

RESCINDED 07-23-25

UW POLICY DIRECTORY

APS 46.3 – Resolution of Complaints Against University Employees

(Approved by the President by delegations of authority Executive Order No. 4 and Executive Order No. 9)

1. Purpose

In the course of their education, employment, or use of University services, individuals may have complaints about the behavior of University of Washington employees or appointees (hereafter included in the term “employees”), including complaints alleging that the behavior of University employees may have violated the University’s nondiscrimination and non-retaliation policies (Executive Order [No. 31](#)). This policy statement describes the processes individuals may use to lodge such complaints, referred to here as “complaints against employees.”

Notice Regarding Impact of 2020 Education Department Federal Regulations:

In compliance with the recent federal regulations implementing Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 34 CFR Part 106, the University published Executive Order [No. 70](#), Compliance with Education Department Sexual Harassment Regulations. In addition to other requirements, the Education Department’s federal regulations define prohibited conduct and set forth grievance procedures for “formal complaints” of such conduct. To address those “formal complaints,” the University will incorporate the grievance procedures set forth in Executive Order [No. 70](#) into applicable University processes, including this policy. Where there are conflicts, those grievance procedures will control. If the allegations that form the basis of a “formal complaint” involve alleged conduct that potentially would fall under the federal regulations and other University policies, then the University may, in its discretion, initiate a combined proceeding, and responsible personnel will apply the policies and procedures that correspond to each.

For purposes of complying with the federal regulations and Executive Order [No. 70](#), the University has designated the University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office (UCIRO), in addition to the Office of the Title IX Coordinator, as the office to receive complaints of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other sexual misconduct.

Individuals with questions should contact the Office of the [Title IX Coordinator](#).

2. Scope

These processes are available to:

- All University employees, including academic personnel, staff, temporary staff, academic student employees, and student employees;
- All students at all University campuses and locations; and
- To those not affiliated with the University (see [Section 6](#), Application of Policy).

It is against University policy to penalize or retaliate against any party for that party’s participation in these complaint processes. The University provides employees reasonable release time from their regular work schedules to participate in these processes, following notification of appropriate administrative personnel.

3. Internal Complaint Processes

Complaints against University employees may be addressed using the following internal processes:

- Local investigation and resolution; or
- University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office (UCIRO) investigation and resolution process.

Typically, internal processes are **not** undertaken simultaneously. The offices noted in [Section 8](#) can also provide consultation and information regarding these processes.

Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodation in order to participate in the complaint processes should contact the [Disability Services Office](#).

A. Local Investigation and Resolution

All individuals are encouraged to discuss complaints against University employees with the appropriate supervisor or, if the supervisor is the source of the conflict, with the administrative head of the employing organization. Complaints can also be referred to the appropriate human resources office (see [Section 8](#)).

The goal of the local complaint process is to address and resolve problems quickly and directly and to stop any inappropriate conduct that may be taking place. The investigation and resolution process time frame will vary based on the circumstances and complexity of the matter and how quickly necessary information can be obtained. The appropriate human resources office staff may facilitate the investigation and resolution process.

The local complaint process typically involves discussions with:

- The individual bringing the complaint, to learn about his or her concerns and the preferences for resolving them;
- The employee(s) whose behavior is the subject of the complaint; and
- Others that may have relevant information, as needed.

Generally, the individual, the employee(s) whose behavior is the subject of the complaint, and the supervisor or administrative head of the organization will be provided a summary of the allegations investigated and the facts determined. As warranted, corrective action may be taken involving the individual whose behavior is the subject of the complaint in accordance with the individual's employment program.

Human resources consultants may also facilitate discussion and, when appropriate, assist in implementing a resolution of the complaint.

B. UCIRO Investigation and Resolution Process

When an individual with concerns contacts UCIRO, UCIRO reviews the concerns to determine if the matter falls within UCIRO's purview for investigation. UCIRO investigates complaints that a University employee has violated the University's nondiscrimination or non-retaliation policies. When concerns fall outside UCIRO's purview for investigation, UCIRO will refer individuals to other resources. A UCIRO investigation also may occur at the request of the administrative head of a University organization or in response to a complaint filed with a state or federal agency.

Matters which occurred more than 365 days prior to an individual request for investigation, or in the case of a state or federal agency complaint, outside the prescribed time periods, will not be accepted for a UCIRO investigation but may be referred to other University offices. UCIRO investigations conducted at the request of an administrative head may encompass time periods beyond 365 days, depending on the scope and nature of the request.

In conducting a UCIRO investigation, the investigator acts as a neutral, objective fact-finder, and typically will interview the individual submitting the complaint, the employee(s) whose behavior is the subject of the complaint, and any other appropriate persons necessary to determine the facts. UCIRO attempts to investigate and resolve allegations of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation as quickly as possible. The time frame for completing an investigation will vary based on the circumstances and complexity of a matter and how quickly necessary information can be obtained. Whenever possible, investigations are completed within 60 working days.

When warranted, resolution teams composed of appropriate staff may be convened to attempt to resolve the complaint. While resolution activities are underway, the UCIRO investigation is usually suspended. During the course of the UCIRO investigation, if the complaint is withdrawn or resolved, the investigation will be closed.

When a UCIRO investigation requested by an individual is completed, the investigator will provide the individual, the employee(s) whose behavior is the subject of the complaint, and the supervisor or administrative head of the organization with a summary of the allegations investigated and the facts determined. As warranted, UCIRO will refer the result to the appropriate administrative head to determine whether corrective actions should be taken involving the individual whose behavior is the subject of the complaint in accordance with the individual's employment program.

There is no internal appeal mechanism; individuals who are not satisfied with the results of the UCIRO investigation may contact state or federal agencies.

4. Complaints Filed With State or Federal Agencies

Individuals have a right to file complaints alleging discrimination or retaliation with state or federal agencies. Such agencies generally have prescribed time periods for filing complaints. State and federal agencies establish their own processes for responding to and processing these complaints. Filing a complaint with a state or federal agency can be done in lieu of or in addition to the University's complaint processes.

5. Responsibility to Report and Cooperate

All University employees, including academic personnel, staff, temporary staff, academic student employees, and student employees are required to report to their supervisors or the administrative heads of their organizations any complaints of discrimination, harassment or sexual harassment, and/or retaliation they receive. In addition, University employees are encouraged to inform their supervisors or the administrative heads of their organizations and their human resources consultant of inappropriate, discriminatory, or retaliatory workplace behavior they observe. Supervisors and administrative heads who receive such reports have the responsibility to initiate a response by contacting an appropriate office as indicated in this policy statement.

All University employees are also required to participate, provide information as requested (including personnel or student files and records and other materials recorded in any form), and otherwise fully cooperate with the processes described in this policy statement.

University employees who fail to report complaints received or to cooperate fully with these complaint processes are subject to disciplinary action by their supervisors or the administrative heads of their organizations. If a supervisor or the administrative head of an organization disciplines a University employee as a result of information obtained in the course of these processes, the employee may appeal such disciplinary action through the mechanisms appropriate to his or her employment status.

6. Application of Policy

This policy statement does not address, and the expression "complaints against employees" does not encompass, complaints for which other specific administrative or contractual procedures exist, such as collective bargaining agreement or union contract grievances, the professional staff complaint process, whistleblower complaints (per [APS 47.1](#)), or allegations of scientific misconduct (per Executive Order [No. 61](#)).

Further, this policy statement does not affect the following:

- Classified non-union employee rights to appeal alleged civil service rule violations to Washington State in accordance with [Title 357 WAC](#). However, concerns regarding the interpretation or application of Washington State rules may be addressed through the local investigation and resolution option of this policy statement, and if not resolved, are considered withdrawn.
- Faculty member rights under the "Administrative and Conciliatory Proceedings for the Resolution of Differences" and "Adjudicative Proceedings for the Resolution of Differences" (*Faculty Code*, Chapters [27](#) and [28](#) respectively). Contact the [Secretary of the Faculty](#) for more information.

- Student conduct, except in those cases where the behavior is related to their status as employees. All other complaints about the conduct of students should be made to the appropriate student conduct office for the [UW Bothell](#), [UW Seattle](#), or [UW Tacoma](#) campus.
- Patients' or family members' rights to report any concerns about care and safety or to register a complaint with any member of the medical staff, with the manager or staff at the point of care or service, or with [Patient Relations](#). The University may obtain the assistance of UCIRO when such complaints allege discrimination, sexual harassment, or retaliation for making such complaints.

7. Additional Resources

A. Office of the Title IX Coordinator

The University's Title IX Coordinator is available to review individual concerns relating to compliance; to provide compliance support for programs, departments, schools, colleges, and campuses relating to discrimination based on sex; and to ensure access to education where such discrimination may be an issue. For more information, see the Office of the [Title IX Coordinator](#) website.

B. Office of the ADA Coordinator

The University's ADA Coordinator consults and assists members of the University community with concerns or inquiries regarding accommodation or access to the University's programs, services, or activities. For more information, see the Office of the [ADA Coordinator](#) website.

C. University Ombud

The Office of the Ombud is available to help individual members of the University community explore and assert their rights and interests within the University and to improve the fairness and effectiveness of the University's systems and operations. For more information about the University Ombud, see Executive Order [No. 18](#) and the [Office of the Ombud](#) website.

8. Additional Information

For additional information about this policy, contact the following:

- [Academic Human Resources](#) (for complaints involving academic personnel, librarians, and academic staff)
- [Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#)
- [Civil Rights Investigation Office](#) (for complaints involving University employees, including student employees)

Human Resources:

[UW Human Resources, Campus Operations & Services—Employee Relations](#) (for complaints involving non-academic staff, including student employees)

[UW Medicine Human Resources—Employee Relations](#) (for complaints involving staff, including student employees, at Harborview Medical Center, University of Washington Medical Center, Airlift Northwest, Primary Care & Population Health, Shared Services, and Faculty Practice Plan Services)

9. History

May 1, 2002; April 4, 2011; RC, February 27, 2013; April 17, 2015; August 14, 2020.

For related information, see:

- Executive Order [No. 31](#), “Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action”
- Executive Order [No. 51](#), “Sexual Violence Elimination”
- Executive Order [No. 70](#), “Compliance with Education Department Sexual Harassment Regulations”
- *Student Governance and Policies*, [Chapter 210](#), “Student Conduct Policy for Discriminatory and Sexual Harassment, Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Misconduct, Stalking, and Retaliation