

## **Week 2 Deliverable: Policies on Handling Complaints**

This is what the Michigan Earth DEI Pod at University of Michigan found regarding 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 link(s) to the reporting policy at our organization are here:**

- [Link](#) - Dean of Students at the University of Michigan (University level)
- [Link](#) - Rackham Graduate School resource guide
- [Link](#) - List of department resources and anonymous reporting form (Department level)
- [Link](#) - Where to go when guide for graduate students (Grad program level)
  - Grievance Procedure [Link](#)
- [Link](#) - (Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center) link including to make an appointment
- [Link](#) - University office of institutional equity (OIE)
- Are reporting policies regularly reviewed? What is the process for changing policy?  
There is no official process for reviewing the department reporting policies, but it is often discussed during regular meetings of faculty and grad students.
- Are the rates of reporting made publicly available (e.g. # of reports each year)?  
No. Making the reporting rate available to members of the department is an important improvement that we will try to add to the anonymous reporting process.

### **What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism?**

- Who are the designated individuals/positions for reporting incidents?  
Our department has no individual whose stated job is to receive complaints about bias, microaggressions, harassment, or overt racism. We do have an anonymous climate reporting form on our website that is reviewed by the Department chair, though this form does not explicitly function as a formal complaint filing system tied to investigative procedures.
- Can reports be made online? Where?  
Yes, on the above mentioned anonymous reporting form.
- Link anonymously?  
Complaints can be filed anonymously.
- Who do in-person and online reports go to? Who has access to see reports?  
The anonymous reporting form is currently sent only to the Department Chair, though the department is currently in the process of updating the form to allow it to go to particular individuals specified by the complainant. The process of handling complaints is currently under evaluation.

- Are police included in the process? When and how? Are individuals accompanied by an advocate or someone from the organization?  
The decision to involve the police for criminal matters follows the same policies as our college.

### **What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?**

There is an OIE annual report but it can be hard to find.

The University Standard Practice Guide has some information:

<https://spg.umich.edu/policy/201.89-1>

We need to establish a process for department-level complaints.

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

- Counselors or advocates, especially those of the same race, ethnicity, and gender.
  - Ombudsperson through the Rackham Graduate School or Office of the Ombuds for all students
  - Departmental Student Advocate (Ingrid Hendy)
  - Departmental Faculty Ally (Selena Smith)
- Automatic or requested investigation of potential impact on grades or evaluations?  
Protection against retaliation or repercussions, accommodations for continuing work/courses, option for pass/fail or outside assessment?

Requests for protection from retaliation must be made on top of original reports of misconduct. There is not an automatic process for preventing retaliation. The relevant part of the university Standard Practice Guide is:

“The University will take appropriate steps to assure that a person who in good faith reports, complains about, or participates in an informal resolution or formal investigation of a discrimination or harassment allegation under this policy will not be subjected to retaliation. The University also will take appropriate steps to assure that a person against whom such an allegation is made is treated fairly. The University will also take appropriate follow-up measures to assure the goals of this policy are met. **Persons who believe they are experiencing retaliation are strongly encouraged to lodge a complaint with the University using the same procedure for lodging a discrimination or harassment complaint.**”

### **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?  
There is no set follow-up process for town halls/subsequent action. More transparency from faculty meetings, executive committees, etc. could help with accountability.
- Working groups or committees with power to change or propose changes to policy.
  - Changes to Departmental policies are usually brought to vote at general faculty meetings.

- The Faculty Executive Committee is currently reviewing policies and codifying current practices into policy. This group has power to make changes and we have one representative from the committee in our pod.
- Cultural surveys, regular or only after wide-spread reports or high-profile incidents. These kinds of reports have been generated after high-profile incidents in other units at the University of Michigan, but there is a lack of clarity on whether recommendations will be applied University-wide or limited to the units where the investigation took place.
- Leadership proactively asks students and/or staff for input on how to improve. Department leadership frequently solicit feedback from students, mostly during regularly held town-hall meetings.

**Specific ideas for improvement in our department (Action Items):**

- We need to make a climate/discrimination/harassment policy page on the department website that is visible to the public & clearly communicates our policies and resources for help and that serves everyone in the department, nested within broader resources for departmental community (currently we only have a resource guide for graduate students)
  - Also include Standard Practice Guide
  - Link to Advance office
  - Link to Rackham & dean's resources
  - Reporting guidelines -- decision tree for when people hear in-person complaints/reports (harassment, discrimination, assault pathways that are confidential & not confidential)
    - And then make sure everyone is educated on this resource
  - Clarity on identifying who are mandatory reporters listed on website and/or door stickers
  - Core materials would seed lab & grad program handbooks
- Reach out to LSA about how to handle unit level information and get unit level support for responses shared in the anonymous reporting form ("unit level repair"). Specifically we want help with the following
  - Want form to articulate who receives report & expand options for who receives
  - The Anonymous reporting form needs an annual report sharing how the form is being used.
  - We need to develop the structure and process (reporting flow chart) for handling anonymous information that is submitted to this form.
  - A mechanism to indicate if any action is desired; and provide feedback to the reporter (anonymous or not) about actions/responses taken
  - Ideas for categorizing the reports (red, yellow, green system for severity and urgency to address the reported information)
  - It needs more direct, specific language clarifying the purpose of the complaint, whether that is to provide general feedback on the nebulous idea of department "climate" or for filing formal complaints to launch an investigation.

- Work with the LSA DEI office to create a diagram to clarify the steps & people to go to to report different types of issues (possibly working with other departments). Review each year.
- Lab-level complaints could be resolved as part of adding multiple recipients (grad chair, dept. advocate, etc.) to the existing anonymous climate reporting form. Consistently disseminating the flowchart and information to each lab to reach every level of researcher present.
- Make a poster to give to each lab to hang on the wall so everyone knows the reporting procedure
- Give a draft of policies/language to each PI that they can modify accordingly for their lab.
- It is important to create a public-facing document enumerating the standard procedures that will be followed in response to anonymous (or non-anonymous) complaints at the Department level. This includes a timeline for escalation to higher levels of administration or involvement of law enforcement for criminal matters.
- There must be clarity on how anonymous complaints submitted by the form will be handled if directed to a Responsible Employee.
- Our longer-term goal is to convince the College that we need an external Diversity Coordinator to guide and handle complaints outside of the departmental power structure and be a liaison and advocate between students, faculty, and deans. This coordinator would be modeled after the office at Scripps (<https://scripps.ucsd.edu/diversity/team>) with graduate student representatives. We also discussed how it might be most feasible to push for this position as serving the Natural Sciences units rather than just our department alone.