

NSHE Policy Against Sexual Harassment and Complaint Procedure

Board of Regents Handbook: Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13

A. Sexual Harassment is Illegal Under Federal and State Law.

The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) is committed to providing a place of work and learning free of sexual harassment. Where sexual harassment is found to have occurred, the NSHE will act to stop the harassment, to prevent its recurrence, and to discipline those responsible in accordance with the NSHE Code or, in the case of classified employees, the Nevada Administrative Code. Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination; it is illegal.

No employee or student, either in the workplace or in the academic environment, should be subject to unwelcome verbal or physical conduct that is sexual in nature. Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature. It refers to behavior of a sexual nature that is not welcome, that is personally offensive, and that interferes with performance.

It is expected that students, faculty and staff will treat one another with respect.

B. Policy Applicability and Sanctions.

All students, faculty, staff, and other members of the campus community are subject to this policy. Individuals who violate this policy are subject to discipline up to and including termination and/or expulsion, in accordance with the NSHE Code or, in the case of classified employees, the Nevada Administrative Code. Other, lesser sanctions may be imposed, depending on the circumstances.

This policy is not intended to and does not infringe upon academic freedom in teaching or research as established in the NSHE Code, Chapter 2.

C. Training.

All employees shall be given a copy of this policy and each institution's Human Resources Office shall maintain documentation that each employee received the policy. New employees shall be given a copy of this policy at the time of hire and each institution's Human Resources Office shall maintain documentation that each new employee received the policy.

Each institution shall include this policy and complaint procedure in its general catalog.

Each institution shall have an on-going sexual harassment training program for employees.

D. Sexual Harassment Defined.

Under this policy, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other visual, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or academic status;
2. Submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as a basis for academic or employment decisions or evaluations, or permission to participate in an activity; or
3. The conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's academic or work performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment in which to work or learn.

Sexual harassment may take many forms—subtle and indirect, or blatant and overt. For example,

- It may occur between individuals of the opposite sex or of the same sex.
- It may occur between students, between peers and/or co-workers, or between individuals in an unequal power relationship.
- It may be aimed at coercing an individual to participate in an unwanted sexual relationship or it may have the effect of causing an individual to change behavior or work performance.
- It may consist of repeated actions or may even arise from a single incident if sufficiently severe.
- It may also rise to the level of a criminal offense, such as battery or sexual assault.

Determining what constitutes sexual harassment under this policy will be accomplished on a case by case basis and depends upon the specific facts and the context in which the conduct occurs. Some conduct may be inappropriate, unprofessional, and/or subject to disciplinary action, but would not fall under the definition of sexual harassment. The specific action taken, if any, in a particular instance depends on the nature and gravity of the conduct reported, and may include disciplinary processes as stated above.

Examples of unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that may constitute sexual harassment may, but do not necessarily, include, and are not limited to:

- Physical assault;
- Sexually explicit statements, comments, questions, jokes, innuendoes, anecdotes, or gestures;
- Unnecessary touching, patting, hugging, or brushing against a person's body or other inappropriate touching of an individual's body;
- Remarks of a sexual nature about a person's clothing or body;
- Use of electronic mail or computer dissemination of sexually oriented, sex-based communications;
- Sexual advances, whether or not they involve physical touching;
- Requests for sexual favors in exchange for actual or promised job or educational benefits, such as favorable reviews, salary increases, promotions, increased benefits, continued employment, grades, favorable assignments, letters of recommendation;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, magazines, cartoons, or screen savers;
- Inquiries, remarks, or discussions about an individual's sexual experiences or activities and other written or oral references to sexual conduct.

Even one incident, if it is sufficiently serious, may constitute sexual harassment. One incident, however, does not usually constitute sexual harassment.

E. Procedure.

The Chancellor and each President shall designate no fewer than two administrators to receive complaints of alleged sexual harassment. The administrators designated to receive the complaints may include the following: (1) the Human Resources Officer at the institution; (2) the Affirmative Action Program Officer; or (3) any other officer designated by the president. If the Human Resources Officer or the Affirmative Action Program Officer or another officer designated by the president, is not the individual who initially receives the complaint of alleged sexual harassment, then the individual receiving the complaint must immediately forward the complaint to either the Human Resources Officer or the Affirmative Action Program Officer. (B/R 12/06)

An individual filing a complaint of alleged sexual harassment shall have the opportunity to select an independent advisor for assistance, support, and advice and shall be notified of this opportunity by the Human Resources Officer or the Affirmative Action Program Officer, or by their designee. It shall be the choice of the individual filing the complaint to utilize or not utilize the independent advisor. The independent advisor may be brought into the process at any time at the request of the alleged victim. The means and manner by which an independent advisor shall be made available shall be determined by each institution or unit.

Supervisors' Responsibilities: Every supervisor has responsibility to take reasonable steps intended to prevent acts of sexual harassment, which include, but are not limited to:

- Monitoring the work and school environment for signs that harassment may be occurring;
- Refraining from participation in, or encouragement of actions that could be perceived as harassment (verbal or otherwise);
- Stopping any observed acts that may be considered harassment, and taking appropriate steps to intervene, whether or not the involved individuals are within his/her line of supervision; and
- Taking immediate action to minimize or eliminate the work and/or school contact between the two individuals where there has been a complaint of harassment, pending investigation.

If a supervisor receives a complaint of alleged sexual harassment, or observes or becomes aware of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment, the supervisor must immediately contact one of the individuals identified above to forward the complaint, to discuss it and/or to report the action taken.

Failure to take the above action to prevent the occurrence of or stop known harassment may be grounds for disciplinary action.

Complaints of sexual harassment must be filed within one hundred eighty (180) calendar days after the discovery of the alleged act of sexual harassment with the supervisor, department chair, dean, or one of the administrators listed above and/or designated by the President to receive complaints of alleged sexual harassment. Complaints of prohibited conduct, including sexual harassment, filed with an institution's administrative officer pursuant to NSHE Code Chapter 6, Section 6.8.1, are not subject to this 180 day filing requirement.

1. Employees.

a. An employee who believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment by anyone is encouraged—but it is neither necessary nor required—to promptly tell the person that the conduct is unwelcome and ask the person to stop the conduct. A person who receives such a request must immediately comply with it and must not retaliate against the employee for rejecting the conduct.

b. The employee may also choose to file a complaint with his or her immediate supervisor, who will in turn immediately contact one of the officials listed above.

c. If the employee feels uncomfortable about discussing the incident with the immediate supervisor, the employee should feel free to bypass the supervisor and file a complaint with one of the other listed officials or with any other supervisor.

d. After receiving any employee's complaint of an incident of alleged sexual harassment, whether or not the complaint is in writing, the supervisor will immediately contact any of the individuals listed above to forward the complaint, to discuss it and/or to report the action taken. The supervisor has a responsibility to act even if the individuals involved are not supervised by that supervisor.

2. Students.

a. A student who believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment by anyone is encouraged—but it is neither necessary nor required—to promptly tell the person that the conduct is unwelcome and ask the person to stop the conduct. A person who receives such a request must immediately comply with it and must not retaliate against the student for rejecting the conduct.

b. The student may also choose to file a complaint with his or her major department chair, who will in turn immediately contact one of the officials listed above.

c. If the student feels uncomfortable about discussing the incident with the department chair, the student should feel free to bypass the chair and file a complaint with one of the above officials or to any chair or dean, who will in turn immediately contact one of the officials listed above to forward the complaint, whether or not the complaint is in writing, to discuss it and/or to report the action taken. The chair or dean has a responsibility to act even if the individuals are not supervised by that chair or dean.

3. Non-Employees and Non-Students.

Individuals who are neither NSHE employees nor NSHE students and who believe they have been subjected to sexual harassment by a NSHE employee during the employee's work hours or by a NSHE student on campus or at a NSHE-sponsored event may utilize any of the complaint processes set forth above in this section.

4. Investigation and Resolution.

a. After receiving a complaint of the incident or behavior, an investigation by one of the above listed officials will be initiated to gather information about the incident. Each institution may set guidelines for the manner in which an investigation shall be conducted.

b. At the completion of the investigation, a recommendation will be made to the appropriate management regarding the resolution of the matter. The recommendation is advisory only.

c. After the recommendation has been made, a determination will be made by appropriate management regarding the resolution of the matter. If warranted, disciplinary action up to and including involuntary termination or expulsion will be

taken. Any such disciplinary action shall be taken in accordance with NSHE Code Chapter 6, or, in the case of classified employees, *Nevada Administrative Code* , Chapter 284. Other appropriate actions will be taken to correct problems, if any, caused by or contributing to the conduct. If proceedings are initiated under Chapter 6, the investigation conducted pursuant to this policy may be used as the Chapter 6 investigation. The administrative officer, in his or her discretion, may also supplement the sexual harassment investigation with additional investigation.

d. After the appropriate management has made a determination regarding the resolution of the matter, and depending on the circumstances, both parties may be informed of the resolution. Certain actions made confidential under NSHE Code Chapters 5 and 6 or *Nevada Administrative Code* , Chapter 284 shall remain confidential.

F. Prompt Attention.

Complaints of sexual harassment are taken seriously and will be dealt with promptly. Where sexual harassment is found to have occurred, the NSHE institution or unit where it occurred will act to stop the harassment, to prevent its recurrence, and to discipline those responsible.

G. Confidentiality.

The NSHE recognizes that confidentiality is important. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The administrators, faculty or staff responsible for implementing this policy will respect the privacy of individuals reporting or accused of sexual harassment to the extent reasonably possible and will maintain confidentiality to the extent possible. Examples of situations where confidentiality cannot be maintained include, but are not limited to, necessary disclosures during an investigation, circumstances where the NSHE is required by law to disclose information (such as in response to legal process), or when an individual is in harm's way.

H. Retaliation

Retaliation against an individual who in good faith complains of alleged sexual harassment or provides information in an investigation about behavior that may violate this policy is against the law, will not be tolerated, and may be grounds for discipline. Retaliation in violation of this policy may result in discipline up to and including termination and/or expulsion. Any employee or student bringing a sexual harassment complaint or assisting in the investigation of such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment and/or academic standing, nor discriminated against, terminated, or expelled because of the complaint. Intentionally providing false information is also grounds for discipline.

“Retaliation” may include, but is not limited to, such conduct as:

- the denial of adequate personnel to perform duties;
- frequent replacement of members of the staff;
- frequent and undesirable changes in the location of an office;
- the refusal to assign meaningful work;
- unwarranted disciplinary action;
- unfair work performance evaluations;
- a reduction in pay;
- the denial of a promotion;
- a dismissal;
- a transfer;
- frequent changes in working hours or workdays;
- an unfair grade;
- an unfavorable reference letter.

I. Relationship to Freedom of Expression.

The NSHE is committed to the principles of free inquiry and free expression. Vigorous discussion and debate are fundamental rights and this policy is not intended to stifle teaching methods or freedom of expression. Sexual harassment, however, is neither legally protected expression nor the proper exercise of academic freedom; it compromises the integrity of institutions, the tradition of intellectual freedom and the trust placed in the institutions by their members.

Effective 5/2003

For more information, please call the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Office at 784-1547.