



Student Code of Conduct-
You Can Audit That?



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A quick look at Georgia Southern University and Internal Audit

- Founded in 1906, Georgia Southern has four campuses: the Statesboro Campus, the Armstrong Campus in Savannah, GA, the Liberty Campus in Hinesville, GA, and a study abroad location in Wexford, Ireland.
- Roughly 26,500 students and 2,700 employees
- GSOU internal audit services five institutions:
 - Georgia Southern University
 - Savannah State University
 - College of Coastal Georgia
 - East Georgia State College
 - South Georgia State College
- Staff of three
 - Chief Audit Officer
 - Senior Auditor
 - Auditor



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Objectives of the Presentation:

- How to review Code of Conduct for adherence to Federal, State, and institution policies and procedures.
- How to review sanctions, procedures, and classification related to behavioral regulations.
- How to review sanctions, procedures, and classification related to University Housing regulations.
- How to review procedures related to code of conduct appeals and hearings.
- How to review procedures related to sexual misconduct appeals, hearings, and related processes.
- How to review policy and procedures related to Academic Dishonesty
- A review of how to determine the fairness and equity of the process.



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Why a Student Code of Code Engagement?

- Requested by Vice president of Student Affairs
- Concern over the following:
 - Timeframe to resolve cases
 - Number of cases
 - Sanctions currently implemented/available
 - Difference in classification of cases, application of sanctions, and academic dishonesty determinations



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Primary Objective of the review

- Review student conduct processes and identify opportunities for improvement related to student Conduct.



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Procedures to be Performed:

- Code of Conduct adherence to Federal, University System of Georgia, and GS policies and procedures.
- Sanctions, procedures, and classification related to behavioral regulations
- Sanctions, procedures, and classification related to University Housing regulations.
- Procedures related to code of conduct appeals and hearings.
- Procedures related to sexual misconduct appeals, hearings, and related processes.
- Policy and procedures related to Academic Dishonesty



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Getting Started: Who did we talk to and what did we learn?

- Who?
 - Vice President of Student Affairs
 - Dean of Student Conduct
 - Dean of Students
 - Conduct Officers
 - Title IX
 - Director of Residential Education
 - Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life
 - Academic Affairs
- What did we learn?
 - Common theme: “Wanting to help students”.
 - Frustration “Who was responsible for what” and “Unclear directions about what was needed/required”.





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Getting Started:

What do we need to perform our review?

- Code of Conduct
- People involved in the process.
- Access to the Code of Conduct System
 - Maxient (Vary from institution to institution)
 - IA had ability to read through the system & create reports w/n Maxient





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Procedure 1: Review of the Code of Conduct

- Was the Code easy to understand?
 - Possible students just did not understand the rules, thus resulting in extra cases
 - Rules applied across a varying number of incidents
- How often was the Code updated?
- Compared Student Code of Conduct to other Codes of Conduct.



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Upon further review: The Code of Conduct

- The Code was easy to understand, reviewed twice a year (with changes made throughout the year when needed), and shared consistent language of other universities.





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Procedure 2:
Review of sanctions, procedures,
and classification related to
behavioral regulations

- Timeframe
 - Input into Maxient within 24 hours
 - Notification sent to students within 48 hours upon creation of case
 - Cases completed/fully resolved within 28 business days of creation or 38 Calendar days, barring appeals
- Sanctions
 - Minimum sanctions & implemented consistent
 - Additional circumstances affecting sanctions
- Full completion/resolution of Cases
 - Cases with respondents reach resolution



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Procedure 2: Information to consider
Review of sanctions, procedures, and
classification related to behavioral
regulations

- What cases could we use?
- There were 301 cases in Maxient with respondents.
 - 56 reached resolutions.
 - Majority were behavioral regulations.
 - Remaining cases reviewed
 - Not used for “full and complete” process reviews.
 - Change in hearing process limited number of useable cases.



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Upon Further Review: Sanctions, procedures, and classification related to behavioral regulations

- Timeframe-
 - 15 cases were not entered within the 24-hour timeframe
 - 28 cases were not resolved within 28 days of creation & averaged 37.5 days to resolve.
 - 2 cases did not send notification of a pending case within 48 hours.
- Sanctions-
 - Of the 56 cases reviewed, 55 met the minimum required sanctions.
 - Remaining case did not have enough information to determine correct/incorrect application of sanctions.



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Upon Further Review: Sanctions, procedures, and classification related to behavioral regulations (Cont'd)



- Completion/resolution of Cases-
 - 301 cases with respondents in Maxient
 - Only 56 reached resolution at the time of review
 - 245 outstanding with a 18.6% completion rate
- What caused this?
 - Office procedures allowed for FYI/No correspondence/Admin letters to be entered without a resolution date
- What is the issue?
 - Cases mislabeled left open for extended periods.
 - Different conduct officers handle different aspects of a case or responsible for entering different sections of information into Maxient.
 - No standard report to note outstanding cases/completion rate included the above categories.



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Procedure 3: Review of sanctions, procedures, and classification related to Housing Regulations



- Timeframe
 - Input into Maxient within 24 hours
 - Notification to students of a pending case within 72 hours upon creation of case
 - Completion/full resolution within 28 business days of creation or 38 Calendar days, barring appeals
- Sanctions
 - Minimum sanctions (listed in Code)
 - Additional circumstances
- Full completion/resolution of Cases
 - Did cases with respondents reach a noted resolution within Maxient?



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Procedure 3: Upon Further Review: Sanctions, procedures, and classification related to Housing regulations

- Completion / resolution of Cases-
 - 243 cases with respondents in Maxient
 - 36 reached resolution at the time of review
 - 207 outstanding w/ 14.8% completion rate
- What caused this?
 - Housing office follows the guidance of the Conduct office procedures allowing FYI/No correspondence/Admin letters to be entered without a resolution date
- What is the issue?
 - Cases mislabeled were left for extended periods.
 - Different conduct officers handle different aspects of a case or responsible for entering different sections of information into Maxient.
 - No standard report to run to note outstanding cases/completion rate included the above categories.



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Procedure 3: Upon Further Review:
Sanctions, procedures, and
classification related to Housing
regulations (Cont'd)

- Looked at the case numbers separately
 - Housing handles cases related to Housing violations but uses the same process.
- Found the same issues with 2 different groups utilizing same process
 - Led us to recommend improvements in this shared process.





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Procedure 4: Review of procedures related to Code of Conduct appeals and hearings

- Appeals/hearings-
 - Adequacy & reasonable consideration to the legitimacy of appeals
 - Consistency among hearings
- Members of Appeals hearings-
 - How are members selected?
 - How are members trained?



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Procedure 4: Upon Further Review: Procedures related to Code of Conduct appeals and hearings

- Appeals/hearings-
 - Documentation maintained for appeals justifying groups decision
 - Process for conducting Hearings
 - Use same questions; explanations & hearing structure
- Members of Appeals hearings-
 - Large pool of people willing to serve but the same members served over and over.
 - Employees serving on the group were often “voluntold” to serve.
 - IA noted this could be due to the time the hearings were held.



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Procedure 5:
Review procedures related to sexual
misconduct appeals, hearings, and
related processes.



- Appeals/hearings-
 - Length of time to resolve
 - Length of time cases spent in each offices
 - Title IX
 - Code of Conduct
- 11 cases available to review
 - Are all cases that needed Title IX review, receiving that review?



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Procedure 5: Upon Further Review:
Procedures related to sexual
misconduct appeals, hearings, and
related processes.

- Once Title IX investigation is completed
 - Turned over to the Conduct office for sanctions.
 - IA noted that often those may sit for an extended period once received by the Conduct office.
 - No explanation





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Procedure 6: Review policy and procedures related to Academic Dishonesty

- Who handles the cases?
 - Academic Affairs?
 - Code of Conduct Office?
 - The Professor?
- Timeframe
 - Professors' timeframe to submit cases
 - Length of time to resolve
- Sanctions
 - Minimum requirements
 - Input into Maxient
 - Syllabus and listed Sanctions
 - Consistency across the application of sanctions
- Plagiarism
 - Percent used to identify plagiarized work



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Procedure 6: Upon Further Review: Policy and procedures related to Academic Dishonesty

- Timeframe
 - Professors no timeframe to submit cases
 - Length of time to resolve led to long overdue cases
- Sanctions
 - For AD cases - Did not require a sanction input into Maxient making difficult to determine consistency.
 - Professor list sanctions in syllabus, but sanctions rarely used by Code of Conduct office and not consistent among professors.
- Plagiarism
 - No standard for assignments identified as possible plagiarism via Turnitin were reviewed. Professors reviewed different percentages. Reviews differed from assignment to assignment.



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Issues and Recommendations:
24-hour incident input, timely case resolutions, and required student notification timeframes in OSC cases.

Condition:

- 56 incidents reviewed,
 - 15 incidents: Not entered into Maxient w/n 24-hour
 - 28 incidents: No resolution w/n a timely manner
 - 2 incidents: Students weren't notified of a case w/n 3 business days.

Cause:

- Staff did not enter incidents w/n 24-hour window.
- Cases did not reach Resolution in a timely manner.
- Staff did not notify students of cases involving them w/n 3 business days.

Recommendation:

- Review Maxient routinely to ensure cases reached full resolution and input in reasonable timeframe.
- Conduct a review of input & notification window to determine if 24 - 72 hr time is reasonable.
- Adhere to timeframe & explanations for extended timeframes noted.
- Utilize notes section to explain extended timeframes.
- The OSC should review internal policies & procedures and update accordingly.



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Issues and Recommendations:
24-hour incident input, timely case resolutions, and required student notification timeframes in Housing cases.

Condition:

- 36 incidents reviewed
 - 11 incidents: Not entered in Maxient w/n 24-hour
 - 3 incidents: No resolution w/n a timely manner
 - 3 incidents: Students weren't notified of a case w/n 3 business days.

Cause:

- Staff did not enter incidents w/n 24-hour window.
- Staff did not notify students of cases involving them w/n 3 business days and an explanation for lack of notification was not noted.

Recommendation:

- Review Maxient routinely to ensure cases reached full resolution and input in reasonable timeframe.
- Conduct a review of input & notification window to determine if 24 - 72 hr time is reasonable.
- Adhere to timeframe & explanations for extended timeframes noted.
- Utilize notes section to explain extended timeframes.



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Issues and Recommendations: Timely case resolutions in AD cases



Condition:

- 8 of 45 cases Weren't resolved in a timely manner

Cause:

- Cases no resolutions in timely manner ranging from 40-75 days

Recommendation:

- Review Maxient routinely to ensure cases reached full resolution and input in reasonable timeframe.
- Once a timeframe for timely resolutions is established, make every effort to adhere to timeframe & note explanations for extended timeframes
- Utilize notes section to explain extended timeframes.



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Additional Note Included in Report: Resolution of Student Conduct Cases in Maxient

Condition:

- 636 cases residing in Maxient for Fall 20 / Spring 21 semesters
- 499 cases No resolution date within the system
 - Therefore, only 137 were able to be sampled.

Cause:

- Resolution dates aren't entered consistently in Maxient.

Recommendation:

- Appropriate personnel should review open or unresolved cases within Maxient to determine if cases should be closed or are outstanding.
- Resolution dates should be entered when cases are resolved and closed.
- For current open cases, resolution dates should be required once the case is considered closed.



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Exit Conference Notes: General

- A letter/email warning to be issued for some violations; however, this is relatively small.
 - OSC and Housing should review the use of these sanctions to determine if these sanctions could be used more broadly as low-level warnings and if they could be processed administratively through Maxient
 - This could minimize staff hours related to specific cases.
 - Efforts should be made to reduce the need for student and code of conduct officer meetings regarding low level violations.
- Violations related to Alcohol/Drug cases (occurring in Housing).
 - First offenses assigned to housing staff (in some cases).
 - Additional offenses (2 or more) are sent to OSC.
 - OSC and Housing should review this process to ensure cases are appropriately assigned at the beginning of the process.
 - Eliminate back and forth communication to reduce case resolution time and outstanding case numbers.
- OSC notes extended timeframes for allowing students to complete sanctions under the notes tab in Maxient; however, this is not a consistent practice among all cases.
 - This information is important to note in to explain the timeframe allowed for sanctions to be completed and should be added in a consistent place.
 - The OSC does not consistently note extended timeframes for allowing students to complete their sanctions.
 - The OSC should determine the most effective location and consistently note the timeframe allowed for sanctions to be completed.



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Exit Conference Notes: General

OSC does not require the use of text messages to alert students about updates on their cases.

- Some cases use the text messaging system, while others do not.
- OSC should utilize this system to improve the timeframe in resolving cases.
 - Email formatting could be the reason for the lack of student response and participation in the process.
 - Maxient's produced email is identified as external in a student's email and is possibly viewed as spam/phishing.
 - The production of this email is vital in notification of students & a closer look at reformatting this email should be considered.
- The full completion process is required by OSC in cases the student does not participate.
 - An increase in response and participation in the process could increase case resolutions during the informal stage thus reducing staff time per case.
- Both OSC & Housing provide information to students related to possible infractions
 - Utilize more opportunities such as speaking at SOAR events, monthly reminders, emails, etc. to remind students about the code of conduct process and community guidelines and Georgia Southern values such as leadership and integrity.
 - A more front-end education program approach could lead to a reduction in cases and an increase of student participation in the process when infractions occur.
 - A monthly meeting between OSC & Housing would allow an opportunity to review outstanding cases and resolve them in a timelier fashion and discuss topics of concern to present to students.



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Exit Conference Notes: General

OSC should utilize the data analytics tools and reporting in Maxient.

- Identifying areas of concern and develop messaging and programming targeting:
 - The conduct process
 - Community guidelines
 - Values such as leadership and integrity

OSC doesn't offer feedback opportunity to students about their experience in the conduct process or share their learning experiences

- Staff should develop and implement an exit survey to allow students this opportunity.
- This survey would give OSC feedback about its process & areas of opportunity for improvement related to student success.



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Exit Conference Notes: Housing

Housing should consider utilizing specialized staff for housing violations.

- A variety of staff handle violations along with their other job duties.
- Specialization in housing violations streamline the process & ensure consistency across cases.

OSC policy: incidents entered w/n 24-hr of the incident.

- 11 cases weren't entered w/n this timeframe for
 - Waiting for more detail
 - Multiple reports occurring at once, etc.
- A review should be conducted to ensure this timeframe is adequate for the entering of cases & consideration should be given to extend this timeframe to 72-hours.



Exit Conference Notes: Academic Dishonesty

Professor list sanctions w/n syllabus

- The sanctions listed are not always applied in AD cases.
- A review of listed sanctions should be conducted to clarify if they are minimum or maximum sanctions to create consistency in the application .
- The University should ensure the Academic Dishonesty policy is reviewed annually, and any changes are communicated to the University community appropriately.

Currently no timetable for when professors should submit AD cases.

- Professors wait until end of the semester to grade and submit AD cases (even for assignments which were completed very early in the semester).
- A timeframe for submitting AD cases should be established.

Determined professors may choose to handle cases of AD without submitting information to OSC or Provost Office.

- In all suspected cases of AD, professors should submit Incident forms to Provost office and OSC.
- These submissions will increase the ability to identify students who are repeat offenders and offer support to those students to avoid additional violations.
- The Provost Office should work with faculty to determine appropriate process for submitting and handling of AD cases.



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