Hazing

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the University of Vermont that no member of the University community may participate or be involved in hazing activities. Information that any member of the University community or student organization has allegedly violated this policy will be referred to the appropriate process for investigation and resolution. Any student or student organization will be referred through the student conduct process for an alleged violation of this policy. Faculty and staff will be referred to the appropriate review process in compliance with University policy or applicable collective bargaining agreement for any alleged violation of this policy.

Reason for the Policy

The University of Vermont is first and foremost an educational institution. Its hazing policy, prevention efforts, and response procedures for hazing incidents, must grow from, and embody, this educational mission.

Membership in organizations, teams, and other University-affiliated groups can increase leadership and service potential; provide athletic, recreational, intellectual, and spiritual opportunities; and otherwise contribute positively to personal and social development. When membership is linked with involvement in hazing activities, the educational purpose of the endeavor is compromised and can endanger the health and safety of students or other university community members.

Hazing is therefore prohibited at the University of Vermont.

Applicability of the Policy

This policy applies to all members of the University community and their guests.
Policy Elaboration

1. Introduction: Understanding the Scope of Hazing Activities

Members of University-affiliated organizations, clubs, and teams engage in a wide array of activities that positively nurture individual relationships, camaraderie, and team building; develop unity, connectedness, and a sense of belonging; and promote the development of self-esteem. However, because it is not always clear to individuals which activities are unacceptable and constitute hazing, student leaders and members of student groups are strongly encouraged to consult with the groups’ advisers, coaches, or other University officials responsible for the program or activity in advance of any planned event.

2. Activities that violate the hazing policy.

A broad range of behaviors may be considered hazing. The range of activities cross a continuum from minor to more severe forms of conduct. Severity of the hazing can be measured both by the level of pressure to engage in the conduct (expecting, encouraging, urging, requiring, coercing, forcing, etc.) and the type of the behavior involved (behavior that is very unlikely to cause physical or psychological harm to behavior that is very risky and almost always will result in some degree of harm).

Note: It is important to note that creating an expectation to participate in activities where harm could result (as a condition of joining, affiliating with, or maintaining membership in a group) is likely to be considered hazing.

Types of Behavior (not an exhaustive list) that constitute hazing

A. The following set of examples (conducted as a condition of joining, affiliating with, or maintaining membership) represents hazing conduct that can diminish one’s sense of membership and/or breach reasonable standards of mutual respect within the team or organization. These activities can also be a warning sign of the risk of more dangerous behaviors being undertaken by member(s) of the group or organization:

- Participating in exercise unrelated to a sport, or considered extreme
- Associating with specific people, but not others
- Performing acts of servitude
- Shaving of the head or any other part of the body
- Conducting scavenger hunts or quests
- Engaging in public stunts that are potentially humiliating or degrading
- Wearing apparel that is conspicuous and not within community norms
- Making prank calls
- Needing to possess certain items at all times
- Depriving privileges granted to other members

B. The following set of examples (conducted as a condition of joining, affiliating with or maintaining membership) represents hazing conduct considered aggravated due to the risk of
harm created. **These activities can place persons at risk of serious physical and/or psychological harm.** Such conduct may result in more serious University sanctions as well as criminal prosecution.

- Undergoing tattooing, piercing, or branding
- Engaging in or simulating sexual acts
- Engaging in sexually violent or sexually harassing behavior
- Threatening or causing physical restraint or abuse (including but not limited to being held down, tied up, taped, or confined in a small space)
- Consuming any substance
- Kidnapping, or transporting and/or abandoning, a person
- Conducting interrogations
- Being nude in a public or private place
- Causing excessive fatigue through physical or psychological abuse
- Furnishing alcohol or illegal substances to minors, or facilitating consumption of alcohol or use of illegal substances by any person
- Damaging, destroying, or stealing property
- Identifying hazing targets or subjects on the basis of their actual or perceived race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, gender identity and expression, veteran status, or other legally protected classification.

Upon completion of a thorough investigation, determinations as to whether hazing occurred are made by the appropriate University official, hearing officer, or hearing body with due consideration of the relevant facts and circumstances.

3. **Be Alert to Potential Hazing Situations**

The questions below may aid the determination whether a particular activity is hazing and thus prohibited:

- Is this a team or group activity that members are encouraged or expected to attend and where minors are consuming alcohol?
- Is any one individual or group of individuals required or urged to complete tasks or activities that aren’t asked of other group members?
- Will current members refuse to participate with the new members?
- Does the activity risk emotional or physical harm?
- Is there a risk of injury or a question of safety?
- Would you have any reservations describing the activity to your parents, a professor, or a University official?
- Would you object to the activity being photographed or reported on the internet, a newspaper or local TV news?
- Will this activity be considered degrading or humiliating by any of the participants?
- Is the activity in violation of Vermont law or University policies?
Definitions

*Hazing:* means any act committed by a person, whether individually or in concert with others, against a student in connection with joining/pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in, or gaining or maintaining membership in any organization that is affiliated with the University; and has the effect of socially or physically isolating, humiliating, intimidating, or demeaning the student or having the effect of harming or potentially harming the mental or physical health of a student.

- Hazing also includes soliciting, directing, aiding, or otherwise participating actively or passively in such acts.
- Hazing occurs regardless of the consent or willingness of a person to participate in the activity.
- Hazing may occur on or off campus.
- Hazing unreasonably interferes with academic, programmatic, and employment activities.
- Hazing includes activities that are in violation of University policies and Vermont law.
- Hazing does not include any activity or conduct that furthers legitimate curricular, extracurricular, or military training program goals, provided that (1) the goals are approved by the organizations’ official university advisor, coach, etc.; and (2) the activity or conduct furthers the goals in a manner that is appropriate, contemplated by the University, and typical and customary for similar programs at other educational institutions.

This policy is intended to be consistent with State law. The policy will be reviewed periodically and revised in light of legal developments and new insights.

*University official:* any person employed by the university and/or acting on behalf of the university.

Procedures

1. **Reports of Hazing**
   - University officials are required to report possible hazing incidents in a prompt and effective manner to University Police Services. Students and other members of the University community are strongly encouraged to report possible hazing incidents as soon as possible to University Police Services.
   - To maximize safety, all reports of hazing should first be directed to University Police Services.
   - The Chief of Police Services, or designee, will promptly take steps to investigate and respond to hazing reports consistent with the exercise of reasonable professional discretion, including the convening of responsible University administrators.

2. **Benefits to Those Who Report**
   a. Individuals who are victims of hazing and who truthfully report the activities shall not be individually charged with a violation of this regulation.
   b. Individuals who have knowledge of a hazing incident, but who did not participate, and truthfully report the activities shall not be individually charged with a violation of this
regulation in relation to that particular incident.
c. When reviewing a case, consideration will be given to whether an organization or group has self-reported a hazing behavior and identified individuals who are responsible for the hazing to an appropriate University Official or UVM Police Services.

3. Administrative Response

- The University’s response to hazing allegations will occur through the processes outlined in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Staff Handbook, or the Officers’ Handbook, or the applicable collective bargaining agreement.
- Since hazing may violate the policy(ies) of more than one governing body, the same incident may be referred to more than one hearing body or go through more than one process.
- University Police Services may refer conduct that may constitute a violation of criminal law to appropriate law enforcement officials, subject to the requirements of governing law.
- Student groups and organizations are also subject to suspension or revocation of University recognition for policy violations or while an investigation is on-going and until such time that the case is resolved.

4. Sanctions

A. Factors that may be considered in imposing sanctions

Hearing officials or bodies responsible for imposing sanctions upon individuals and/or organizations for hazing policy violations may consider factors such as the following:

- Nature of the offense, including whether aggravated conduct occurred
- Severity of the harm or damage resulting from the offense
- The respondent’s role in the hazing incident
- Disciplinary history of the respondent(s)/organization
- Whether the respondent(s)/organization cooperated during the proceedings, responded honestly to questions, and promptly accepted responsibility for one’s actions
- Any leadership role or seniority of the respondent(s) in the organization or team relative to which hazing occurred
- Whether any offense involved behavior directed at another person because of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, gender identity and expression, veteran status, or other legally protected classification

B. Examples of sanctions

Hearing officials or bodies responsible for imposing sanctions will do so exercising reasonable discretion in light of factors such as those just described above.

Examples of sanctions that may be imposed upon individual students are:

- Disciplinary suspension or dismissal, or suspension or termination of employment;
- Attendance at educational programs or other trainings;
- Monetary Fines
- Restitution; and/or
- Participation in alcohol, drug, or other counseling services

Examples of sanctions that may be imposed upon organizations that knowingly permit, authorize, or condone hazing are:
- Probation;
- Revocation or suspension of the organization’s existence or recognition;
- Cancellation of some or all the organization’s activities or events (such as intercollegiate or intramural sports contests); and/or
- Decrease in, or restriction of, the organization’s privileges

**Forms**

None

**Contacts**

To maximize safety, all reports of hazing should first be directed to University Police Services.

Anonymous information may be reported to Police Services for investigation via Internet or phone:


**UVM TIP LINE 2** - 656-TIPS

Additional resources for any UVM student wishing to speak privately and in confidence about a hazing incident include:
- Center for Health and Wellbeing – Counseling and Psychiatry Services: 656-3340 (24 hrs/day)
- Center for Health and Wellbeing – Student Health Services: 656-3350 (24 hrs/day)

Faculty and staff may contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) via the Wellness Corporation. Because other University officials are required to report possible hazing violations for investigation, communications outside of the Counseling and Psychiatry Services and EAP are not guaranteed to be confidential.

Please note: Counseling and Psychiatry Services, Student Health Services, and the Employee Assistance Program are designed to be confidential resources for individuals who report hazing incidents. Under current Federal law, CAPS and EAP are exempted from reporting these incidents to law enforcement. Medical clinicians in Student Health Services are required to report hazing incidents, although they may do so without providing identifying information about the reporter.

For additional information regarding this policy and related matters, please contact the Vice Provost for Student Affairs Office at 656-3380.
The University official responsible for oversight of the policy when a student or student organization commits a violation is the Vice Provost for Student Affairs. The University official responsible for oversight of the policy when a staff or faculty member commits a violation is the Provost.

**Related Documents / Policies**

Group and Organization Recognition Policy

**Effective Date**

Approved by the President on May 23, 2013
Approved by the Chair of the Board of Trustees on May 18, 2013