Community Standards & Expectations Guide for Residential Living

"To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." - Teddy Roosevelt

The Community Standards & Expectations Guide for Residential Living provides students with a document designed to enhance the Spartan Residential Experience by proactively addressing student conduct issues which may arise within the residential community and promoting a productive living-learning environment for all students.

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COMMUNITY STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

Housing and Residence Life is committed to fostering a transformative Spartan Residential Experience through a variety of co-curricular programs and services which engage students in active learning, civic engagement, exemplary leadership and personal development in a supportive and inclusive environment. Students residing on campus and their respective guests are expected to abide by the community standards that govern NSU student conduct and residential student guidelines. These standards are embodied within a set of core values that include respect, integrity, inclusivity, community and responsibility. When residents fail to adhere to the community standards, appropriate action may be initiated under Housing & Residence Life’s Guide to On-Campus Living Handbook to address student conduct violations and relevant consequences.

DEFINITION OF A RESIDENTIAL STUDENT
For the purposes of enforcing Housing & Residence Life’s Guide to On-Campus Living Handbook, residential students are defined as all persons living in the residence halls and registered as a Norfolk State University student pursuing undergraduate or graduate, or continuing education.

SPARTAN RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY VALUES
In an effort to facilitate transformational learning experiences for students, the following values are essential to community development, character-building and leadership development. Students residing within the Spartan residential community are expected to abide by these values:

**Integrity** – Norfolk State University residents will uphold the Spartan Code of Ethics and demonstrate honesty, integrity and a respect for members of the Spartan residential community at all times.

**Fairness** - Norfolk State University residents will honor fairness and strive for fairness in all their dealings and interactions.

**Community** – Norfolk State University residents will understand the importance and value of their community. The Spartan residential community will reflect a culture of diversity and inclusion.

**Respect** - Norfolk State University residents will show respect for each other, for property and for the community.

**Responsibility** - Norfolk State University residents are given and accept a high level of responsibility as role models.

DISCIPLINARY PHILOSOPHY
Housing & Residence Life is committed to fostering a transformative Spartan Residential Experience and facilitating education for personal development of Norfolk State University students. We firmly believe that every experience in a student’s life can be educational and that
our students’ education at the University is not limited to an expansion of his or her academic knowledge. Rather, it should include the development of an appropriate moral and ethical code that allows each student to understand the importance of responsibility, accountability, and how to function properly in society.

The goal of student discipline is education. It is intended to serve this purpose by identifying socially unacceptable behavior and to ensure that each student understands the importance of adapting to community standards while simultaneously providing for the needs of the individual student. However, there may be times when a residential student’s behavior warrants punitive action.

**Important Note:** All official communication will occur through the student's Spartan e-mail account. Students are responsible for checking their e-mail account regularly as it is the official means of communication. Failure to retrieve messages and letters will not be deemed as grounds to extend the Student Conduct Process for students in violation of Community Standards.

**COMMUNITY STANDARDS FOR THE SPARTAN RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY**

The Student Conduct Process is a timely process by which the residence hall community intervenes when a student's behavior is contrary to community standards. The process is designed to encourage students to take responsibility for their actions and to assure that the rights of all members of the residence community are respected while making every effort to balance individual and community needs and is focused on educational outcomes. When a residential student accepts responsibility for violating a policy, the sanction(s) assigned are intended to provide the student with additional information or experience that will help them to understand how the violation impacted the community, or how the student would be negatively impacted should that behavior continue.

**THE COMMUNITY STANDARDS PROCESS UPHOLDS COMMUNITY VALUES**

The Student Conduct Process is intended to protect the interests of all members of the Spartan residential campus community and, to appropriately address student conduct deemed inappropriate or in violation of the *Guide to On-Campus Living* Handbook. The student conduct referral process is intended to support the development of student decision-making and to ensure student behavior is aligned with community values. Should a residential student not conform his/her behavior to community expectations, he/she may be subject to appropriate decisions and sanctions including, but not limited to, termination of housing contract, placement on the Residence Hall No-Trespass List, restriction or loss of the privileges in regards to visitation and/or participation in a specific residence hall or halls within the residential community. The community standards process is different from criminal and civil court proceedings.

Additionally, a residential student’s behavior outside of the residential halls may affect their status as member of the Spartan residential community. In these instances, residential students may be referred to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities. The Student Conduct Code applies to conduct that takes place on the campus, at University-sponsored events, and off campus, when the administration determines that the off campus conduct affects a substantial university interest. A substantial university interest is defined to include:

- Violation of a local, state or federal law.
- Incidents where a student may present a danger or threat to the health or safety of him/herself or others.
- Incidents which impose upon the rights, property or achievements of self or others or significantly breaches the peace and/or causes social disorder.
- Incidents which are detrimental to the educational interests of the University.

The Student Conduct Code as well as the *Guide to On-Campus Living* Handbook may be applied to conduct that takes place at any time during the time a person is enrolled as a student, including intra-semester breaks and between semesters. The *Guide to On-Campus Living* Handbook also applies to guests of residential community members. Residents are responsible for their guests at all times and accordingly, may be held accountable for the misconduct of their guests/visitors within the residence halls. Housing & Residence Life reserves the right to refer residents and/or their visitors and guests to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities and/or Norfolk State University Campus Police.

**STUDENT CONDUCT PROCESS**

Upon receipt of an Incident Report or University police report, Housing & Residence Life designee will investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident in question and determine whether it warrants a Student Conduct Meeting within Housing & Residence Life or a referral for a hearing within the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities. If the designee determines the facts collected and the Incident Communication Report(s) filed does not warrant further action, the matter will be closed. Such determinations are appropriate where the report filed does not violate the Spartan Code of Ethics, NSU Student Code of Conduct, or Housing & Residence Life’s policies and/or when there is insufficient evidence to support a reasonable belief that a policy has been violated.

If the designee determines that the facts collected and the Incident Report(s) filed does warrant further action, the matter will be forwarded to the appropriate Graduate Assistant, Residence Hall Director or due to the nature of the incident, forwarded to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities for review and appropriate action. Typically, the student will receive an email from Housing & Residence Life within two (2) business days. The email will include the incident report and a copy of their right and it will request the student’s presence at a Student Conduct Meeting to discuss the matter further. During the meeting, the student will have an opportunity to discuss the facts surrounding the incident, the circumstances involved, the alleged policy violation(s), and if found responsible, the range of possible sanction(s). The student will be asked if he/she accepts or does not accept responsibility for the alleged policy violation(s) and to provide a written statement responding to the allegation(s). Within three (3) business days after the Student Conduct Meeting, the student will be sent a sanction letter via email, documenting the details of the allegation and the final outcome. The student will have five (5) business days to file an appeal. Upon notification of a sanction(s), it is the student’s responsibility to complete all sanctions in a satisfactory manner by the designated deadline stated. Should he/she fail to do so, additional action or sanction(s) may occur. If a student is found not responsible, a letter will also be sent via email and no further action will be needed.

Students referred to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities will be contacted to appear at a Student Conduct Hearing. For information pertaining to the Student Conduct Hearing
process, please contact the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities or visit their website at http://www.nsu.edu/studentjudicial/.

APPEAL OF A DECISION OR ASSIGNED SANCTION(S)
A student may request an appeal of decisions from the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities hearings to include imposed sanctions. Only those students that personally appear at a hearing have the right to appeal the decision of the Hearing Officer(s) or Student Court. Decisions on all appeals are final.

The request must be in writing and submitted within 5 business days of the decision. The written appeal must specify the grounds and rationale for the appeal.

All students have a right under specific circumstances to appeal. In order to appeal a decision, one of the following must have occurred: (a) a flaw in the student's right of due process; (b) evident bias in the decision of the individual conducting an informal investigation; (c) inconsistent or overly severe sanction imposed; or (d) new information has been obtained which may have affected the outcome of the initial decision. All appeals must be submitted in writing to Housing & Residence Life within five (5) business days of the date of the student’s sanction letter. The student should address the appeal letter to: Mr. Marcus Porter, Assistant Director of Community Standards/700 Park Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia 23504.

Important Note: Housing & Residence Life reserves the right to remove a resident out of the residential community on a temporary basis as the student conduct process or appeals process takes place should circumstances warrant removal due to threat to self or others. Norfolk State University and Housing & Residence Life will not be responsible for making alternative housing arrangements or for payment or reimbursement of any costs a student may incur as a result of this action.

If you have any questions regarding the Community Standards Process, please contact your Residence Hall Director. You may also contact Marcus Porter, Assistant Director of Community Standards at (757) 823-8407 or 1-(866)-378-7747. For cases referred to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities, you may contact them at (757) 823-8222.

TYPICAL SANCTIONS

The following are possible sanctions (though not inclusive) that are assigned for residential students who violate University Housing policy or guidelines within the Guide to On-Campus Living Handbook:

- **Counseling** - an informal discussion by the respective residential life staff member to correct inappropriate behavior; may include a verbal warning to ensure the rights of all members of the Spartan residential community are respected.
- **Written Warning Letter** - serves as an official notice that you have been informed about University policies.
- **Educational Sanctions** - can include activities such as writing assignments, attending a class or workshop, facilitating a programming effort or a bulletin board.
Community Service – requirement to complete a certain number of hours of service determined by the respective residential life staff member and verified by your Graduate Assistant, Residence Hall Director or Area Coordinator.

Restitution - mandatory repayment for damage to property, cleaning or as determined by the residential life staff member.

Loss of Privileges – loss of certain privileges such as: having guests, restricted access to residential facilities, use of services, or computer network access.

Referral to Counseling – mandates sessions with University counseling or health professionals.

Relocation - mandated reassignment to a different room, floor, or hall.

Notification of Parents - in some situations parents or guardian may be contacted.

Residence Hall Warning – a written statement placed in the student's file indicating that further violations will result in more severe disciplinary action.

Residence Life Probation – official notice that incidents of inappropriate behavior or violations of the Guide to On-Campus Living Handbook may result in more significant disciplinary action.

Removal from Housing – immediate removal from the Spartan residential community.

Housing Ineligible List – mandatory ineligibility for on-campus housing for a period of one semester, a year or for the duration of matriculation.

Student Conduct Referral – the incident will be forwarded to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities as a result of a violation of the University Code of Student Conduct.

Important Note: Please be aware that failure to complete a supplemental sanction may result in further disciplinary action.

ALTERNATIVE SANCTIONS

Alternative sanctions may be educational in nature in an effort to assist students in fostering more of their own personal growth and development as well as to enhance the community at large. Some common alternative sanctions are as follows:

1. Alcohol Education Class: this class addresses issues surrounding the use of alcohol and its effects on the body as well as the community. The class is supervised by the Counseling Center. Students mandated to attend will receive written notification of dates, times, and locations. The class meets 50 minutes each week for four weeks.

2. Drugs/Narcotics Education Class: this class addresses issues surrounding the use/abuse of drugs and/or narcotics and their effects on the body as well as the community. Students mandated to attend will receive written notification of dates, times, and locations. The class meets 50 minutes each week for four weeks.

STUDENT CONDUCT POLICIES

It is recognized that living in a college residential community requires a certain amount of tolerance and conformity by all members. Rules controlling conduct within housing owned or
controlled by the University are promulgated by Housing & Residence Life to enhance the living, learning and comfort of all members within the residential community. Rules established by Housing & Residence Life are outlined in the Guide to On-Campus Living Handbook. Additionally, the Norfolk State University Code of Student Conduct and disciplinary procedures apply to all students, including those who live in the residence halls.

Each incident of inappropriate behavior or violation of community standards has a cumulative effect, and a person’s previous incidents of inappropriate behavior or violations during the course of the semester, as well as the previous semester, will be considered when sanctions are prescribed. The community standards are listed as follows:

**Community Standards Code for Infractions**

1. Blocking hallways or walkways in any residence hall area so as to cause a fire hazard. This includes blocking the electrical panels and propping open entrance or exit doors.

2. A false report of a fire or other emergency, including pulling a fire alarm station when no safety emergency is evident; yelling “fire” or similar as a prank; and misusing or damaging fire safety equipment (i.e., fire extinguishers, sprinkler system, fire pull boxes, smoke detectors, and similar).

3. Intentionally or recklessly destroying, damaging or defacing University or others’ personal property. Negligent destruction, damage or defacement of University or private property. This includes improperly disposing of trash in or around the residence halls.

4. Participating in throwing, dropping, projecting or causing objects to fall from a residence hall room or window any object whatsoever whether it may cause physical harm or not, such as basketballs, garbage bags, glass or plastic bottles, keys, etc. This also includes the passing of any items out of a window. The resident may also be charged for clean up if applicable.

5. Harassing any person in such a way as to seriously or repeatedly interfere with that person’s academic pursuits, sleep, and/or other personal pursuits. This includes malicious pranks, prank phone calls, sexual harassment, hate crimes, threats, online harassment, text messaging, and roommate conflicts.

6. **Possession, use, sale, distribution, being in the presence of or providing marijuana or any controlled dangerous substance or illegal drug and/or drug paraphernalia. The Office of Residence Life and Norfolk State University makes no distinction between whether it has or has not been used, or its intended purpose. The Office of Residence Life and Norfolk State University has a “Zero Tolerance Policy” for drug/narcotic violations.** (Discretionary Violation)

7. Breaking into or entering any locked/secured residence hall space, including maintenance closets, utility rooms, residence hall roof, another resident’s room/apartment, or any residence hall building.

8. **Providing false information to University officials or University Police. This includes forgery or unauthorized alteration of University documents; lying in a disciplinary proceeding; lying to an**
Office of Residence Life & Housing staff member so as to substantially interfere with the performance of his or her duties. (Discretionary Violation).

9. Failure or refusal to produce a University identification card upon demand by a residential life staff member, security officer or other official of the University acting in his/her official capacity or officer of the law.

10. Intentionally, recklessly, or substantially interfering with University officials, including residential life staff members, in the performance of their duties. This includes failure to comply with staff directives, or preventing staff from conducting their normal duties in handling administrative and disciplinary matters.

11. Failure to monitor a guest’s behavior and adherence to policies and/or procedures, regardless of whether the guest is registered under the resident’s name. Residents will also be held responsible for damages caused by their guests.

12. Loan of residence hall space. This includes allowing guests to stay in your room/apartment in your absence for an extended period of time. Additionally, individuals who have not signed a NSU Housing Contract are not permitted to reside in the residence halls.

13. Gambling of any kind is not permitted in the University residence halls nor anywhere on campus, or in off-campus residences.

14. Failure to comply with published security policies and procedures regarding guest visitation and improper sign-in procedures. This also includes attempting to trespass or trespassing. You may not sign in a stranger or allow a stranger to follow you into a residence hall.

15. Noisy or disruptive behavior, including a stereo at high volume, excessive yelling or other types of noise, or violations of established floor/hall quiet hours that interfere with another person’s or a group’s free exercise of academic or personal pursuits, or the ability to sleep or study.

16. Violation of safety and security policies and procedures, the NSU Housing Contract and/or posted in any of the residence halls. This includes refusing to sign in during designated times, or propping open doors.

17. Duplicating, lending or borrowing of room or apartment keys or NSU Spartan Card to or from anyone, including roommates, suitemates, and/or or apartment mates.

18. Violation of a written agreement with one’s roommate, suite mate, apartment mate, or floor mate, developed under the supervision of any residential life staff member.

19. Tampering with/misuse of University office phones, telephone system or cable system.

20. Unauthorized sales/solicitation activity; use of residence hall space to conduct a private business enterprise, whether legal or illegal. Residents are not permitted to use the apartments or rooms for any commercial purposes whatsoever. Solicitation by residents or guests is forbidden.
21. No paid parties, advertised parties, or meetings of more than two (2) people per resident in each room or apartment are allowed in the residence halls.

22. Unauthorized modification/furnishing of residence hall space that may contribute to a fire hazard or unsafe condition. This includes installation of any air conditioner, ceiling fan, or loft, painting, any personal furniture, the installation of a personal lock or chain, possession/use of waterbeds, splicing cable lines, modifying electrical outlets, use of materials that damage the surfaces of the room or prevent equipment from working properly. This also includes removing screens, drilling holes.

23. Use of any sports/recreational equipment in any common area in the residence halls, quad area, and/or roadways adjacent to the residence halls. This includes, but is not limited to, football, basketball, lacrosse, hockey, baseball, and any type of skating or cycling.

24. Harboring a pet or stray animal of any kind. Only fish kept in a tank or aquarium are allowed in the residence halls. The tank must not exceed ten (10) gallons.

25. Extreme prankish behavior of any kind. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of undue force on someone, e.g. grabbing, pushing or shoving, or vandalizing a person’s property, or state property belonging to Norfolk State University.

26. Smoking, of any kind, is prohibited in all residential facilities. Smoking is only permitted a minimum of three (3) feet from any facility entrance.

27. Use of abusive or profane language to any residential life staff member.

28. Removing original furnishings from any apartment/room or placing any outside (non-University or University) furnishings such as patio furniture in the apartment/room.

29. Entering or leaving the building through the windows, roof doors or emergency exits and climbing or scaling the exterior of the building.

30. Repeated failure of the monthly room inspection and extermination policies and procedures.

31. Leaving food cooking unattended resulting in the activation of the fire alarm system or the trouble alarm. Failure to evacuate the building during evacuation procedures including fire alarm evacuations. Use of fire-fueled or electric grills for cooking on landings or open spaces in the residence hall/quad area. The use of flammable materials and heat producing appliances.

32. *Disorderly conduct* – including conduct which interferes with the operation of the University or programs within the Spartan residential community, indecent exposure and/or actions, and/or conduct resulting from drug/narcotic usage and/or alcohol consumption. Also includes conduct deemed unlawful by the criminal statutes of the Commonwealth of Virginia or the United States of America and conduct that endangers or threatens the security of the University community. *(Discretionary Violation)*
33. Violations of Residence Life & Housing policies and procedures published in the NSU Housing Contract, the Guide to On-Campus Living Handbook, the Norfolk State University Student Handbook, Spartan Code of Ethics, and the University Code of Student Conduct.

STUDENT'S RIGHTS
Each member of the Spartan residential community has rights that are recognized in the student conduct process. These rights are as follows:

1. The student should be informed of the charges against him/her in writing.
2. The hearing shall be conducted in such a manner as to do substantial justice and shall not be restricted unduly by rules of procedure and evidence.
3. The student shall have the right to be assisted by an adviser of his/her choice, who must be a member of the Norfolk State University community (administrative official, faculty member, or student). The adviser, upon request of the student may:
   a. Advise and assist the student in the preparation and presentation of his/her defense.
   b. Accompany the student at all discipline hearings.
   c. Advise and assist the student in the preparation and presentation of appeals.
4. The student shall have the right to request in advance a copy of the incident report.
5. The student shall have the right to call a reasonable number of witnesses, subject to cross-examination. Names of the witnesses must be provided to the hearing officer at least two days prior to the hearing.
6. The accused student has the right not to appear or to remain silent at the hearing. In the event the accused person does not appear at the hearing, after proper notification, the evidence in support of the charges shall be presented, considered, and adjudicated.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What happens during the Student Conduct Meeting?
The residence life member will introduce themselves and briefly review the student conduct process. They will explain your rights in the process, as well as what you have been charged with and ask you to sign a document indicating you understand your rights. The incident report and any other supporting documents or statements will then be read. You will then be given the opportunity to tell what happened. After all the information on the case has been reviewed, including the written documents and everything that has been said, you will be given the opportunity to tell us anything else we need to know before making a decision. The timeline for the decision and appeals process will then be explained to you and you may leave. You will be informed of the outcome of the meeting in writing via your NSU student e-mail account.

How is a decision made about whether or not I am responsible?
The meeting administrator will consider all of the information presented during the meeting (the incident report, your statements, statements of witnesses) and then look at each alleged violation separately. A student is found ‘responsible’ for violating policies if he or she admits it or the evidence indicates that a person is responsible. A Student Conduct Meeting is an educational meeting—not a legal proceeding. Therefore, when evidence is considered, it is not for purposes
of making a decision “beyond a reasonable doubt.” Rather, the standard of evidence used at Norfolk State University (and at most other colleges and universities), is a “preponderance of evidence.” This standard of evidence essentially asks “Is it more likely than not that a policy was violated?”

How will I be punished?
The Student Conduct Process is an educational process which means that Housing & Residence Life does not operate from a “punishment perspective.” However, there may be cases where the outcome may include removal from housing. For cases referred to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities, infractions may lead to actions ranging from University warnings to expulsion. Even in the most challenging situations, however, the University is committed to making decisions regarding inappropriate behavior or disciplinary actions from an educational perspective. Decisions regarding educational outcomes take the following factors into account:

- the nature and gravity of the incident (what you did)
- the motivation underlying the behavior (why you chose to do what you did)
- your disciplinary history (what you have done before)
- precedent in similar cases
- the developmental and educational impact of this incident and your perspective of your role and possible future implications given the findings and/or outcome (what you can learn from this situation to positively impact your future choices and the Spartan residential community).

If the violation also involves an alleged crime, can I be prosecuted criminally & also be addressed through the Student Conduct Process?
Yes. The Norfolk State University student conduct process is separate from the legal system and has different goals and outcomes. Without your permission or a court order, we generally cannot inform external agencies of the outcome of our process and our decisions are not influenced by any civil or criminal proceeding.

Is it just my word against someone else’s?
Where possible, we try to gather additional information (witness statements, physical evidence) to avoid creating an environment which prevents an opportunity for two students to “square off.” Likewise, you have the opportunity to provide witness statements or other information. Again, in making a decision, the guideline used is a “preponderance of the evidence.”

What if I did do it?
The Student Conduct Process offers you the opportunity to admit you made a mistake and take to assume responsibility for your decisions and behavior. Experience has shown that most students have the courage to admit their mistakes and are committed to learning from poor decisions. Therefore, we are committed to helping students explore their decisions and to consider how they reflect their own values and the persons they hope to become.

Will my parents find out?
If your parents claim you as a dependent, they will be informed of the results of a Student Conduct Meeting in the following situations: students who are placed on Residence Life...
Probation, Removal from Housing, or on the Housing Ineligible List. Additionally, if you are found responsible for serious or repeated violations of the University Alcohol and Drug Policies, your parents will be informed if you are under the age of 21 years of age. In all cases, we are informing your parents in order to enlist their support in our joint educational mission--not to “get you in more trouble.”

*I didn’t know my actions were a violation of University policy-I didn’t mean to do anything wrong! How can you hold me responsible for that?*

Every Norfolk State University student is responsible for knowing the Spartan Code of Ethics and the Student Code of Conduct. Members of the Spartan residential community are also responsible for knowing the guidelines within the Guide to On-Campus Living Handbook. For all students: ignorance is not an excuse.

**May I bring someone with me to the Student Conduct Meeting?**

Yes. Most students do not choose to bring someone with them to the hearing, but if you wish to have an advisor present, you may do so. An advisor may be a friend or family member, an RA, faculty or staff member. The advisor serves as a support person and is intended to be of assistance to you before and during the hearing however, the advisor may not speak for you nor address the meeting administrator or appeal administrator.

**Can I talk to the person who made the complaint or wrote up the incident report about me?**

This depends on the nature of the incident. In some instances, you will be specifically directed to avoid contact with the complainant or initiator of the Incident Report. You may be afforded an opportunity to talk to the person in some meetings but some you may not be able to do so. In any situation, you may want to be careful about your interactions with the person who may have made the complaint or written up the report as your contact may be interpreted as a threat or as interference with the Student Conduct Process.

**Can I be kicked out of school?**

Incidents or violations which are serious in nature or warrant referral to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities may result in suspension (temporary removal) or expulsion (permanent removal). When Housing & Residence Life refers such cases to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities, the cases are typically heard by Hearing Officers or the Student Court.

**How about just not showing up for the hearing?**

Even if you aren’t there, a decision regarding your responsibility can be made based on the incident report and witness testimony (where pertinent). Actions can also be assigned in your absence. It is in your best interest to participate in the hearing.

**What happens if I don’t complete the assigned outcomes?**

If you don’t file an appeal, it is assumed that you accept the decision: you are responsible for completing the action(s) assigned. If you do not, you will be subject to additional charges and additional outcomes.