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# Seattle Pacific University's Behavioral and Community Expectations




## STUDENT HANDBOOK EXPECTATIONS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

By enrolling in undergraduate courses at SPU, students agree to comply with the expectations, policies, and procedures in this handbook. These apply at all times while a student at SPU, including during breaks and between academic terms, and (unless otherwise stated) whether on or off campus. Failure to comply at any point from the time of admission until graduation, withdrawal, or other termination of student status may result in disciplinary action. Auditing and non-matriculated students are also expected to comply with applicable expectations, policies and procedures in this handbook.

## CONTEXT FOR BEHAVIORAL AND COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

The University's behavioral and community expectations are shaped and informed by four sources:

- **University Mission:** Seattle Pacific University is a Christian

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university fully committed to engaging the culture and changing the world by graduating people of competence and character, becoming people of wisdom, and modeling grace-filled community.

- **Scripture:** As a Christian university, SPU affirms the Old and New Testaments as divinely inspired and authoritative Scriptures. SPU draws from the Christian Scriptures in formulating its policies for faculty, staff and students.
- **Christian Tradition:** SPU affirms the historic Christian faith. The University was founded by the Free Methodist Church and stands within the Wesleyan holiness tradition of evangelical Christianity. We embrace the Wesleyan theology of hope that God's transforming love is offered to all persons, addresses all areas of life, and is ultimately aimed at the redemption of the whole creation.
- **Legal Authority:** Some University policies are in response to specific legal requirements, while others go beyond what laws require. Students are prohibited from violating federal, state or local laws, and some actions may violate University policies even if they are not violations of law.

As reflected above, Seattle Pacific University's purpose and foundation are grounded in its commitment to the Christian faith as it seeks to foster both competence and character in the lives of students. However, the University does not require its students to share its religious beliefs or conform to all of the lifestyle commitments that follow from these beliefs. This is reinforced by the fact that the University has never required students to sign a statement of faith as a pre-condition to acceptance and enrollment. Informed by the Wesleyan theological tradition, the University's mission is missiological in nature; it seeks to be a community of hospitality and hope where all people, those who profess a Christian faith as well as those who do not, can encounter the gospel of Jesus Christ. The fact that the University may not require particular beliefs or practices of its students should not be taken to mean that the University regards such beliefs and practices as untrue or

unimportant. In particular, the University has developed a [Statement of Faith](#) and a [Statement on Human Sexuality](#) that express certain fundamental beliefs and values of the University and related practices of faithful discipleship. The University intends for the words and actions of its faculty and staff to model the call of discipleship and present Jesus Christ in a winsome manner that invites students into an encounter with God. In addition, the University wants to aid students who wish to develop in their Christian faith and provide resources for any student who may be struggling with questions of lifestyle and morality. To assist with this, the University provides counseling and ministry services for students who need help in clarifying personal character issues, relational and behavioral, or those struggling with issues of morality and moral behavior.

Nonetheless, the University requires that all students abide by certain behavioral standards. While the Behavior and Community Expectations do not give expression to all of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, these behavioral standards are based on the University's Christian mission and are intended to provide a positive learning environment, promote the intellectual, social, spiritual, and physical well-being of students, and facilitate the University's goal of character formation.

## **BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE STUDENT CONDUCT PROCESS**

Seattle Pacific University generally seeks to follow a biblical model of discipline as described in [Matthew 18:15-18](#) and [Galatians 6:1-2](#) when it comes to conduct matters pertaining to students. The purpose of this kind of discipline is redemptive in nature, seeking to reconcile the person to God and to his or her neighbor. It is also progressive, normally beginning with a private conversation between two people (student to student).

If those two people cannot resolve the problem, the next level would include consultation with a staff member such as a

resident advisor (RA), a residence life coordinator (RLC), or a faculty or staff member. If it then cannot be resolved, it will be referred to counseling and/or the conduct process by the dean of students for community life (DOSCL) or DOSCL Designee. When a situation involving a student or student organization appears to violate University policies, rules, regulations, or standards, it becomes the responsibility of the vice president for student life or the VPSL designee to implement the University's behavioral and disciplinary process.

Because a primary goal of the disciplinary process is to be educational and redemptive, the process is non-adversarial and is not to be considered analogous to court proceedings. Conduct hearings are not courtroom dramas. They are meetings among community members to give all parties the opportunity to identify concerns, explain perceptions, explore behavior, and hear suggestions. The emphasis is placed on student behavior, and the relationship of behavior to commitments and responsibilities inherent in accepting membership in the University community.

Please note, however, that the University may follow a different approach if there are concerns for campus safety or applicable laws prescribe other procedures. Also, the University has developed specialized procedures for addressing certain types of misconduct. For example, refer to the section titled [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) for the University's procedures for addressing reports of sexual misconduct, and refer to the section titled [Nondiscrimination Complaint Procedures](#) for the University's procedures for addressing reports of discrimination.

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