**Useful Links**

- Student Services Customer Care Policy
- Our Commitment
- Discipline Regulations
- Student Complaints Procedure
- Equality and Diversity
- Harassment and Bullying
- Attributes of the Sheffield Graduate
Appendix A
Guidelines for using the Notice of Inappropriate Behaviour

Student Services has guidance for managing inappropriate behaviour by students, see the downloads box at www.shef.ac.uk/ssd/sca/. The Notice of Inappropriate Behaviour (the Notice) is an additional tool which can be used within that guidance.

Training is provided through the Supporting the Supporters programme www.shef.ac.uk/ssd/support/training. This training can be tailored for individual departments and services as required.

1. Either academic or service departments may hand the Notice to a student who is deemed to be behaving inappropriately. Guidance can be sought from the Critical Support Team when coming to a decision about whether or not to issue a Notice in a certain situation.

2. The level at which behaviour is deemed to be inappropriate and necessitates this card being issued to a student has to be judged by the individual involved (in consultation with others as appropriate). As a guide it is expected that one or more of the following applies:
   - Further communication at that point is no longer productive.
   - A colleague needs to be alerted to help manage the situation.
   - A senior member of staff needs to be involved with discussions about a particular incident.
   - The behaviour is ongoing, coercive or persistent.
   - Any member of the University (staff or students) feels intimidated and/or worried about their own well-being.
   - Consideration is being given to involving Security Services, to help manage the situation.
   - Consideration is being given to put on hold, restrict or withdraw access to services, for example by restricting access to various parts of the University campus.

3. The Notice may be used, alongside verbal guidance, as a way of helping draw a difficult situation to a close. However, issuing the Notice may not de-escalate a potentially volatile situation, and could actually make it worse. It may therefore be appropriate at times to issue the Notice at a later point, and this perhaps could be done by the Critical Support Team in Student Services.

4. When a Notice has been issued to a student the member of staff should contact the Critical Support Team on support@sheffield.ac.uk, and provide the name of the student, registration number, the time and date the Notice has been issued and a brief summary of any relevant incident and the inappropriate behaviour involved.

5. When advised that a Notice has been issued the Critical Support Team will:
   - Contact the student advising that the Support Team are aware of the incident/behaviour and to offer support if required (considering any well-being and cultural issues).
   - Contact colleagues advising them that a Notice has been issued, where appropriate, including (but not limited to) the academic Head of Department, Taught Programmes Office, Student Conduct and Appeals Office, Security Services and Accommodation and Commercial Services (if the student is in University owned or managed student
accommodation). Colleagues will be asked to note that the Critical Support Team is the main point of contact.

- Provide information on harassment procedures and the Discipline Regulations as necessary.
- Put a case note on the student’s record.

6. Teams/sections/departments may wish to record the incident locally.

7. If a member of the University feels that the safety of any member of staff is at risk then Security Services should be contacted on 24085 or in emergencies 4444.

8. The record that a Notice has been issued and the details of an incident may be used as evidence in any future discipline case.