

Preparing for a Conduct Meeting

A conduct meeting is a time to discuss an alleged violation with a conduct officer/committee and is typically held in a location determined by the hearing officer/committee. More information can be found in the Student Handbook.

It is important to think about what you want/need to say ahead of time so that your comments are focused, relevant, and thorough.

Have a witness to the event that you want to bring to the meeting? Make sure you notify the office at least 3 days prior to the meeting to get a witness approved. More information about witnesses can be found on the conduct FAQs. Use this outline to help you present your information.

I. Introduction

- a. The conduct officer will explain the conduct process and all the allegations that will be discussed during the meeting. Feel free to ask any questions about the meeting.

II. Describe what occurred from your perspective.

- a. Provide a thorough but concise explanation of what happened during the incident. Point out how you made decisions during the events, and talk about what you think you did right and if, and when, you used poor judgement. It is most helpful to provide the sequence of events in chronological order so that it makes sense. Try not to get off on side topics that are not relevant.
- b. Explain any mitigating factors (e.g., What prompted you to make a particular decision – was your judgement clouded for some reason? What/Who influenced you? What were you feeling at the time? What stresses were you facing at the time? What past experiences impacted what you did?).

III. Describe your level of responsibility in what occurred.

- a. Ultimately, the university expects that students will be accountable for their actions. If you are responsible for what happened, you should state this. Rather than trying to mitigate what you did, simply state that you committed a violation and would like to try to fix it and learn from it. Furthermore, if you take this route, it is helpful to talk about what you are now doing to be proactive about avoiding the situation in the future and preventing yourself from violating the Student Handbook again. The university community expects responsible citizenship of students. Talk about what you are doing to be a positive contributor to the community and how you have addressed your behavior so far. What are you doing to seek self-improvement on your own?
- b. Sometimes you may feel that you are somewhat but not entirely responsible for what occurred. If this is the case, it is important to explain what specifically you take responsibility for and what specifically you feel you are not responsible for. If there are mitigating factors that you feel detract from your level of responsibility, it is important to state those factors. Another example might be any overriding feelings or stress at the time that impacted what you did in the moment. If you think someone else is responsible for certain actions, you should specify who was responsible, what they were responsible for, and how their actions impacted yours.

- c. Sometimes you may feel that you are not responsible at all for what occurred. You should state why you think this is and provide any evidence that you are not responsible. You might reiterate any facts that establish you are not responsible for the alleged violations. However, remember that just because you disagree with a law or policy does not mean that you did not violate it. Regardless of your personal feelings about a law or policy, if you chose to violate it, you would be best served by admitting this and taking responsibility for your actions.
- d. If you are at fault and are taking responsibility for it, do not blame others in the course of admitting responsibility. This detracts from you stating that you are responsible (e.g., “I take full responsibility for what occurred. However, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. The police are just looking for people to arrest. I was violating the law, but I did not hurt anyone and just got caught.” Essentially, such statements actually mean, “I AM responsible except I am really not responsible because everyone else is.”). If you violated the law, do not say, “I was in the wrong place at the wrong time” as this is not true and reflects poorly on your sense of personal accountability for your actions. You were committing a violation and got caught. While you may not be happy that you got caught, this does not mean you were not in the wrong. It is not a sign of taking responsibility to say things like, “I know tons of people who do this and don’t get caught – I’m just unlucky.” Show you are willing and able to be accountable for your actions. Just because others were not caught does not mean they too were not committing a violation or that you should not be held accountable for the commission of a violation. Strive to do the right thing, because it is the right thing to do.

IV. Describe what you plan to do differently in the future.

- a. What can the university community expect from you in the future? What are you going to do to prevent the behavior from reoccurring or to show that you are a good citizen? Even if you did not commit a violation, it is always a good idea to reflect on what positive behavior you plan to engage in to help yourself avoid problems later. Take steps to be proactive about your behavior and show that you will be a responsible citizen from now on, and discuss what you have already done and what you will do.