

Progressive Discipline Policy

Purpose

University of West Alabama's (UWA) Progressive Discipline Policy and Procedures are designed to provide a structured corrective action process to improve and prevent a recurrence of undesirable employee behavior and performance issues.

Outlined below are the steps of UWA's progressive discipline policy and procedures. UWA reserves the right to repeat, combine, or skip steps depending on the facts of each situation and the nature/severity of the offense. Some of the factors that will be considered are whether the offense is repeated despite coaching, counseling, or training; the employee's work record; and the impact the conduct and performance issues have on the organization. Whenever possible, oral and/or written warnings, with sufficient time for improvements, shall precede formal discipline.

Nothing in this policy provides any contractual rights regarding employee discipline or counseling, nor should anything in this policy be read or construed as modifying or altering the employment-at-will relationship between UWA and its employees.

Procedure

Step 1: Counseling and verbal warning

Step 1 creates an opportunity for the immediate supervisor to bring attention to the existing work-related issue. The supervisor should discuss with the employee the nature of the problem or the violation of policies and procedures. The supervisor is expected to clearly describe expectations and steps the employee must take to improve his or her performance or resolve the problem.

Within five business days, the supervisor may prepare written documentation of the verbal counseling. The employee will be asked to sign this document to demonstrate his or her understanding of the issues and the corrective action. This step may be repeated.

Step 2: Written warning

The Step 2 written warning involves more formal documentation of the work-related issues and consequences.

During Step 2, the immediate supervisor, after consultation with Human Resources, will meet with the employee to review any additional incidents or information about the work-related issues as well as any prior relevant corrective action plans. The supervisor will outline the consequences for the employee of his or her continued failure to meet performance or conduct expectations.

A formal performance improvement plan (PIP) requiring the employee's immediate and sustained corrective action may be issued within five business days of a Step 2 meeting. The written warning may also include a statement indicating that the employee may be subject to additional discipline, up to and including termination, if immediate and sustained corrective action is not taken.

Step 3: Suspension and/or final written warning

Step 3 involves providing the employee with final written warning, if one has been previously given, or suspending that employee. Some work-related incidents are so problematic and harmful that the most effective action may be the temporary removal of the employee from the workplace. When immediate action is necessary to ensure the safety of the employee or others, the immediate supervisor may suspend the employee pending the results of an investigation.

Suspensions that are recommended as part of the normal sequence of the progressive discipline policy and procedures must have prior approval from HR.

Depending on the seriousness of the infraction, the employee may be suspended with or without pay in full-day increments consistent with federal, state and local wage and hour employment laws.

Step 4: Recommendation for termination of employment

The last and most serious step in the progressive discipline process is a recommendation to terminate employment. Generally, UWA will try to exercise the progressive nature of this policy by first providing warnings, issuing a final written warning, or suspending the employee from the workplace before proceeding to a recommendation to terminate employment. However, UWA reserves the right to combine and skip steps depending on the circumstances of each situation and the nature of the offense. Furthermore, employees may be terminated without prior notice or disciplinary action.

The supervisor's recommendation to terminate employment must be approved by Human Resources (HR), prior to any action taken.

Hearings Process

Employees will receive notice and have the opportunity to present information to dispute the information used to issue disciplinary action prior to any formal disciplinary action taking place. The purpose of this process is to provide insight into extenuating circumstances that may have contributed to the employee's performance or conduct issues while allowing for an equitable solution.

Performance and Conduct Issues Not Subject to Progressive Discipline

Behavior that is illegal is not required to proceed through the steps of progressive discipline and may result in immediate termination. Such behavior may be reported to local law enforcement authorities.

Similarly, theft, fighting, substance abuse, and intoxication while on the job, and other acts of violence at work are not required to proceed through the steps of progressive discipline and may be grounds for immediate termination.

Documentation

The employee will be provided copies of all progressive discipline documentation, including all PIPs. The employee will be asked to sign copies of this documentation attesting to his or her receipt and understanding of the corrective action outlined in these documents.

Copies of these documents will be placed in the employee's official personnel file.

Impact of Written or Final Progressive Discipline Warning

Annual Increase/Merit Raise- Employees on a Progressive Discipline Warning or a PIP are not automatically eligible for an annual across-the-board or merit pay increase. At the supervisor's discretion and in consultation with HR, a salary increase for an employee who has been on a Disciplinary Warning or a PIP may be considered provided they have significantly met and sustained performance expectations.