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1004: Policy Statement on Harassment

Policy Statement on Harassment (Relating to Protected Categories)

Harassment is a form of discrimination prohibited by law. It is the policy of Georgetown University to prohibit harassment on the basis of age, color, disability, family responsibilities, gender identity and expression, genetic information, marital status, national origin and accent, personal appearance, political affiliation, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, source of income, veteran’s status or other factors prohibited by federal and/or District of Columbia law (“Protected Categories”). Sexual harassment is addressed under the University’s Policy Statement on Sexual Misconduct.

Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion to an individual because of a Protected Category as specified above, when such conduct has the purpose or effect of: unreasonably interfering with an individual or third party’s academic or work performance; creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or work environment; or otherwise adversely affecting an individual or third party’s academic or employment opportunities.¹

Harassment may include, but is not limited to: verbal abuse or ridicule, including slurs, epithets, and stereotyping; offensive jokes and comments; threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts, and displaying or distributing offensive materials, writings, graffiti, or pictures. Harassment may include conduct carried out through the internet, email, social media, or other electronic means.

Interpretive guidance:

- A hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment exists when conduct is severe or pervasive. Factors to be considered in determining whether conduct is severe or pervasive include the nature, scope, frequency, and duration of the conduct and the number of persons involved. Simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not severe or pervasive do not create a hostile or offensive environment.
- If an issue of harassment is raised in strictly academic areas, such as coursework, the matter will be handled in consultation and coordination between IDEAA and the Executive Vice President or Dean of the faculty member’s school because such matters may also concern issues of academic freedom.
- To constitute harassment, the conduct in question must be objectively intimidating, hostile or offensive, and must interfere with a person’s ability to participate in employment or educational programs or activities of the University. The injured party’s perception of the offensiveness of the alleged conduct, standing alone, is not sufficient by itself to constitute harassment.

¹ This policy does not apply to conduct that is unrelated to a Protected Category.

- Harassment is especially serious when it occurs between teachers and students or supervisors and subordinates. In such situations, harassment unfairly exploits the power inherent in a faculty member's or supervisor's position. Although harassment often occurs when one person takes advantage of a position of authority over another, the University recognizes that harassment may also occur between people of equivalent status. This includes peer harassment.

This policy applies to any allegations of harassment against an employee (including faculty and staff) or student of Georgetown University or a Georgetown University operated program, regardless of where the alleged conduct occurred.

This Policy Statement on Harassment will be widely disseminated to members of the University community, and will be consistently enforced. The policy will be reexamined, updated as appropriate, and distributed regularly to all students, faculty, and staff.

Training will be provided to employees and students for the purpose of preventing harassment and promoting a respectful community. All employees are responsible for completing training identified as mandatory.

Reporting Obligations for Faculty and Staff

The University recognizes that supervisors (including those who supervise employees and those who supervise students) bear a particularly important responsibility to deter harassment. Any faculty or staff member (other than those who are statutorily prohibited from reporting) who learns of conduct that may violate this policy must contact the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Affirmative Action (IDEAA) at 202-687-4798, within 24 hours, or as soon as possible. If in doubt as to whether certain conduct violates this policy, or if you have any questions about this policy or its application, call IDEAA for a consultation.

Procedure for Filing Complaints

Any member of the University community who believes conduct that violates this policy has occurred, or who has questions concerning this policy, is encouraged to contact IDEAA at 202-687-4798. This Office is staffed with trained individuals, and administers both a confidential mediation process and a confidential grievance procedure. A full description of the IDEAA Grievance Procedures to Investigate Allegations of Discrimination and Harassment may be obtained from IDEAA and is also located on IDEAA's website.

Allegations against students are handled under the following disciplinary procedures:

- Code of Student Conduct (for students in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Business School, the School of Foreign Service, the School 3 of Nursing and Health Sciences, Biomedical Graduate Education, and the School of Continuing Studies).
- Law Center Student Disciplinary Code (for students at the Law Center)
- School of Medicine Student Code of Professionalism (for students in the School of Medicine)

Where an accused individual is both a student and employee of the University, the procedures that apply will depend on the status of the individual during the alleged incident. If there is ambiguity regarding which procedures shall apply, the Vice President of Institutional Diversity and Equity shall decide.

Bias Reporting

Any member of the University community can make a report about a possible bias incident or hate crime through the Bias Reporting System. For more information go to <http://studentaffairs.georgetown.edu/biasreporting/>. Making a report through the Bias Reporting System is not the same as filing a complaint under the grievance

procedures described above. The Bias Reporting System allows the University to track and review bias-related incidents, offer supportive counseling services and other resources, and may lead to an investigation under which the accused may be held accountable for his or her acts. Anonymous reports are permitted under the Bias Reporting System.

Other Reporting Avenues

Complainants are encouraged to exhaust internal procedures established to enforce this policy before pursuing administrative remedies outside the University. However, the University acknowledges the rights of complainants to seek redress from any external enforcement agency, including the District of Columbia Office of Human Rights, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Office of Civil Rights of the United States Department of Education.

Retaliation Prohibited

This policy prohibits retaliation, harassment, or other adverse action against an individual for making a complaint in good faith, assisting in an investigation, opposing harassment or otherwise exercising rights protected by law. It also prohibits taking any adverse academic or employment related action against an individual based on an unsubstantiated allegation or rumor of harassment. Retaliation should be reported promptly to IDEAA and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.



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2115 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, 6th Floor

Washington DC 20007

Phone: [\(202\) 687-2500](tel:(202)687-2500)

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