

Student Accountability Process

Columbia seeks to be a caring community that models Christian character and embodies values such as respect, trust, cooperation and honesty. Non-academic accountability procedures are sometimes necessary in order to maintain community. Discipline at Columbia is designed for the restoration of each willing person back into full participation within the community.

Foundational Matters

Counsel and discipline are integral parts of the growth process of life at Columbia. Students are encouraged to seek counsel from faculty, staff, and student leaders at any time regarding spiritual, social, academic, vocational and personal concerns. Discipline includes both the giving of encouragement and the exercise of restraints. It is intended to assist the individual in reaching personal and community goals. As outlined in Matthew 18:15-17, responsibility for this process is shared by every member of the community. That is, members have high expectations of each other and show our care for each other by encouraging responsible choices as well as confronting and correcting those choices which are irresponsible, and which undermine the shared community commitments we have made to each other.

Guiding Principles

- We want to extend to every student a trust and respect that is both given and earned through each student taking personal responsibility for their own conduct. Accountability for choices made is required if students are to grow in responsibility and character.
- As part of the application process, every student at Columbia has signed the Community Life Standards commitment, thereby indicating that the expectations of the College have been carefully studied, clearly understood, and accepted without reservation.
- Columbia is a covenant community where membership is described first and foremost with such principles as commitment, loyalty, and accountability; rules, regulations, and discipline procedures only come to the fore when the covenant is violated.
- Expectations, regulations, and guidelines exist to serve the needs of people. Therefore, their administration must be pursued with sensitivity to both the individual and the community.
- Discipline seeks to ensure the greatest good of both the individual and the College community. Therefore, it always aims at being redemptive rather than punitive.
- Accused students have the right to understand the nature of the complaint against them. This includes the right to know who has accused them and to see items that may implicate their involvement. All efforts will be made to protect the dignity of all parties involved in the student accountability process.

Informal Accountability

All students attending Columbia Bible College have committed themselves to carefully abide by the College's standards and regulations as spelled out in the Community Life Commitments which they signed as part of the application process, and which can be found in the Student Handbook. Additionally, each student is expected to "look out for the welfare" of others in the Columbia community; this includes reminding each other of College standards and even approaching peers about actions and attitudes which are inconsistent with College standards.

The Student Leaders in the residences (Resident Leaders, RLs) and among commuters (Commuter Hosts, CHs) have special responsibility to approach their fellow students about violations of College standards and regulations. It is assumed that many disciplinary matters will not need to be brought before Student Development staff because caring student leaders have personally worked the matter through with the student(s) involved and have been assured there will be no repetition. RLs and CHs will write a brief description of any concerning incident in an Incident Report and submit it to Student Development staff.

Note: In the case of more serious infractions, the incident must be reported immediately to Student Development staff, who will then decide the Stage (see below) at which the consequences will be determined.

Formal Accountability Process

Initial contact regarding any complaint involving students should be directed toward a Resident Director or the Dean of Students either in person or in writing. Any concerns communicated via the Incident Report form found on the web site, will go directly and immediately to the Dean of Students and the Associate Dean. While these stages outline a potential flow of accountability, the seriousness of the disallowed behaviour may merit immediate and direct movement to any of the Four Stages.

Stage One: Warning

This stage responds to those relatively minor violations of College standards that have not been able to reach resolution between the Student and Student Leaders (see Informal Accountability). It is also the response to more significant infractions as reported to, or observed by, Student Development staff. The student will meet with his/her respective Student Development personnel (i.e. Commuter Director, RD, Director of Athletics), to carefully consider all relevant factors and appropriate responses to this infraction.

- Some, or all, of the following responses may be included in this stage: an appropriate work assignment, a response paper, a fine, curfew, restitution for damages, loss or restrictions of privileges etc.

- The student will be asked to sign a “Memo of Understanding” to ensure that she/he is fully aware of all aspects of the infraction, of her/his stage in the disciplinary process, and of the consequences of moving to the next stage.
- A copy of the “Memo of Understanding” will be kept in the student’s file in the Student Development Office, and the Dean of Students will be informed in detail as well.
- A specific time frame for the period of probation will be set in place: usually to the end of the semester, but not shorter than six weeks.

Stage Two: Probation Level One

A student moves to this stage because of repeated or more serious offenses.

- The student will meet with the Dean of Students and his/her respective Student Development staff to consider carefully all the relevant factors and appropriate courses of action. The student may bring along a support person if they so wish.
- Some, or all, of the following consequences shall be applied: assignment to support group or counseling; curfew; suspension or removal from leadership positions, sports and ministry teams, etc.; a statement to the student body; a fine; a special work assignment; suspension from college; and Financial Aid and/or Student Work (if any) may be affected as well.
- A “Memo of Understanding” will then be developed; it will summarize the nature of the infraction, indicate the student’s stage in the disciplinary process and the consequences to be applied. Upon being signed by the student, it will be placed in the student’s Student Development file (with reference in Academic’s Student file as necessary).
- The time frame of the “Memo of Understanding” may extend to the end of the school year, and lack of cooperation and progress may negatively affect the student’s application to return to Columbia for the following school year. NOTE: The Columbia community will view positively any initiatives by the student which demonstrate a sincere desire to re-establish him/herself as a responsible member of the community.

Stage Three: Probation Level Two

A student moves to this stage, either because of repetition of serious disallowed behaviour (including failure to keep reaffirmed commitments), unwillingness to abide by community standards and expectations, or because of the severe/sensitive nature of his/her first or subsequent infraction.

- The student will meet with the Dean of Students and his/her respective Student Development staff to consider carefully all the relevant factors and appropriate courses of action. The student may bring along a support person if they so wish.

- If, after consideration of all relevant factors, there are consequences short of dismissal that can be imposed, a Probation Level Two Memo of Understanding may be presented to the student. This memo will clearly state that any further violations will result in immediate dismissal.

Stage Four: Dismissal or Suspension

If the only option remaining is dismissal/suspension, the Dean of Students will ask the Columbia's Lead Team to ratify this decision.

- The student will be informed of the decision in a Memo of Dismissal, including his/her right of Appeal and the processes through which an Appeal is conducted.
- Students living in residence are required to move off campus 48 hours following the ratification by the Lead Team to dismiss a student.
- Suspension will typically be for at least one semester and will include specific requirements that must be met before the student can apply for a return to active student status. Details will be noted in the student's permanent record.
- Dismissal will be for at least one academic year but more often will permanently disqualify the student from future studies at Columbia. Stringent and exceptional conditions for readmission shall apply. Details will be noted in the student's permanent record.

Rationale

The underlying goal of the disciplinary process and support structures is to provide appropriate assistance to students who desire to live in harmony in the College's community; occasionally it serves to ascertain whether a "parting of ways" may be necessary. To provide the most suitable and immediate assistance, or to respond most appropriately and concretely, not all the options listed in each stage of the disciplinary process need to be applied in a given situation. It is also important to be aware that the circumstances of an individual situation could warrant skipping one or all of the first three stages.