

POLICY

Ocean County College is committed to the use of progressive discipline to ensure fairness and judicious application of disciplinary actions. All employees will have alleged policy, procedure, and conduct violations adjudicated fairly, and appropriate disciplinary action will be applied if a violation is found to have occurred. Subsequent and additional violations will be subject to progressively increased severity in disciplinary measures.

In instances where the offense is severe, it may be necessary to impose a suspension or termination of employment, even for a first offense. When a suspension or termination is deemed to be appropriate, the President has the authority to grant interim approval for suspension (paid or unpaid) or termination during periods between scheduled Board of Trustees meetings. The President will share such interim actions with the Chair of the Board of Trustees when they occur, and they will require review and final approval by the Board of Trustees at its next scheduled meeting.

Employees covered by a bargaining agreement will follow the applicable contractual process governing disciplinary actions. In the absence of contractual language, this policy and procedure will apply.

ADOPTED: April 23, 2007

Revised: May 27, 2014

Revised: May 29, 2025

PROCEDURE

All College employees are required to adhere to workplace behavior and performance standards. The College uses a progressive discipline process to address performance and/or behavioral concerns with the goal of improvement. At each step in the process, supervisors will inform the employee of the issue(s) and the employee is afforded an opportunity to provide input prior to disciplinary action. Documentation must be retained by the supervisor and provided to Human Resources when formal Written or Suspension discipline occurs.

Prior to formal discipline, counseling is recommended as an alternative step.

Counseling

Informal coaching by the supervisor to address minor behavior or performance concerns. The employee is encouraged to provide their perspective, and the supervisor must clarify expectations and provide guidance for improvement. Follow-up discussions with the employee should be conducted to review progress. This step may be repeated, and documentation is retained solely by the supervisor. Counseling is not considered the first step in the disciplinary process but should be utilized to address minor concerns and prevent escalation of problematic behavior.

To encourage the most effective results and provide employees an opportunity to improve, supervisors should follow the following steps:

Verbal Warning

Description: Formal notice of concern is discussed. A supervisor will outline the performance or behavior concern, meet with the employee to address specific concerns, and clarify expected results. Verbal warnings should be documented between the employee and supervisor.

Written Warning

Description: If performance or behavioral concerns continue after verbal warning, formal written notice is issued to the employee by the supervisor with a copy sent to Human Resources. The notice should include clear instruction on actions needed to correct the performance issue(s).

Unpaid Suspension

Description: If performance concerns continue after written warning, the employee is suspended without pay for three to five days. Suspension requires the approval of Human Resources, area Vice President, President of the College, and the Board of Trustees.

Termination

Description: Refer to policy #3312.4.

Part Time Instructional Employees: Adjuncts, P/T Teachers, WPE Instructors, Health Science Instructors

When a part time semester based instructional employee displays concerning behaviors, performance issues, misses or cancels classes without permission, or engages in other concerning actions, the supervisor or designee will enact the progressive discipline steps outlined below. Given the short-term nature of their assigned role, the timeframe of expected improvement and consecutive actions is condensed.

Verbal Warning

Description: Formal notice of concern is discussed. The Dean/Supervisor will outline the performance or behavior concern, meet with the employee to address specific concerns, and clarify expected results. Verbal warnings should be documented between the employee and supervisor.

Improvement Plan

Description: If performance or behavioral concerns are not sufficiently met after verbal warning, the Dean/Supervisor, or designee, will provide a formal written improvement plan to the employee containing expectations, goals, and subsequent actions. Disciplinary actions resulting from a Written Improvement Plan may include limiting or withholding future course offerings, and/or removal from current or future scheduled courses, until the employee has fulfilled the requirements of improvement plan such as training or otherwise demonstrated commitment to making the necessary improvements.

Termination or Separation of Position

Description: Refer to policy #3312.4.

If a full-time staff member has performance or behavioral concerns in a secondary instructional position, the Dean/Supervisor may choose to no longer offer assignments or remove the full-time staff member from the secondary instructional position.

Documentation:

At each step of the progressive discipline process, detailed documentation must be retained by the supervisor. Documentation must contain; the nature of the problem, expectations for improvement, consequences of behavior, and employee response to the concern.

Accelerated Discipline:

The steps of progressive discipline outlined above may be accelerated, up to and including termination, for serious performance issues, violation of policies, or misconduct. Acceleration of progressive discipline steps will consider the repetition of counseling and verbal warnings, prior disciplinary actions, length of time lapsed within each step, and the nature of the employee's position responsibilities. The College reserves the right to discipline and discharge employees for just cause.

ADOPTED: May 29, 2025