Complaints and Reporting Policy for Mount Holyoke College

The mhcURGE Pod found the following policies in place for handling complaints, including the reporting process, resources, and possible outcomes. Some information was public; answers that were only found through follow up with contacts are annotated with this (red text) color.

The links to the reporting policy at our organization are here:

- [https://www.mtholyoke.edu/diversity-and-inclusion/bias_incidents](https://www.mtholyoke.edu/diversity-and-inclusion/bias_incidents) (Campus Bias, Insensitivity, and Discrimination Incidents Reporting).
- [https://www.mtholyoke.edu/risk/grievance-procedure](https://www.mtholyoke.edu/risk/grievance-procedure) (Includes guiding principles, resources, informal and formal procedures).
- [https://www.mtholyoke.edu/risk/title-ix-compliance-mount-holyoke-college](https://www.mtholyoke.edu/risk/title-ix-compliance-mount-holyoke-college) (Includes all of the Title IX policy and procedural information, including contact information for Title IX Coordinator and staff).
- [https://www.mtholyoke.edu/academicdeans/report-form-alleged-honor-code-violation](https://www.mtholyoke.edu/academicdeans/report-form-alleged-honor-code-violation) (This link is for reporting alleged violations of the College’s Honor Code. Reported incidents are reviewed by the Academic Honor Board consisting of the Dean of Students, 3 faculty members, and one student member).
- [https://www.mtholyoke.edu/deanofstudents/honorcode](https://www.mtholyoke.edu/deanofstudents/honorcode) (This link includes policies and reporting procedures for alleged violations of the Honor Code to be taken up by the student disciplinary peer board, the Honor Code Council).

Are reporting policies regularly reviewed? What is the process for changing policy? We invited the coordinator of our Bias Education and Response Team to come to our group. She outlined plans for a reconfigured initiative that is launching this summer (2021). **We are enthusiastic that this new initiative is a dramatic improvement to the current practices and policies. The new initiative will be based on a restorative-justice approach. Specifically, the new approach: centralizes information and reporting mechanisms so that they are easier to find and understand; establishes an intake and tracking system that is equitable among students, faculty, and staff and more transparent to the community; encourages early reporting and early interventions aimed at education and community building; will be overseen by trusted and senior staff and faculty; and is accountable to the community in terms of reporting of number and nature of incidents.** The new approach will differ significantly from the current approach - note that we outline the current approach in the remainder of this document.
Are the rates of reporting made publicly available (e.g. # of reports each year)? MHC complies with the Clery Act for reporting of crimes and Title IX violations, but otherwise keeps rates of reporting, nature of incidents, and outcomes completely confidential. Any reported hate crime that occurred on campus will appear in the Public Safety and Service log with minimal information in order to protect the anonymity of the reporting party.

What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism? (N.B. much of the text below is cut-and-pasted from: https://www.mtholyoke.edu/diversity/questions-and-answers)

- Who are the designated individuals/positions for reporting incidents? The intake for student complaints is in the relatively new Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (https://www.mtholyoke.edu/diversity-and-inclusion). Faculty are instructed to report directly to the Dean of Faculty, and staff are instructed to report directly to Human Resources.
- Can reports be made online? Yes, student reports can be made online at the first link above (https://www.mtholyoke.edu/diversity-and-inclusion/bias_incidents). The first line for the reporting form asks for the reporters’ name, but the second line asks if the report is anonymous. So these reports can be made confidentially but not anonymously by students. We understand that reporting for faculty and staff is also confidential but not anonymous, and we are not aware of online reporting procedures.
- Who do in-person and online reports go to? Who has access to see reports? Student reports go to the Bias Education and Response Team: Dean of Students, Residential Life, Counseling Center, Health Center, and Ombudsperson. This website states that a “Bias response team member may forward the intake form to other appropriate offices (Public Safety and Service, if investigation is required, Dean of Students, Ombudsperson, Advocate if one is assigned).” For faculty and staff, we are not aware of publicly available answers to these questions.
- Are police included in the process? When and how? Are individuals accompanied by an advocate or someone from the organization? Campus Police is sometimes involved in the process (see above). According to the website, “Campus Advocates” are volunteer-trained faculty and staff members who can work with a student on an individual basis and help them navigate the college process. Advocates will reach out to the affected student to offer support, answer questions related to the process, relay concerns to the appropriate campus representative(s), and reinforce other support systems available to the student. Their primary role is to make sure that student needs are being met within the system.

What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?
- Follow-up by supervisor, training (bias, etc.), disciplinary action, termination? All of these are possible, although currently the process and outcomes are confidential and opaque.
- Who decides the outcomes/consequences? What is the process? Currently, student outcomes are decided by an Honor Code Council (https://www.mtholyoke.edu/deanofstudents/honorcode) that is staffed by students, faculty, and administrators. Faculty and staff outcomes are decided by the Dean of Faculty and Human Resources, respectively. These processes and outcomes are confidential.
- Are reports tracked? Yes
• How are they tracked? By who? They are tracked by the people who decide the outcomes: the Honor Code Council, the Dean of Faculty, and Human Resources.
• Are repeated complaints escalated to a disciplinary board? What is the process? The process does not change with repeated complaints, but outcomes usually do.

What resources are available for individuals reporting?
• Counselors or advocates, especially those of the same race, ethnicity, and gender? To MHC’s credit, Student Counseling Services has recently made an effort to hire counselors of diverse identities (https://www.mtholyoke.edu/counseling/clinical-and-administrative-staff), improving but not solving a long-standing problem.
• Automatic or requested investigation of potential impact on grades or evaluations? No, unless ad hoc action is taken.
• Protection against retaliation or repercussions, accommodations for continuing work/courses, option for pass/fail or outside assessment? No, unless ad hoc action is taken.

What resources are available to groups raising issues or proposing changes?
• We are not aware of formal resources for groups raising issues or proposing changes. Cultural surveys are rare. High-profile incidents (that attract press and external attention) usually trigger school-wide forums where community members raise concerns. There are, however, a few institutionalized locations for the work of change. We describe these channels briefly below.
• The President’s Office (and senior leadership) instituted and has prioritized an Anti-Racism Action Plan since this summer (2020) (https://www.mtholyoke.edu/president/mount-holyoke-colleges-anti-racism-action-plan).
• The relatively recent advent of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative and Office of Equity and Inclusion (https://www.mtholyoke.edu/diversity-and-inclusion) is exciting because its Director is a high-level administrator with a seat at the table of decision-making. It was this office that responded to our inquiry and provided us with an overview of their plans for new Bias Education and Response policies.
• Some faculty working groups and committees are empowered to propose legislation and other changes to policy. For example, two long-standing faculty committees (Faculty Affirmative Action Committee, MultiCultural Community Life) are undergoing welcome changes in name and mission, and we expect these changes to be approved by a full vote at an upcoming faculty meeting. Finally, the Dean of Faculty has recently put together a DEI in STEM Steering Committee, made up of some STEM faculty and staff and overseen by the Associate Dean of Faculty/Director of the Science Center.