



COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Hazing

Policy Number [X-XX]

Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania

Approved by University Senate, [Date of Approval]

Revised March 25, 2024

Responsible Office: Office of Student Conduct

1. Purpose

Hazing is generally understood to be a form of initiation that occurs when new members enter certain social groups, most often characterized by degrading, humiliating, or dangerous tasks and behaviors. It is the most damaging instrument to student groups and organizations on a college campus. These organizations include but are not limited to social, honor, service, athletic, fraternity, sorority, and music. This counterproductive and hazardous act has no rightful place in any student group or organization.

Hazing at Commonwealth University is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Hazing risks human lives, brutalizes everyone involved, and jeopardizes the very existence of Commonwealth University student groups and organizations.

No policy can be so precisely written as to address all possible situations. When this policy does not address a specific behavior, students, organizations, teams and groups are expected to conduct themselves and their activities in the spirit of this policy and with respect for the dignity and well-being of others. The definition of hazing applies to all students regardless of the organization's affiliative nature with Commonwealth University whether or not the participants consent to such activity or perceive the behavior as voluntary.

Any student who participates in hazing is subject to the Student Code of Conduct and may be suspended or expelled from the University. Hazing is a criminal offense. Any student who participates in hazing may be arrested and prosecuted. Convictions may result in applicable penalty under the Pennsylvania Crimes Code: 18 Pa. C.S. § 2802.

2. Scope

Members of the Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania community, including students, faculty, staff, officials, and alumni.



COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

3. Definitions, Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. Definitions

3.1.1. **Hazing** – Commonwealth University and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 18 Pa. C.S. § 2802, define hazing as intentionally, knowingly or recklessly, for the purpose of initiating, admitting, or affiliating an individual into or with an organization, or for the purpose of continuing or enhancing an individual's membership or status in an organization, causing, coercing or forcing an individual to do any of the following:

3.1.1.1. Consume any food, drink, liquid, alcoholic liquid, drug, or other substance which subjects the individual to a risk of emotional or physical harm.

3.1.1.2. Endure any brutality or act of a physical nature, which may include but is not limited to whipping, beating, branding, paddling, kicking, pushing, shoving, tackling, calisthenics, or exposure to the elements.

3.1.1.3. Endure brutality or act of a mental nature, which may include but is not limited to activity adversely affecting the mental health, or dignity of the individual, sleep deprivation, exclusion from social contact, or conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment or degradation.

3.1.1.4. Any activity which has the potential to be frightening, morally compromising, degrading, and/or unduly deceptive, including deception designed to convince the individual of impending pain, injury, or non-initiation including but not limited to promoting servitude, berating or verbally harassing individuals, throwing items at or on individuals, forcing individuals to carry items or wear apparel which is undignified, requiring public stunts such as forcing individuals to yell when entering or departing a physical structure or in the presence of designated individuals, forcing individuals to use designated entrances or exits, requiring individuals to run personal errands, intentionally creating labor or clean-up work, and requiring individuals to wear scant clothing or to be nude.

3.1.1.5. Endure brutality or an act of a sexual nature.

3.1.1.6. Any activity which endangers or has the potential to endanger the academic performance of the individual, such as not allowing adequate time for, or interfering with academic commitments; activities conducted between the hours of midnight and 8:00 a.m., and forced exclusion from social or verbal contact with any other individual.

3.1.1.7. Any destruction or removal of public or private property.

3.1.1.8. Any violation of federal, state, or local law or rule or University policy.

3.1.2. **Student Organization** – The term student organization in this policy refers to organizations, both sponsored and unsponsored by the University, including but



COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

not limited to chapters, teams, clubs, colonies, units, or groups of students, alumni, or advisors, or other persons associated with the University.

3.1.3. **Recognized Organization** – A “recognized organization” is one that has fulfilled all of the registration requirements set forth by the student government body and is fully recognized by the University, student government, and other relevant University governance groups

3.2. **Roles and Responsibilities**

3.2.1. University student groups and individual students – responsible for reading and abiding by the Student Code of Conduct and this hazing policy

3.2.2. Student organization advisors – responsible for understanding this policy and aiding organization members in policy compliance

3.2.3. Dean of Students’ Office/Student Involvement – responsible for Anti-Hazing Compliance Agreement

3.2.4. Office of Student Conduct – Investigates and adjudicates charges of violations of the hazing policy by an organization and individual students

3.2.5. Vice President of Student Success and Campus Life – may issue interim suspensions and other educational outcomes

3.2.6. Any individual affiliated with the university – may file a complaint alleging violations of this policy with the Office of Student Conduct

4. **Policy**

4.1. Presumptions

4.1.1. Hazing will not be tolerated at the University.

4.1.2. University student groups (e.g. registered student organizations, intramural and athletic teams, and other student groups) and individual students are prohibited from hazing.

4.1.3. Hazing is prohibited in any form both on campus and off campus.

4.1.4. Intentional or reckless hazing that results in a substantial risk of physical injury or death or which results in serious bodily injury or death is a crime in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

4.1.5. New and prospective member-related activities by nature must reflect the best interests of the new/prospective members, current members of the organization, and the University.

4.1.6. Training and education that have clear objectives and relevance to the tasks and responsibilities of an organization’s members and that are not dangerous or harmful are not considered hazing.

4.1.7. Hazing shall not include reasonable and customary athletic, law enforcement or military training, contests, competitions, or events.



COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

- 4.1.8. All University students, employees, advisors, and organizations are responsible for abiding by this policy, both on campus and off campus, including in privately-owned facilities or property.
- 4.1.9. Student organizations are responsible for any activity in violation of this policy by any individual or group associated with the organization, unless it is proven that the group or individual activity was independent of, and occurred without the knowledge or consent of the organization. Such responsibility also applies to situations when one or more individuals associated with the organization know or should have known of the activity and failed to make every reasonable attempt to prevent or stop it.
- 4.1.10. The filing of charges at Commonwealth University against an organization does not preclude the filing of University charges against an individual student or the filing of civil or criminal charges against the organization or individual.
- 4.1.11. For the purposes of this regulation, hazing includes observation of hazing activities by any individual in a position to intervene but who fails to intervene.
- 4.2. Implementation
- 4.2.1. The organization's leader(s), who may be either elected officer(s) or designated leader(s) within the organization, are responsible for informing individuals associated with the organization of this policy. This policy should be clearly communicated by the leader(s) to the membership at the first meeting of the organization each semester and to new members before beginning new member activity.
- 4.2.2. To certify acknowledgement of this policy's conditions, student organizations must submit a completed Anti-Hazing Compliance Agreement through the Dean of Students' Office/Student Involvement within seven days of the commencement of fall semester classes or before beginning any organization-related activities, whichever comes first, and at the election or appointment of new officers or leaders. Failure to submit the completed form by the deadline will result in interim suspension of organizational recognition until the completed form is received.
- 4.2.3. All organizations will not interfere with their participants' academic success and therefore will not interfere with student academic requirements. All non-academic initiation must occur during the fall and spring semesters while classes are in session.
- 4.2.4. The University shall provide a copy of this policy, including the University's rules, penalties, and program of enforcement to each student organization. The University shall ensure that students are informed of this policy via student organization leadership, including the rules, penalties, and program of enforcement.

5. Procedures, Standards, and Guidelines



COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

5.1 Jurisdiction and Procedures

5.1.1 Charges of violations of this policy by an organization should be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for investigation and adjudication in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

5.1.1.1 In all cases of alleged violations of this policy, the organization advisor and associated University personnel (such as a coach), associated University department, and general headquarters of the organization (when applicable) will be notified.

5.1.1.2 During the period of formal investigation or adjudication of alleged violations of this policy, all new member-related activities, organization activities, and University recognition or sponsorship of the organization may be placed on interim suspension by the Vice President of Student Success and Campus Life or their designee.

5.1.2 Charges of violations of this policy by a student should be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for investigation and adjudication conducted in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

5.1.3 The University, organizations, and individuals may also be criminally charged under applicable laws.

5.1.4 It is not a defense to a charge of hazing that:

5.1.4.1 Any or all participants consented;

5.1.4.2 The conduct was not part of an official organizational event or otherwise sanctioned or approved by the student group; or

5.1.4.3 The conduct or activity was not done as a condition of membership to or affiliation with a student group.

5.1.5 It is a violation of this policy to retaliate or take adverse action towards any person for reporting an alleged violation of this policy or for cooperating with a University investigation related to this policy. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, verbal or implied threats, physical or psychological abuse, intimidation, harassment (verbal or written), isolation, or any other action intended to create a hostile environment for the intended target of the retaliation.

5.2 Filing Complaints

5.2.1 The following groups or individuals may make a report in regard to this policy:

5.2.1.1 Any student organization as a group.

5.2.1.2 Any individual member of a student organization.

5.2.1.3 Any pledge/associate/new member of a student organization.

5.2.1.4 Any probationary student organization as a group.

5.2.1.5 Any probationary member.

5.2.1.6 The Advisor of a student organization.

5.2.1.7 Alumni/alumnae of a student organization.

5.2.1.8 Any individual affiliated with the university.

5.3 Educational Outcomes



COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

- 5.3.1 Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for possible educational outcomes.

Any reasonable educational outcomes may be imposed by the Office of Student Conduct at the conclusion of an adjudicative process. Additional educational outcomes not listed in the Student Code of Conduct may be imposed, if reasonable, upon the approval of the Vice President of Student Success and Campus Life.

Educational outcomes imposed by the University for violations of this regulation may be in addition to any penalty imposed for violation of the criminal laws of the State (if applicable) and for violation of any other University regulations or policies.

5.4 University Antihazing Program

- 5.4.1 The University will maintain an Antihazing Program for purposes of ensuring the University's rules, penalties, annual reporting, organizational training, antihazing policy dissemination and posting occur.

The University will maintain records of hazing allegations, violations, and adjudication within the Office of Student Conduct in accordance with the Timothy J. Piazza Antihazing Law and University policy.

6 Compliance and Enforcement

- 6.1 Every University policy will undergo a regular review on a five-year cycle, with approximately 20% of the total policies inventory being reviewed each year.
- 6.2 All policy reviews will be conducted by the responsible Senate Committee to assure that the policy remains relevant and aligns with applicable federal and state laws and regulations, PASSHE Board of Governors policies, and other University policies, procedures, standards, or guidelines.

7. Additional Information

6.3 Supporting Documents

- 6.3.1 Student Code of Conduct - <https://www.commonwealthu.edu/student-handbook/code-of-conduct>
- 6.3.2 Student Complaints and Concerns - <https://www.commonwealthu.edu/student-complaints-and-concerns>
- 6.3.3 18 Pa. C.S. § 2802 - <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&ttl=18&div=0&chpt=28&sctn=2&subsctn=0>



COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

- 6.3.4 Timothy J. Piazza Antihazing Law - <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&ttl=18&div=0&chpt=28>
- 6.3.5 The Hazing Prevention Network - <https://hazingpreventionnetwork.org/#>
- 6.3.6 StopHazing resources - <https://stophazing.org/about/>
- 6.3.7 The Anti-Hazing Coalition - <https://www.antihazingcoalition.org/>

6.4 History

- 6.4.1 Issued by: Dione Somerville, Vice President for Student Life
- 6.4.2 Notes: Reviewed by the Student Life Standing Committee 10/17/97; Reviewed by Student Life Standing Committee 4/2/2019, Interim Policy by VP for Student Affairs on 4/24/2019, Approved by Forum 9/25/2019
- 6.4.3 Effective Date – [Date Approved by the University Senate or Issued by the Office of the President as an Interim Policy]
- 6.4.4 Revised – March 25, 2024
- 6.4.5 Next Review Date - [Date of Revision]

- 6.5 **Related Policies** - Student Code of Conduct; Student Complaints and Concerns

- 6.6 **Contacts for Additional Information and Reporting**
Office of Student Conduct, Commonwealth University,
studentconduct@commonwealthu.edu; (570) 389-4734