

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Student Handbook?

Rules and regulations are in place to support the university's educational mission and to provide a safe living, learning and working environment where all can concentrate on the education process without undue interference. The Student Handbook informs students of the standards of behavior expected, the processes in place for enforcing the rules and the university's response to violations. The Student Handbook also gives information about the rights of students and procedures to follow should students believe they are being treated in a discriminatory manner by other students. The Student Handbook also contains various policies containing information which universities are required to provide to students.

2. Why does WT have a Student Handbook?

The Student Handbook and related processes serve to educate students about their civic and social responsibilities as members of the WT academic community and to hold them accountable for their behavior. In summary, the Student Handbook expects students to:

- Follow the policies, rules, and regulations of the university.
- Use the "Silver" Rule as a guide in your relationships and interactions with others - "Treat others the way that they want to be treated".
- Be honest in academic work and other activities.
- Be law abiding.

Having a Student Handbook is necessary in order to strive for a safe campus community and to make it possible for all community members to successfully pursue their educational interests.

3. What are some of the examples of possible violations?

Alcohol violations (e.g., underage drinking, public intoxication, drinking and driving), computer misuse, damaging other's property and/or university property, fighting, harassment, hazing, intimidation, physical abuse, sexual misconduct, stalking, theft, threats and possession of weapons on campus.

4. Who can file a complaint?

Any member of the university community (faculty, staff, or student) or any person who is unaffiliated with the university who has knowledge of an alleged violation of the Student Handbook may file a complaint against a student alleging that a violation of the Student Handbook has occurred. The university itself may initiate a complaint.

5. How can a complaint be filed?

A complaint should be filed as soon as possible, but within 30 working days of the alleged violation. A late complaint may be accepted with the approval of the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Office of Community Standards, or designee. The complaint should include the details of who, what, when, where, and how, with as much additional information as possible included witnesses. They can be filed using the following Incident Report link: https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?WestTexasAMUniv&layout_id=0.

6. Who can I talk to if I'm unsure about filing a complaint or have questions about the process?

An appointment can be scheduled with the Office of Community Standards to discuss the issue and to learn about the process. The Office of Community Standards is available Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm at (806) 651-2389 located in the JBK 102H or by email at studentconduct@wtamu.edu.

7. What happens when I am called in to meet with a university Conduct Officer?

You will be given an explanation of the conduct process, additional information related to the alleged violation will be shared, and you will be given the opportunity to share your version of what happened.

8. What are some of the ways in which students can be held accountable?

If found Responsible, students may be given a sanction that directly relates to the infraction. Some examples of a Responsible finding might include a reprimand, requirements to complete an education program, assigned community service, restitution for damages, a period of Probation, or Expulsion for the university. The sanction can include one or multiple assignments, and is determined on a case-by-case basis. Determining factors might include the student's needs, the student's conduct history with WT, and the impact of the student's behavior on the community.

9. What will happen if I don't schedule or keep an appointment, or complete the sanction?

In most cases an enrollment hold will be placed on your student account, preventing you from enrolling for subsequent terms at WT. In the case of a missed meeting, in some cases a decision could be made with the student In-Abstentia (not present). In these cases, the decision found by your assigned Conduct Officer or Hearing Board will be sent via WT email.

10. In what circumstances can a student be held accountable for off-campus behaviors?

Off-campus behaviors which affect the educational mission of the university or which impact other students' ability to continue with their education at WT may be subject to review and conduct action. Examples of off-campus behaviors include: selling or providing

alcohol to underage students; selling or distributing illicit drugs; sexual violence; hazing; actions which result in serious injury or death of another person; and repeat alcohol/drug violations.

11. Will my parents be notified when I'm called into a Student Conduct meeting?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is a federal law that prohibits educational institutions from releasing information about a student's educational record to third parties, including parents, without the consent of the student. Discipline records are classified as "education records". Some exceptions in the law do exist. The law does permit educational institutions to notify parents of student under age 21 when a student has been found Responsible for an alcohol and/or drug-related violation. Students are generally notified when parents will be contacted. If a student wants university officials to discuss their discipline records with a parent or parents, the student can sign an authorization for release of information from granting such permission and submit the signed form to the Office of Community Standards. When students do not give the university a local address or keep the local address current, letters can be sent to a student's permanent address, which is usually a parent's address. If you do not want such mail sent to a permanent address, keep your local address on the Colleague system.

12. I am also going to court for the offense for which I got a letter from the Office of Community Standards. Isn't this double jeopardy? Can my campus proceedings be delayed until the criminal process is concluded?

Students may be subject to civil and/or criminal penalties in addition to campus sanctions. The Office of Community Standards is obligated to proceed with disciplinary matters as soon as sufficient information to do so has been collected. The most educational value is derived when discipline occurs relatively contemporaneously with the offense. The university is not required to defer to timelines imposed by the criminal justice system. Campus resolution may proceed before, during, or after civil and/or criminal actions are concluded and is not subject to challenge based on the action or inaction of civil authorities. The Student Conduct process does not attempt to determine whether or not a student committed a crime, but only whether or not it is more likely than not that a violation of the Student Handbook occurred.

13. Can I bring a witness and if so, how do I go about doing that?

No, a witness should not attend your scheduled meeting. However, you can pass along the information to your assigned Conduct Officer or the Office of Community Standards who will add that witness into your case file and schedule a meeting with that individual to collect additional information.