



DELIVERABLE #2

Complaints and Reporting Policy for the Jackson School of Geosciences (JSG) Pod at The University of Texas at Austin

The JSG URGE Pod has 87 Members. Therefore, the Pod is split into “Podlets” to accommodate meeting times and foster discussions in smaller groups. Below is the synthesized deliverable for the JSG pod with specific guidelines for each Podlet.

Note that there may not be consensus between podlets.

Complaints and Reporting Policy for the JSG URGE Pod

This is what was found by the JSG URGE Pod at the University of Texas at Austin on policies for handling complaints, the reporting process, resources, and possible outcomes. Some information was public; answers that were only found through follow-up with contacts are noted.

- **The links to the reporting policy at our organization are here:**
 - The University of Texas at Austin Policies: www.utexas.edu/campus-life/report-misconduct
 - JSG Policies: www.jsg.utexas.edu/people/jsg-community/guidelines/
www.jsg.utexas.edu/people/jsg-community/workplace-issues/
 - Are reporting policies regularly reviewed? What is the process for changing policy?
 - The policy is somewhat new, so no one is sure
 - Are the rates of reporting made publicly available (e.g. # of reports each year)?
 - No, or at least we couldn't find reported numbers from JSG or UT. HR might have records but may reject requests for access

- **What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism?**
 - Who are the designated individuals/positions for reporting incidents?
 - Undergraduate Students:
 - JSG level: Undergraduate Advisor (Jessica Bradford)
 - Department Chair (Daniel Stockli)
 - Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (Chris Bell),
 - University level: [Dean of Students](#), [Ombuds](#), [UT Counseling and Mental Health Center](#). Note: All 3 university-level offices offer confidential services.
 - Graduate Students:
 - JSG level: Graduate Coordinator (Philip Guerrero), Graduate Advisor/GSC Chair (Brian Horton)
 - Department Chair (Daniel Stockli)
 - Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (Chris Bell)
 - University level: [Dean of Students](#), [Ombuds](#), [UT Counseling and Mental Health Center](#). Note: All 3 university-level offices offer confidential services.
 - Faculty:
 - JSG level: HR representative (Monica Reed)
 - Department Chair (Daniel Stockli), Dean (Claudia Mora). University level: [Ombuds](#), [Employee Assistance Program](#), [Office for Inclusion and Equity](#). Note:

The Ombuds and Employee Assistance Program offer confidential services.

Research Scientists & Staff:

- JSG level: HR representative for the Unit (Monica Reed for DGS and the Dean's Office, Scott Tinker for the Bureau of Economic Geology, or Susanne Morrison);
- Unit Leader (Scott Tinker, BEG; Demian Saffer, UTIG; Daniel Stockli, DGS); Dean (Claudia Mora).
- University level: [Ombuds](#), [Employee Assistance Program](#), [Office for Inclusion and Equity](#). Note: The Ombuds and Employee Assistance Program offers confidential services.
- **UNCERTAINTY: Do postdocs who are externally funded, or visiting scholars more generally, have access to these reporting mechanisms?**

Required University Reporting:

- Sexual Harassment: [Title IX office](#).
- Discrimination: [Office of Equity and Inclusion](#) or [Office of Dean of Students](#).
- Interpersonal Violence (including stalking): UT Police Department: 512-471-4441 or 911 if an emergency; [Employee Assistance Program](#); [Student Emergency Services](#); [BCAL](#) or call 512-232-5050, 24 hours a day.
- [Conflict Management and Dispute Resolution Office](#)
- Can reports be made online?
 - Yes, at the UT-level (not at JSG level beyond sending email):
 - [Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line \(BCCAL\)](#)
 - [Title IX Reporting](#): Title IX Resource Wheel for UT Employees, Title IX Resource Wheel for UT Students
 - [Office for Inclusion and Equity Discrimination Reporting](#)
 - [Student Organization Hazing Reporting](#)
 - [Unethical or Illegal Activities Reporting](#)
- Can reports be made anonymously?
 - Some are anonymous <https://ombuds.utexas.edu/>
 - **SUGGESTION: There is great value in hiring an internal ombudsperson who can build a rapport with people in the department, who can be seen as a trustworthy individual to confide in. We advocate for hiring a person to do this instead of appointing a faculty member to do this as this is a full-time job and commitment. The ombudsperson will advocate on the behalf of those filing a complaint and can work with a committee to develop appropriate consequences for perpetrators. Also, there is concern that external ombuds services are overlooked so it could take a while to even get an appointment**
 - Title IX reports can be reported anonymously if you are the victim. Mandatory reporters cannot report anonymously, they must disclose ALL information they know, including victim/target name and contact.
 - Formal complaints of discrimination or harassment to the Office of Inclusion and Equity are not anonymous. There is a mandatory reporting policy for people defined as "responsible employees"
 - **SUGGESTION: A community "dropbox" for people to anonymously (or non-anonymously) submit experiences/microaggressions/perspectives they had in the department. With a question regarding if the submitter would like a specific follow-up.**
- Who do in-person and online reports go to? Who has access to see reports?
 - **UNCERTAINTY: Who gets JSG/Grad student reports at the JSG level, beyond the person it is submitted to. Is the dean informed?**
 - [BCAL](#) - "trained staff"
 - Title IX - Reports go to the coordinator (and staff?): Adriana Alicea-Rodriguez

- Reports of unethical or illegal activities handled by, “senior leadership from: University compliance services, the President's Office, Legal Affairs, Internal Audit, and Human Resources”
 - Are police included in the process? When and how?
 - Does not seem a requirement at JSG or University level. Maybe for Title IX?
 - Only mentioned in response to emergency situations (calling 911) and for illegal and unethical activity (UT compliance <https://compliance.utexas.edu/>)
 - Are individuals accompanied by an advocate or someone from the organization?
 - This is not a strictly formal/codified thing.
 - People who file a complaint to the Office of Inclusion and Equity can designate an “advisor” to accompany them to meetings and interviews. It's not clear from the website but it seems that this person isn't an expert provided by OIE but is merely a friend/supporter of the complainant.
 - **POD SUGGESTION: There needs to be a reporting structure that is at least partly outside the department/school (i.e., a neutral party). Having chains of reporting interact with other power structures within the department can make it very difficult for people to feel comfortable reporting. For example, graduate students are supposed to report issues to the Graduate Advisor. What if that person is the student's Research Advisor? Note: this isn't specific to graduate students, anyone who reports has power structures to contend with.**
- **What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?**
 - Follow-up by the supervisor, consequences may include training (bias, sexual harassment, etc.), disciplinary action, loss of student supervision, termination.
 - Who decides the outcomes/consequences? What is the process?
 - UT Title IX Process summarized here, details not entirely obvious though: <https://titleix.utexas.edu/process>
 - Office of Inclusion and Equity (which investigates discriminatory acts related to employment only) has a formal investigation process in which complainants and respondents provide evidence to the OIE or the Dean of students (as appropriate) who will then review the evidence and interview witnesses. Facts will be assessed on the basis of what is reasonable to people of “ordinary sensitivity,” not the individual sensitivity or reaction of the individual making the complaint [“sensitivity” to racial harassment, I'm assuming???]. Within 15 days of the completion of the investigation, the investigator discusses findings with the appropriate vice president or their designee, who will then either: a) request further investigation of the complaint; b) dismiss the complaint if the results are inconclusive or there is insufficient evidence, or c) find that the policy was violated. If (c), disciplinary actions can include written reprimands, the imposition of conditions, reassignment, suspension without pay, and termination. The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome. policy: <https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/nondiscrimination-policy>
 - Are reports tracked? How are they tracked? By who?
 - Yes, there is a final investigation report for all formal complaints (at the Title IX and OIE levels)
 - Are repeated complaints escalated to a disciplinary board? What is the process?
 - There is a formal ‘chain of command’ that complaints can/do go up as they progress from JSG to higher/central UT offices.
 - Historically, this doesn't seem to happen.
 - **POD SUGGESTION: Reporting should be more than a hammer and more of an iterative process that results in an improved environment. Perhaps smaller-scale issues could be addressed more as a learning process/opportunity for**

improvement than a reprimand (e.g., call in vs. call out). Consequences could come up when an individual doesn't correct their behavior after they've been made aware of it.

- **What resources are available for individuals reporting?**

- Counselors or advocates, especially those of the same race, ethnicity, and gender.
 - UT Counseling & Mental Health Center has 5 Diversity Counseling and Outreach Specialists (DCOS): <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/staff.html#dcos> (it is not clear that these can be directly contacted, but presumably through a referral)
 - The Employee Assistance Program also lists directories that are specifically BIPOC led: e.g. [Inclusive Therapists](#), [Queer & Trans Therapists of Color](#), [Therapy for Black Girls](#), [Therapy for Black Men](#).
- [BCAL](#) - Behavior Concerns Advice Line is also a good resource
- Automatic or requested investigation of potential impact on grades or evaluations.
 - Office of Inclusion and Equity protects “whistleblowers”, which include students ([link](#)).
 - ***UNCERTAINTY: Unfortunately, many of the procedure and protocol links yield 404 errors. Not sure if these requests can be filed pre-emptively (i.e. you fear that there might be retaliation)***
- Protection against retaliation or repercussions, accommodations for continuing work/courses, option for pass/fail, or outside assessment.
 - Anyone who retaliates in any way against an individual who brought a harassment/discrimination complaint to the Office of Inclusion and Equity or who participated in good faith in an OIE investigation will be the subject of disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- ***POD SUGGESTION: Confidentiality of reporting is critical. Concern can exist among reporting individuals that confidentiality won't be maintained, which can prevent people from reporting. Additionally, certain situations may exist where confidentiality is not possible (e.g. small lab groups where reporting party is obvious). There needs to be clarity on what protection against retaliation exists and that protection needs to be strong.***
- ***POD SUGGESTION: All entering individuals (postdocs and faculty in addition to graduate students) should be provided on orientation to reporting structures.***

- **What resources are available to groups raising issues or proposing changes?**

- Petitions of # signatures trigger a town hall, meeting with organizational leadership, or policy change. What is the follow-up process for town halls and meetings?
 - University-wide town halls are usually decided on by leadership
- Working groups or committees with power to change or propose changes to policy.
 - GSC is a very large committee (60+), but individual members can talk to the chair of the committee and propose changes to policies related to graduate student education. It is unclear whether there is a process to propose and adopt changes beyond individuals or groups initiating in an ad hoc way, and/or the full GSC then discussing and voting on it.
 - Perhaps we should suggest the appointment of a standing committee to proactively/regularly assess and review reporting, code of conduct, and policies and bring proposed changes forward to GSC more formally.
- Cultural surveys, regular or only after wide-spread reports or high-profile incidents.
 - UT has terminated [Campus Climate Response Team](#)
 - A JSG climate survey has been proposed and drafted and there is an intention

- to carry it out in the coming months
 - Leadership proactively asks students and/or staff for input on how to improve.
 - GSEC survey tracking.
 - Mentor feedback forms? Usually done when a student graduates.
 - It would be good to also get undergrad feedback on this (e.g., surveys at end of the semester or focus groups?) This is not done regularly to our knowledge.
 - **POD SUGGESTION: There need to be more resources in place to create more frequent communication between all levels of hierarchy in the department (among undergrad, grad, faculty, dept leadership). For example, a faculty survey that is visible to the graduate students in the same way that the graduate student survey is visible to the faculty.**
 - **POD SUGGESTION: At present, there is no process for reporting and addressing "the little things" that can build up to toxic environments. This is reflected in the fact that student surveys over time demonstrate that students feel that they have low levels of support on this and continue to feel this way. Such a process needs to be created (e.g., perhaps an anonymous "ticket" or web-based form). It's also essential to have a formal process on the back end to receive and follow-up on these complaints, even if anonymous. It would also be good to have this reporting system have an option to address a complaint/report vs. just reporting it to create a record/document a pattern.**
 - **We also note that an annual JSG-wide climate survey (which has already been drafted), in addition to a reporting process for individual incidents, would be a good way to develop a larger-scale understanding of these issues school-wide.**
- **Title IX and NSF funding:**
 - The offense and action can have happened before or during an active grant.
 - NSF now has a process to address allegations reported to NSF. [NSF's Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#) (ODI) handles this process.
 - If you have access to a Title IX report that indicates that a particular PI should not have NSF funding now or in the future, you can send it to them. Complaints can be forwarded to: ProgramComplaints@nsf.gov.