**Help and Advice Case Studies**

## Example

Problem: Client is profoundly deaf and only speaks British Sign Language (BSL). He works as a qualified tradesman and has done without issue for years. He was originally employed by a family company but had been recently transferred to a larger firm. The client contacted us as he was facing a disciplinary and dismissal for gross misconduct for a breach of health and safety procedure.

Process: On investigation by our adviser, it appeared that the disciplinary was unfair as no reasonable adjustment had been made for the client’s deafness, including adjustments to ensure communication of any work procedures. Our adviser wrote to the client’s employer detailing the breach of the Equality Act 2010 and reminding the employer that a suitably qualified BSL translator should be provided for the client at the disciplinary hearing.

Outcome: The outcome of the disciplinary hearing - instead of the projected dismissal - was a written warning. The client decided not to appeal the warning but asked us for help to request reasonable changes so that situations such as this did not arise again in his workplace.  The client is still employed, the written warning has expired, and our client’s employer has worked hard to improve communication.

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| **Topic** | **Last Updated** |
| Academic Misconduct | 21/12/2023 |
| Hardship Fund | 17/04/2023 |
| Complaints | 21/12/2023 |
| Disciplinary x2 | 17/04/2024 |
| Fitness to Practise | 26/03/2024 |
| Mitigating Circumstances | 26/03/2024 |

Supporting students through the Complaint’s Procedure

Enquiry: A student studying a Level 6 BSc (Hons) in Mental Health Nursing had recently been allocated a placement working in a setting with elderly patients suffering from advanced dementia. The student had already had 4 out of 5 placements in this setting and felt they were not being provided with the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills and expertise necessary for post-graduate employment. When contacting their course leader, the student was told that it would not be possible to change the placement. The student did not know what to do next and was told by a friend that the Students’ Union might be able to help.

Process: The student booked an appointment with an advisor by completing an enquiry form on the Help and Advice page of the Students’ Union website. During the in-person meeting at St John’s Campus, an advisor explained each step of the Complaints process to the student in simple and clear language. The advisor talked through the guidance for completing a formal complaint and answered questions the student had such as ‘How long after I submit the form should I receive a response?’. The advisor made it clear that successful outcomes of the Formal Complaint Process were often dependent on having evidence of what has happened (in this case, the student referenced the University prospectus) and a clear desired outcome (in this case, the student wanted to move placements to a different setting).

Outcome: The student completed a Formal Complaints form and sent this to Complaints and Appeals. The complaint was upheld and as a result, they managed to get their placement changed.

Supporting Students through the Suspected Academic Misconduct Process

Enquiry: A level 4 student studying a BA (Hons) in Primary Initial Teacher Training submitted an assessment which was flagged during marking for suspected academic misconduct. The student, upon reflection was able to see the mistake they made and came to the Help and Advice Service as advised on the notification email for some clarity on the process and the potential outcomes.

Process: The student booked an appointment with an advisor by completing an enquiry form on the Help and Advice page of the Students’ Union website and sent over details of the AIT referral. During the appointment online (on Teams), an advisor explained each step of the academic integrity process to the student in simple and clear language. The advisor explained the specific type of academic misconduct that was suspected and outlined some types questions the student may be asked around this in the Academic Integrity Meeting (commonly referred to as AIT for short). The advisor talked through the process, step by step, and explained what to expect at the Academic Integrity Meeting and some of the potential penalties that **could** be applied in line with the university policy.

Outcome: An advisor accompanied the student to the academic integrity meeting and supported them throughout making sure policy was being accurately followed and that the student understood everything that was happening/the questions being asked. The student was given a penalty 2 in line with the university’s policy. After the meeting the student debriefed with the advisor who talked the student through the given penalty and explained what this meant in terms of next steps, progression, and future learning opportunities such as the CiteItRight Learning.

Supporting Students through the Mitigating Circumstances Process

Enquiry: A level 5 student studying BSc (Hons) in Business Management had an assessment due but was unable to submit as they had been ill and hospitalised around the submission deadline. They were extremely worried they were going to be penalised for missing the deadline due to being suddenly unwell. They approached the Students’ Union’s Help and Advice Service after being signposted to us from Firstpoint for support around claiming Mitigating Circumstances.

Process: The student booked an appointment with an advisor by completing an enquiry form on the Help and Advice page of the Students’ Union website. The advisor talked through the guidance for submitting a mitigating circumstance claim and answered questions the student had such as ‘what circumstances do the university give mitigating circumstances for?’ and ‘what evidence does the university accept?’. The advisor made it clear that successful outcomes for mitigating circumstances were often dependent on having evidence of what has happened (in this case, doctor’s note/letter and paperwork from the hospital) and a clear link as to how these circumstances impacted their ability to submit the assessment.

Outcome: An advisor sense-checked the mitigating circumstance submission before the student submitted their claim through SOLE. The mitigating circumstances claim was granted, and the student was given another attempt at the assessment with the grade remaining uncapped.

Supporting Students through Fitness to Practice

Enquiry: A PGCE student who was struggling on one of their placements due to unexpected health difficulties was unsure where to go for guidance and support. This led to the student going through the Fitness to Practice process. They approached the Students’ Union’s Help and Advice Service after being signposted to us from the Fitness to Practice notification letter. The student was looking for support around the Fitness to Practice process and potential outcomes.

Process: The student booked an appointment with an advisor by completing an accessible paper version of the Help and Advice enquiry form at the Students’ Union’s welcome desk and sent over details of the Fitness to Practice referral via email. During the face-to-face appointment, an advisor explained each step of the Fitness to Practice process to the student in simple and clear language. An advisor explained the specific concerns raised in the Fitness to Practice notification letter and outlined some types of questions the student may be asked around this in their meeting. The advisor talked through step by step what to expect and some of the potential outcomes of the process in line with the university policy. The advisor accompanied the student to all relevant meetings to support, to make sure the policy was being followed correctly and to help the student understand what they were being asked.

Outcome: The student was referred to Occupational Health to make sure they were safe and fit enough to be on placement and to make sure the student was receiving the correct/enough support to continue. An action plan was put in place to make sure the student could succeed in their remaining placements. This was reviewed after a set amount of time and the student remained on the course with additional support in place.

Supporting Students through Student Disciplinary (as the complainant)

Enquiry: A student studying Level 5 Sport and Exercise Science experienced bullying on their course. They were unsure as to what they could do about their experiences but were guided towards making a complaint by a member of staff. They approached the Students’ Union’s Help and Advice Service after being signposted to us by that staff member. The student was looking for support as their disclosure was being investigated under the Student Disciplinary and wanted to know more about the process and potential outcomes.

Process: The student booked an appointment with an advisor by completing an enquiry form on the Help and Advice page of the Students’ Union website. The advisor listened as the student explained their situation and the nature of the complaint. They talked through the Student Disciplinary process, what to expect as a complainant and potential outcomes. The advisor also signposted the student to welfare services where the student could get more support if they felt they wanted to. After the appointment the advisor sent the student an advice action plan detailing the next steps advised during the appointment.

Outcome: An advisor accompanied the student to their initial investigation interview to support, to make sure the policy was being followed correctly and to help the student understand what they were being asked. The student also accessed mental health and wellbeing support. The student was satisfied with the outcome of the Student Disciplinary and felt the advisor helped them feel heard and supported.

Supporting Students through Student Disciplinary (as the subject of the complainant)

Enquiry: Two Level 4 students in university halls were notified that they were required to attend a Student Behaviour Review Board meeting due to alleged antisocial behaviour. They approached the Students’ Union’s Help and Advice Service after being signposted to us from the notification letter. The students were looking for support around the Student Disciplinary process and potential outcomes.

Process: The students booked an appointment with an advisor by completing accessible paper versions of the Help and Advice enquiry form at the Students’ Union’s welcome desk and sent over the details of the Student Disciplinary. During their face-to-face appointments, with different advisors, each of their advisors explained the steps involved in the Student Disciplinary process in simple and clear language. Both advisors explained the specific concerns raised in the notification letter and outlined the types of questions the students may each be asked around this in their individual meetings. The advisors talked through step by step what to expect and some of the potential outcomes of the process in line with the university policy.

Outcome: Their advisor accompanied the students to all relevant meetings to support, to make sure the policy was being followed correctly and to help the students understand what they were being asked. Their advisors also sense checked the written statements the students chose to submit ahead of their meetings. Both students received final written warnings.

Supporting Students through Access to Learning Fund Application

Enquiry: A level 6 student studying BA (Hons) Criminology who, due to losing their job and having some unexpected bills, were struggling financially. They approached the Students’ Union’s Help and Advice Service after being signposted to us from the Firstpoint. The student was looking for support in applying to the Access to Learning Fund.

Process: The student booked an appointment with an advisor by completing an enquiry form on the Help and Advice page of the Students’ Union website. The advisor talked with student about their situation to better understand what additional support may be appropriate. The advisor also talked through completing the application for the Access to Learning Fund, making a list of all the evidence that needed to be collected and submitted. The advisor also filled out a foodbank referral for the student, so they had some food in the immediate future. After the appointment the advisor sent the student an advice action plan detailing the next steps advised during the appointment and then sense checked the application form before the student then submitted it.

Outcome: The Access to Learning Fund application was successful and the student received an amount of money to help their financial situation. The Access to Learning Fund award is not a loan, so the student won’t need to pay anything back. They were able to continue with their studies without needing to worry about finances.