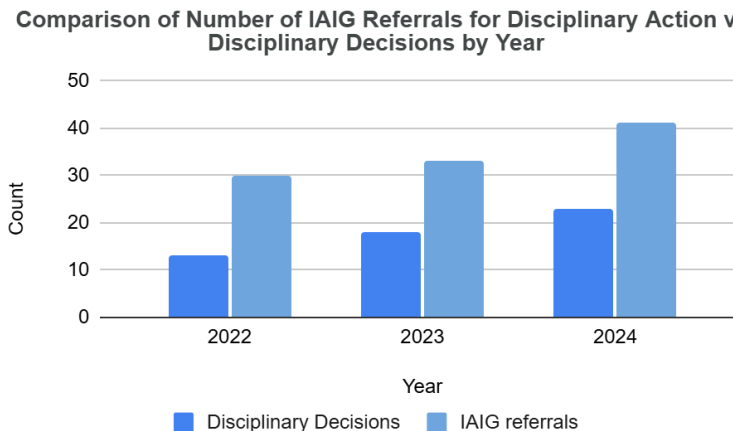


Executive Director’s report of cases of misconduct that resulted in the imposition of disciplinary measures in 2024¹

In 2024, UNOPS imposed disciplinary and other measures on 23 members of UNOPS personnel (either former or current) following a finding of misconduct. The majority (74%) of these individuals had their contracts terminated, with the remaining 26% receiving one or more of the following measures: demotion, deferment of a promotion, written censure, completion of a UNOPS training course, and recovery of money, as detailed below.

The disciplinary measures imposed were in relation to 7 types of misconduct: medical insurance fraud, prohibited conduct (abuse of authority, sexual harassment and harassment), conflict of interest, plagiarism, misrepresentation and forgery, interference in a recruitment process, and omissions in conflict with a personnel member’s general obligations. Medical insurance fraud was the most common type of misconduct sanctioned in 2024 - representing over half (56%) of all disciplinary measures imposed.

The length of time for completion of the disciplinary process varied depending on the complexity of the matter, the number of pending misconduct cases, the quantity and type of available evidence analysed in light of the evidentiary standards set by the UN Tribunals, complexities resulting from UNOPS due process obligations, and any follow-up clarifications that may be required with investigators following referral of the case to the HR Legal Officer. Both the number of referrals from IAIG to the HR Legal Officer for disciplinary action, and the number of disciplinary decisions handed down, have been increasing each year, as reflected in the below chart:



In 2024, UNOPS recommended that the UN Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) refer 22 members of UNOPS personnel who were alleged to have engaged in criminal conduct to national authorities for legal recourse, in accordance with national law. UNOPS also recommended that OLA refer one non-UNOPS personnel member to national authorities for legal recourse. Recommendation of referrals to national authorities may not always occur in the same calendar year as the disciplinary decision: 13 out of the 22 individuals were the subject of disciplinary measures in 2024.

¹ The terminology in UNOPS legislative framework refers to “disciplinary measures” in relation to measures imposed on staff members (see sections 7.1-7.4 of OI.IAIG.2025.01 (*Investigations and Measures Relating to Misconduct Allegations Against UNOPS Personnel*)) and “administrative measures” in relation to measures imposed on individual contractors (see sections 8.1-8.4 of OI.IAIG.2025.01). However, for ease of reference in this document, both types of measures will be referred to uniformly as “disciplinary measures” and both types of processes will be referred to as “disciplinary processes”.

Summary of Disciplinary measures imposed in 2024

I. Medical Insurance Fraud: 13 Persons

A UNOPS personnel member engaged in medical insurance fraud by submitting four false medical insurance claims to two insurance providers. As the personnel member had separated from UNOPS prior to the disciplinary measure being imposed, UNOPS revised the personnel member's records to reflect that the reason for separation was termination of contract with immediate effect for serious misconduct.

A UNOPS personnel member instigated, aided, abetted, conspired and cooperated with nine other UNOPS personnel members to engage in medical insurance fraud by submitting false medical insurance claims to an insurance provider. As the personnel member had separated from UNOPS prior to the disciplinary measure being imposed, UNOPS revised their personnel records to reflect that the reason for separation was termination of contract with immediate effect for serious misconduct. UNOPS terminated the contracts of the nine other personnel members who engaged in medical insurance fraud with immediate effect for serious misconduct. Given that one of the nine who engaged in medical insurance fraud had separated from UNOPS prior to the disciplinary measure being imposed, UNOPS revised that personnel member's records to reflect that the reason for separation was termination of contract with immediate effect for serious misconduct.

A UNOPS personnel member engaged in medical insurance fraud by submitting a false medical insurance claim to an insurance provider, and by knowingly misleading investigators in relation to claimed leave days. UNOPS terminated the personnel member's contract with immediate effect for serious misconduct.

A UNOPS personnel member engaged in medical insurance fraud by submitting 24 false medical insurance claims to an insurance provider. As the personnel member had separated from UNOPS prior to the disciplinary measure being imposed, UNOPS revised the personnel member's records to reflect that the reason for separation was termination of contract with immediate effect for serious misconduct.

II. Prohibited Conduct (sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority): 2 Persons

A UNOPS personnel member engaged in sexual harassment towards a colleague by making multiple sexual comments, insinuations, remarks and innuendos verbally and via written text messages over a prolonged period to their supervisee. UNOPS decided to impose a disciplinary measure of separation from service with compensation in lieu of notice and without termination indemnity. The personnel member was included in the UN ClearCheck database.²

A senior UNOPS personnel member engaged in harassment and abuse of authority towards multiple colleagues in that personnel member's team, thereby creating a hostile and offensive work environment. UNOPS decided to impose a written censure and deferment for eligibility for consideration of a promotion for 1 year.

III. Conflict of Interest: 1 Person

A UNOPS personnel member failed to declare a conflict of interest by failing to disclose an

² For more information about ClearCheck see <https://unsceb.org/screening-database-clearcheck>.

unauthorized outside activity during their employment with UNOPS, in particular that they were dually employed by another international organisation. UNOPS imposed a measure of written censure and a reduction in sub-level on the personnel member.

IV. Plagiarism: 2 Persons

A UNOPS personnel member engaged in plagiarism in a written test for a UNOPS recruitment process. UNOPS demoted the personnel member with a deferment of eligibility for consideration for a promotion for one year, and required the person to complete a UNOPS training course.

A UNOPS personnel member engaged in plagiarism in a written test for a UNOPS recruitment process, and breach of confidentiality by disclosing previous questions and internal model answers for UNOPS recruitment processes to external candidates. UNOPS terminated the personnel member's contract with immediate effect for serious misconduct.

V. Misrepresentation and Forgery: 2 Persons

A UNOPS personnel member admitted to forging an official procurement document. UNOPS imposed a measure of reduction in four sublevels on the personnel member.

A UNOPS personnel member misrepresented their educational qualifications in multiple job applications to UNOPS and provided forged degree certificates with these applications over an extended period of time. UNOPS terminated the personnel member's contract with immediate effect for serious misconduct.

VI. Interference in a Recruitment Process: 1 Person

A senior UNOPS personnel member misused their position as a Hiring Manager to manipulate and unduly influence a UNOPS recruitment process in order to improperly advance the interests of an internal candidate, namely by providing the candidate with a copy of the model answer to the written exam. UNOPS terminated the personnel member's contract with immediate effect for serious misconduct.

VII. Omission to Comply with a Personnel Member's General Obligations: 2 Persons

A UNOPS personnel member was absent from duty for a period of several weeks due to being hospitalised and intentionally omitted to comply with the obligation to declare their absence to their supervisor and in their work attendance sheet, and did not record their absence in the official UNOPS leave system; the historical absence was uncovered in the course of the personnel member being investigated for another matter. There were mitigating circumstances including that the personnel member had accumulated enough leave to cover their absence meaning the conduct did not result in any financial harm to the Organization. UNOPS imposed a written censure on the personnel member.

A UNOPS personnel member failed to report a stolen UNOPS motorbike. UNOPS imposed a written censure on the personnel member and sought to recover USD 1,252.

Overview of the Legal Framework with Respect to Disciplinary Measures

In Article 101, paragraph 3 of the Charter of the United Nations, it is stated that the *“paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.”*

Staff Regulation 10.1 (a) provides that *“the Secretary-General may impose disciplinary measures on staff members who engage in misconduct”*. Staff Rule 10.1(a) provides that the *“failure by a staff member to comply with his or her obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules or other relevant administrative issuances or to observe the standards of conduct expected of an international civil servant may amount to misconduct and may lead to the institution of disciplinary processes and the imposition of disciplinary measures for misconduct.”*

In addition, UNOPS Operational Directive Ref. OD.PCG.2017.01 (Human Resources, Ethics and Culture) states that:

“4.1 All UNOPS personnel shall adhere to the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity

4.2 UNOPS personnel shall comply with the duties and responsibilities set out in the Charter of the United Nations, the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules, the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service (as defined, from time to time, by the International Civil Service Commission) and with other relevant instruments in the UNOPS Legislative Framework.

4.3 UNOPS requires the same standards of conduct of all its personnel, regardless of their contractual modality, except to the extent such standards are, in the opinion of UNOPS, inherently inconsistent with the status of non-staff personnel engaged as independent contractors, interns, volunteers or other status as defined by UNOPS”

Furthermore, UNOPS Operational Instruction OI.PCG.2023.01 (Personnel Management Framework) states that: *“8.8 Where the standards of conduct expected from personnel pursuant to the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules, OD.PCG.2017.17 on Human Resources, Ethics, and Culture, this OI, or the relevant processes and mandatory procedures in the PQMS are not abided by, the responsible UNOPS personnel shall be held accountable for misconduct and, following a disciplinary proceeding, a disciplinary measure or administrative action may be imposed on him or her by the Executive Director. Disciplinary proceedings are not of a criminal nature, they are administrative proceedings; consequently, a finding of misconduct in disciplinary proceedings is not a finding of guilt for criminal law purposes.”*

Examples of the types of misconduct a member of personnel may be found to have engaged in can be found at paragraph 8.11 of OI.PCG.2023.01.

Operational Instruction OI.IAIG.2025.01 (*Investigations and Measures Relating to Misconduct Allegations Against UNOPS Personnel*) provides a detailed legal framework for the conduct of investigative and disciplinary processes following the reporting of misconduct allegations to IAIG, including how allegations of suspected misconduct are reviewed, investigative procedures (including the rights, responsibilities and obligations of investigation subjects and

other participants), and the procedures following investigation, including referral of the investigative reports to the Human Resources Legal Officer (“HR Legal Officer”) in the Legal Group who conducts the disciplinary/administrative proceedings going forward.

The HR Legal Officer, following a review of the matter, may determine a charge of misconduct is warranted, in which case the subject of the investigation is provided with an opportunity to respond to those charges. Any response is taken into consideration and, if the General Counsel considers that misconduct is established, the General Counsel then provides a recommendation to the Executive Director on the misconduct allegations, including what type of disciplinary/administrative measures would be proportionate to the misconduct.

OI.IAIG.2025.01 also sets out the range of disciplinary and non-disciplinary measures that the Executive Director may impose on members of personnel found to have engaged in misconduct ranging from a written censure through to separation.³ Note also that pursuant to Section 10.1 of OI.IAG.2025.01 personnel members can still be held to account for misconduct following their separation from the Organization: *“If the Executive Director determines that the personnel’s misconduct warrants a measure such as separation from service, but that personnel no longer has a UNOPS contract, the Executive Director may impose such a measure, in which case the personnel’s date of separation shall not be changed but the reason for separation will be changed to reflect the Executive Director’s determination.”*

How to report misconduct

All UNOPS personnel have a duty to report suspected misconduct. Suspected misconduct can be reported via the Integrity Portal at integrity.unops.org.

³ The policy that was in effect in 2024 was OI.IAIG.2023.01 which is identical to OI.IAIG.2025.01, aside from a few minor amendments. Note that the disciplinary and non-disciplinary measures are identical between both policy documents.