



**REASONABLE FORCE & SAFE HANDLING:  
POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

<b>Process Area</b>	<b>Curriculum</b>
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002	Jan 2018	Changes to section 3, 5, 5.4, 5.6, 5.7	MG	Governing Body	Jan 2021
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004	Nov 2023	Updated with minor amendments	LS	Governing Body	Nov 2026

**If requested, the College will make the policy available in alternative formats to accommodate visual impairments. The policy can also be downloaded from the College website and made available in alternative languages upon request.**

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Southern Regional College has a commitment to

- providing a safe and secure environment for the entire College community (students and staff); and
- promoting and sustaining appropriate behaviour.

This policy has been formulated with due consideration to the following legislation:

- The Children (NI) Order 1995 – duty to protect and child protection responsibilities/ fulfilling responsibility;
- UN Convention on The Rights of The Child 1989 – (Articles 12, 16 and 19); UK 1991;
- The Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978;
- Human Rights Act 1998 – Articles 3 and 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- The Further Education Order (NI) 1997.

The College believes that:

- Each student has a right to be educated in a safe and secure environment where each student's moral, intellectual, personal, social and emotional development is promoted;
- Enrolment literature and safeguarding information will inform parents and carers of students under the age of 18 that their children are being educated in a safe, caring and respectful atmosphere;
- All staff have the right to work in a safe and secure environment.

### Links With Other Policies

This policy is one of the overall pastoral policies and dovetails into the College's existing anti-bullying policy, disciplinary policies, learning support policy, student charter, personal tutor policy, equality and good relations policy, safeguarding policy, student health and wellbeing policy, health and safety policy and complaints and compliments policy.

It also takes account of the organisational development policy, teaching, learning and assessment policies.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff and students at the College.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

Student	In the context of this policy a student is defined as a person who has registered with the College for a programme of learning.
Reasonable Force	<p>There is no precise legal definition of “reasonable force.” It will depend on the circumstances in each individual case. However, the following should be borne in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>use of force</b> can be regarded as reasonable <b>only</b> if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. For example, physical force could not be justified to prevent a student from committing a trivial misdemeanour, or in a situation that could clearly be resolved without force;</li> <li>• The <b>degree of force</b> employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour, or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any force used should always be the <b>minimum</b> to achieve the desired result.</li> </ul> <p>It may be appropriate for a member of staff to use reasonable force for the purpose of preventing the student from doing (or continuing to do) any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Committing any offence;</li> <li>2. Personal injury to, or significant damage to the property of, any person (including the student themselves); or</li> <li>3. Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the College or among any of the College students or staff, whether that behaviour occurs during education sessions or otherwise.</li> </ol>

### 4. PURPOSES

The following purposes underpin the College’s policy and practices to:

- Create a learning environment in which students and staff feel safe;
- Protect every person in the college community from harm;
- Protect all students against any form of physical intervention, which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful; and
- Develop and implement guidance for staff (teaching and support staff) so that they are clear about the circumstances in which they might use reasonable force to restrain students and how force might be applied.

## 5. PROCEDURE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

This policy and procedure takes into account that the use of reasonable force, as defined in Section 3 and safe handling in the following contexts:

- Planned intervention in which staff employ, where necessary, pre-arranged strategies based upon a risk assessment which is held by the personal tutor and learning support manager/coordinator if support needs are identified.
- Emergency or unplanned use of force/intervention, which occurs in response to unforeseen event

### 5.1 Preventative Strategies

The College actively promotes positive behaviour management strategies thus reducing the need for the use of any form of physical interventions, except in emergency situations. All attempts should be made by staff to defuse and de-escalate conflict, confrontation or aggression.

Preventative strategies are listed in Appendix 1.

Training on behavioural management and safeguarding will be provided to all staff.

### 5.2 Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is one of the College's preventative strategies to minimise the risk of an incident escalating unnecessarily and will be a normal practice for the College where a student or group of students are known to exhibit disturbing and distressing behaviour. Risk assessment will be considered only for those students where there is a foreseeable risk and it enables the College to plan and train accordingly. Risk assessments should be included with a student's learning plan/agreement. Risk assessment will be considered from an environmental and individual risk perspective.

Risk assessment documentation is attached (Appendix 2 & 3).

### 5.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Reasonable force/safe handling can be used by any member of staff who is authorised by the Chief Executive. Unless in exceptional circumstances, this is defined as any member of staff who has been assessed and passed appropriate safeguarding controls and who has a supervisory responsibility for one or more students.

All lecturers (part-time and full time), managers (Tier 3 and above), classroom assistants, learning support staff, librarians are authorised to use reasonable force/safe handling on students.

Under all circumstances staff should ensure that they have adhered to all other College policies.

The guidance contained in this Policy cannot cover every possible situation in which it might be reasonable for someone to use a degree of force. For example, everyone has the right to defend themselves against an attack provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force to do so. Similarly, in an emergency, for example if a student is at immediate risk of injury or on the point of inflicting injury on someone else, any member of staff would be entitled to intervene whether or not specifically authorised by the Chief Executive to do so.

### 5.4 Reasonable Force/Safe Handling Procedure

There may be circumstances when a member of staff may have to decide between making an intervention/using reasonable force by placing him/herself in a dangerous situation or standing

back and thereby allowing colleagues or students to face a potential danger. There will always be an element of personal judgment in these decisions and there is the possibility of someone being injured. However, it is reasonable to expect a member of staff to engage in some risk where there is evidence of danger to others and intervention has a good chance of being effective.

Staff should never, however, put themselves in personal danger merely to safeguard property.

Reasonable force/safe handling can be used by an authorised staff member on the College premises, recognised out centres (Appendix 4 – Sites authorised and recognised for the use of reasonable force/safe handling) or authorised situations (e.g., College trips/visits to other places).

Reasonable force should be limited to emergency situations and used only as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have been exhausted and where a student is:

- Committing any offence;
- Causing personal injury, or damage to the property of, any person or
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the College or among any of the College students or staff, whether that behaviour occurs during education sessions or otherwise.

Examples that fall in the first two categories are:

- A student attacks a member of staff or another student;
- Students are fighting;
- A student is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects.

Examples that fall into the third category are:

- A student persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a room or area or the College; or
- A student is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting learning.

## 5.5 Forms of Reasonable Force

When other behaviour management strategies have failed then a minimum intervention of force may be employed.

The force applied should consider age, sex, physical strength, size, understanding, medical conditions and any special needs of the student. Any use of force should preserve the dignity and respect of all concerned. The use of reasonable force should involve a calm and measured approach at all times appropriate to the particular student and be in accordance with the College's agreed strategies.

Force should only be used after the following stages have been observed (unless the situation calls for immediate intervention for the prevention of serious injury to any other person):

- Inform the student to stop the inappropriate behaviour;
- Ask the student to behave appropriately, clearly stating the desired behaviour; and
- Tell the student that physical intervention will take place if the behaviour continues.

During the incident:

- repeatedly reassure the student and tell them that physical contact will stop as soon as they are ready to behave appropriately; and
- if risk is still perceived, request additional support from other authorised staff members.

Once force is no longer necessary then, ideally, an independent member of staff should verbally question the individual to see if any injury has occurred from the use of force.

### Acceptable Forms of Force

The College considers the following as acceptable forms of force:

- Separating students who are fighting, or who are about to fight;
- Blocking a student's path;
- Holding;
- Leading a student by the arm; or
- In the most extreme circumstance, the use of restrictive holds.

### 5.6 Health and Safety

When using reasonable force/safe handling, the student's health and safety must always be considered and monitored.

Physical interventions should involve the minimum amount of force necessary to resolve the situation and calm the student.

#### Limits on the Use of Force

The law strictly prohibits the use of force, which constitutes the giving of **corporal punishment**. The use of force as a punishment or to intentionally cause pain, injury or humiliation is unlawful.

Staff should **never** act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- holding around the neck;
- any hold that might restrict breathing;
- kicking, slapping or punching or using any implement;
- forcing limbs against joints;
- tripping;
- holding or pulling by the hair;
- holding the pupil face down on the ground;
- staff should also avoid touching or holding a student in any way that might be considered indecent.

The use of reasonable force is only to be employed in exceptional circumstances or an emergency situation where a student appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and whose behaviour is presenting a threat to themselves or others. A member of staff should not intervene in an incident without help if there is a risk of injury or they may endanger their life.

This policy and procedure cannot cover every situation in which it might be reasonable for someone to use a degree of force. For example, everyone has the right to defend themselves against attack provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force to do so.

### **5.7 Use of Force on Individuals not known as Students**

In certain situations, people may be present on College premises and present a clear risk of injury to themselves, students or staff. In these situations, a minimum force intervention, as described above may be considered by authorised staff. In such situations the following procedure should be observed (unless the situation calls for immediate action):

- Try to defuse the situation and reduce the chance of an incident happening;
- Ask the individual to identify if they are a student of the College;
- If they are not a student or unwilling to respond, ask the individual to leave the College premises immediately;
- Inform the individual that unless they leave the premises immediately appropriate force will be used to safeguard student, staff or property.
- Inform the individual that the Police will be informed.

If required to apply reasonable force do so in a calm manner, ask for assistance from authorised staff as required and inform the individual that force will no longer be applied if the individual is willing to leave the College premises.

In an emergency situation staff have common law rights to use reasonable force in self-defence, to prevent another person from being injured, or to prevent property from being significantly damaged.

### **5.8 Record Keeping**

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force must be recorded in the proforma "Record/Report of the use of Reasonable Force" (Appendix 5). The form should be submitted during the same working day as the incident to the Chief Executive or Campus Manager (senior manager) if the Chief Executive is not available. An Incident Report should also be sent to the Health and Safety manager.

The views of the member of staff and student (where possible) should be recorded as soon as possible, preferably on the same day.

Records of all incidents will be kept by the Chief Executive for three years after the event or until the individual concerned is 21 years of age (if a student). Confidentiality and the student's right to privacy will need to be ensured.

### **5.9 Contacting Parents**

Parents, carers or nominated guardians should be contacted if the student is below the age of 18 as soon as possible after the incident. Any contact with the parents should be made by the Chief Executive or nominated Senior Member of Staff and will be recorded as part of the incident. Any complaint from the student, parent, carer or guardian will be dealt with as part of the College's Client complaints policy and procedure.

### **5.10 Post Incident Management**

#### **Staff Subjected to Physical Violence**

The College will support any member of staff subjected to physical violence or assault and will assist them in taking appropriate action against an assailant.

**Designated Safe Handling Staff**

The following staff are designated as having responsibility for providing advice to staff on the use of reasonable force/safe handling and for the implementation of this procedure:

- The Chief Executive and Directors
- All Assistant Directors
- Heads of Faculty

**Training and Development**

All staff will have regular awareness training of issues relating to the use of reasonable force/safe handling, procedures and practices relating to the behaviour management and safeguarding policy and procedures. All staff will receive appropriate training and development in line with the College's Organisational Development policy, in the use of preventative strategies and approaches for managing difficult situations when they may arise.

**6. DISTRIBUTION**

All Clients  
VLE  
SharePoint

**7. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Disciplinary Policy –Students
- Safeguarding Policy
- Organisational Development Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Learning Support Policy
- Student Charter
- Personal Tutor Policy
- Equality and Good Relations Policy
- Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints and Compliments Policy

**8. FLOW CHART**

None



## APPENDIX 1

### PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

**All lecturers need to be aware of strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult students and steps which they can take to defuse and calm a situation.**

**The strategies listed below are examples that may be used, should an incident arise:**

1. Move calmly and confidently;
2. Make simple, clear statements;
3. Intervene early;
4. Try to maintain eye contact;
5. If necessary, summon help before the problem escalates; and
6. If possible, remove audience from the immediate location.

### ACTION STEPS

1. Tell the student to stop and inform them of the possible consequences of failure to do so.
2. If possible, summon another colleague.
3. Continue to communicate with the student throughout the incident.
4. Make it clear that physical intervention will cease as soon as it is no longer necessary.
5. Appropriate follow-up action should be taken, which may include:
  - providing medical support;
  - accessing internal pastoral care and advice from the Safeguarding team; and
  - accessing external advice/support.

A calm and measured approach to a situation is needed and staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper or are acting out of anger or frustration when handling a problem.

### INTERVENTION GUIDELINES

**There are situations where staff should not intervene without help. Assistance should be sought when dealing, for example, with:**

- a member of the general public;
- a physically large student;
- more than one student;
- when the lecturer believes that they may be at risk of injury.

**In those circumstances where the member of staff has decided that it is not appropriate to restrain the student without help, they should:**

- remove other students who might be at risk;
- summon assistance from colleagues;
- where necessary, contact the police;
- inform the student(s) that help will be arriving; and
- continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

## APPENDIX 2

### Risk Assessment

A small number of students may exhibit disturbed or distressing behaviour which may require some form of physical intervention by staff. To minimise the risk of incidents escalating unnecessarily due to lack of foresight, planning and training, the College will carry out a risk assessment from two perspectives:

- Environmental risk assessment; and
- Individual risk assessment.

Heads of Faculty and Curriculum Area Managers assess any student considered to be a risk. Any risk assessment proforma should be submitted in the first instance to the Assistant Director. On approval the full document will be returned to the course team via the Head of Faculty, who will implement appropriate actions.

### Environmental Risk Assessment

- Identify situations or locations where there is an increased risk of incidents happening.
- Analyse past incidents to identify medium to high risk locations.
- Staff and students consulted.
- Individual students consulted.
- Decide the appropriate type and level of supervision.
- Curriculum Team to make recommendation to risk assessment group and level of supervision to minimise risk.
- Implement plan.
- Review plan.

### Individual Risk Assessment

Where a College is aware that a student is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, the College should plan its response by:

- Consulting the student, as appropriate.
- Consulting the parents (if student is under 18) – specific action the College may need to take.
- Briefing staff – what action they should be taking (may require training or guidance).
- Managing the student – e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict.
- Ensuring that additional support can be summoned wherever possible.
- Implementing plan.
- Review plan.

### Risk Reduction

Risk reduction should include:

- Proactive measures to support the student effectively and prevent difficulties emerging.
- Early interventions to help the student in difficult situations and avert problems.
- Planned measures to manage the student and others safely when unavoidable difficulties arise.

**APPENDIX 3****Risk Assessment Proforma**

Name of Student	
Student ID Number	
Student Course Title	
Student P code and Y code	
Mode of Attendance	
Risk Assessment Completed by (Staff Name)	
Date of Risk Assessment	
Risk Assessment Confirmation (Assistant Director Signature)	
Date	

Consultation has been carried out with:

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| a) The Student                            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Parent/Carer or Guardian (if Under 18) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Staff                                  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Behaviour Causing Concern

## Disruption

Behaviour	Likelihood (Low, Medium Low, Medium, Medium High, High)	Frequency (Hourly, Daily, Weekly, Monthly or Termly)	Risk Factor (Low, Medium, High)
Vandalism			
Bullying			
Fighting			
Violent and Aggressive			
Angry Outbursts			
Impulsive Dangerous Behaviour			
Self-Harms			
Medically related Behaviour			
Threatening and Abusive			
Other (specify)			

## People Most Likely to Exhibit Behaviour Towards

Behaviour	Likelihood (Low, Medium Low, Medium, Medium High, High)	Frequency (Hourly, Daily, Weekly, Monthly or Termly)
Support Staff		
Technician		
Member of SMT		
Male Staff		
Female Staff		
Other Students in Class		
Other Students in School		
Male Students		
Female Students		
Younger / Older Students		
Other Students (specify)		

## Environments and Time of Greatest Risk

Location and Time of Behaviour	Disruption	Vandalism	Bullying	Fighting	Violent and Aggressive	Angry Outbursts	Impulsive Dangerous Behaviour	Self-Harms	Medically Related Behaviour	Threatening and Abusive	Other
During Lessons											
Between Lessons											
Library											
Canteen											
Educational Trips											
Transport											
Medication not Taken											

**Risk Evaluation**

Level of Likelihood	x	Frequency	= Risk
Very Likely 5	x	Hourly (5)	= 25 greatest
Likely 4	x	Daily (4)	= 16
Quite Possible 3	x	Weekly (3)	= 9
Possible 2	x	Monthly (2)	= 4
Unlikely 1	x	Termly (1)	= 1 lowest

**Likelihoods****Frequency**

Very likely	5	Hourly	5
Likely	4	Daily	4
Quite Possible	3	Weekly	3
Possible	2	Monthly	2
Unlikely	1	Termly	1

This numerical evaluation of risk is not an absolute but simply affords a student's predisposition and risk frequency to be compared.

**Risk Scores**

Score	Risk
25	Very High
15-20	High
8-12	Medium
6-10	Low
1-5	V Low

**Action Plan**

Drawn up by:

Date:

Name of Student:

Agreed by:

(Head of Faculty)

Date:

Signed:

(Student/ Parent: under 18-year-old)

Date:

Behaviour	Risk Factor (L, M, H)	Existing Support or Precautions	Additional Precautions	Staff Responsible

**APPENDIX 4****Recognised College Venues**

1. All College campuses.
2. Any other building legally owned by the College.
3. Any venue where the College has been engaged, through a service level agreement and the venue is defined in that service level agreement, by a third party to provide education or training services.
4. Any venue where the College is engaged in an education visit, provided that all educational visit documentation has been properly completed and a risk assessment properly carried out in line with the College's educational visit policy.



**APPENDIX 5****Reasonable Force – Incident Record Form**

Date of Incident	
Student Name	
Student ID Number	
Staff Name(s) Involved in use of Force	
Where did the incident start?	
What happened leading up to and during the event?	
What action was taken to de-escalate the situation before the use of force?	
What behaviour was displayed by the individual?	<div> <div>Risk of injury to self or others <input type="checkbox"/></div> <div>Risk of significant damage to property <input type="checkbox"/></div> <div>Compromising good order and discipline <input type="checkbox"/></div> <div>Risk of committing a criminal offence <input type="checkbox"/></div> </div>
What do you believe would have happened if there had been no physical intervention?	
How was the individual held/what force was used?	
How long was force used for?	
Was anybody injured? If Yes, please give details.	

Name of member of staff who verbally assessed individual for injury after the use of force.	
Has the student been restrained before?	
Were there any witnesses to the incident? If Yes, please provide name and contact details.	
Was medical intervention needed?	
Have the following records been completed?	First Aid Report Form Incident Report Form Cause for Concern Form
Name of Staff Completing Form	

**Reviewed by Chief Executive**

Received by Chief Executive's Office (Date)	
Reviewed by Chief Executive or Designated Staff (Date)	

**Implications for Future Planning**

To be completed by Head of Faculty for Student Concerned (if student)

Does this student have an individual behaviour programme/plan?	
Do changes need to be made to any of the following?  Environment  Reinforcement strategies  Defusing and calming strategies  Targets for student	
Do any other agencies need to be involved in the future?	

**Follow Up Action**

Medical intervention was needed

**YES/NO**

Please specify other recording procedures:

- First Aid Report Form completed
- Cause for Concern Form completed

**YES/NO****YES/NO**

Parent/carer informed by:

- Telephone / Letter
- Direct Contact

**YES/NO****YES/NO**

Additional Comments:

Form completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Post held: \_\_\_\_\_

CEO signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_