

University of Washington
Department of Physics

**Policy and Procedure for Reporting and Handling Graduate Student
Complaints**

(Revised September 10, 2009)

The Department of Physics is committed to ensuring that students have a positive graduate school experience. To this end, the Department will make every effort to prevent and respond to problems. The department also pledges to respond quickly and affirmatively to alleviate any problems or miscommunications that may arise.

Students may report grievances to the Department Chair or the Graduate Program Coordinator; however, the Department recognizes that students also need a less formal environment where they may speak openly and easily about their concerns. This policy and procedure is intended to encourage students to report complaints to the Graduate Advisor who will provide sympathetic counsel in a supportive environment. Students should still speak with the Department Chair or the Graduate Program Coordinator about serious complaints, which warrant immediate action.

In cases of sexual harassment, or when the student does not feel comfortable talking to members of the Department, the student should contact the University Ombudsman and Ombudsman for Sexual Harassment at 206-543-0283 or 206-543-6028. The University of Washington Policy on Sexual Harassment can be found on the Web at

http://www.washington.edu/provost/ap/eoaa/sexual_harassment_brochure.pdf

The University of Washington Equal Opportunity Statement also includes information on Title IX compliance, which prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities receiving federal funds. This statement and Title IX information can be found at http://www.washington.edu/provost/ap/eoaa/equal_opportunity_poster.pdf

Role and Responsibilities

The Graduate Advisor helps protect the rights and interests of graduate students. In this role the Graduate Advisor will:

- Act as a source of information and assistance to graduate students.
- Receive complaints from graduate students.
- Discuss options and offer advice for resolving complaints.
- Make recommendations to the Department Chair and Graduate Program Coordinator about desired or necessary changes in Department policies and procedures.

Policy

The Graduate Advisor will respect confidences. While the Graduate Advisor will occasionally report to the Chair on graduate student concerns, these reports will not contain any details making it possible to identify individual students unless the students give their consent.

Although the Graduate Advisor will not normally take action without the graduate student's explicit consent when specific instances of sexual harassment are reported any officer of the University is required to report it to the Ombudsman for Sexual Harassment.

Graduate students are expected to be actively involved in discussing a plan for resolving the complaint and deciding how to proceed.

Procedure

If you have a complaint, you should stop by the Graduate Program Office or make an appointment to meet with the Graduate Advisor.

Jen Lehner, Graduate Advisor

C139B Physics/Astronomy Building
grad@phys.washington.edu
206-543-2488

The Graduate Advisor will listen; discuss your options and offer advice; and ask you how you would like to proceed. You may ask the Graduate Advisor to proceed in one of the following ways:

1. Take no action. (You simply need a sympathetic ear.)
2. Report the complaint to the Department Chair or Graduate Program Coordinator if a pattern of similar complaints is heard which, in the judgment of the Graduate Advisor, merits action. (You feel the complaint requires action if the Graduate Advisor hears similar complaints from other graduate students.)
3. Report the complaint to the Department Chair or Graduate Program Coordinator. (You feel the complaint requires action.)

No matter how you decide to proceed, the Graduate Advisor will support you in your decision and follow-up with you to find out if the complaint was resolved and your situation improved.

Additional Resources

You may also report complaints to the following persons or offices.

Blayne Heckel, Chair
C121F Physics/Astronomy Building
chair@phys.washington.edu
206-543-2771

Stephen Sharpe, Graduate Program Coordinator
B406 Physics/Astronomy Building
sharpe@phys.washington.edu
206-682-2395

Susan L. Neff, University Ombudsman and Ombudsman for Sexual Harassment
301 Student Union (HUB)
ombuds@u.washington.edu
206-543-0283
206-543-6028

University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office (UCIRO) 4311
11th Ave. NE, Suite 630
uciro@u.washington.edu
206-616-2028

Office of the Vice Provost - Student Life
476 Schmitz Hall stulife
@u.washington.edu
206-543-4972