

Graduate Student Conflict Resolution Policy

Department of Anthropology, University of California, Santa Barbara

The Department of Anthropology at UCSB (hereafter the Department) is committed to the success and wellbeing of its graduate students. This document outlines Departmental procedures for handling conflicts that may arise between its graduate students and faculty. Graduate students who experience a conflict and/or wish to report a grievance about a faculty member at the Department level should follow the procedures herein. Links to university level resources for managing student grievances are also provided at the end of this document.

1. Departmental responsibility

The Department adheres to [mandatory reporting](#) procedures, that require anyone in a supervisory capacity (e.g., professor, teaching assistant, etc.) who hears of sex discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual violence (violations of Title IX) report it to the Title IX office. Students can find published information from UCSB webpages about [Title IX](#) and the [Student Grievance Procedure](#), which cover issues relating to discrimination or harassment based on “*race, color, religion or creed, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, age, sex, gender, veteran’s status, genetic information, or citizenship.*” All faculty are also subject to the Academic Senate’s [Faculty Code of Conduct](#).

Investigations of alleged violations of Title IX or the Faculty Code of Conduct are handled at the University, rather than Departmental level. Allegations of violating Title IX or the Faculty Code of Conduct may be raised to the Academic Senate at any time by faculty, staff, or students with or without the oversight of the Department.

The Department is responsible for recording student grievances brought to its attention, protecting privacy and anonymity when possible (see above on mandatory reporting), and facilitating the resolution of conflicts to the best of its ability. In serious cases of concern, the Department may report concerns about graduate student conflicts with faculty to the Dean of Social Sciences, and if no resolution is reached to the Graduate Dean, Executive Vice Chancellor, and/or Academic Senate, as appropriate.

2. Managing minor conflicts

Minor conflicts may include issues such as faculty having limited availability for feedback or giving contradictory or unproductive recommendations to students. We encourage such minor conflicts, providing the student feels comfortable, to be raised first with the student’s faculty advisor(s) and/or a committee member for constructive advice and planning. An action plan may include supervision rearrangements; committee member rearrangement; shifted meeting schedules; creating work schedules with deadlines; agreements on use of spaces and data; acceptable and preferred modes/times to communicate; and others. If the student feels that this is not sufficient or possible, we recommend elevating the grievance to an official complaint.

3. Making an official complaint

Complaints may be made directly (i.e. non-anonymously), or anonymously, including via a third-party, following the procedures outlined below. Mandatory reporting requirements, as outlined above, remain in effect for both direct and anonymous complaints.

3.1 Direct complaints

To file a direct, non-anonymous, complaint, the student, or a third-party on their behalf, must document their complaint in writing and submit it to the Faculty Graduate Advisor or a member of the Department Executive Committee (membership of this committee include the Department Chair and rotating faculty representatives of each wing of the Department). The Faculty Graduate Advisor will then consult with Executive Committee to review the complaint. Should the complaint concern the Faculty Graduate Advisor or a member of the Department Executive Committee, they will be excluded from this process. The complaint will then be reviewed to determine if the issue raised is within or beyond the scope of the Department conflict resolution process.

- If a direct complaint is deemed **within scope** of Department responsibilities (see above), the student will be invited to a meeting with the Faculty Graduate Advisor and/or the Executive Committee, a member of the student's advisory committee of the student's choosing, and the faculty member about whom the complaint is made. At this meeting, the parties are tasked on agreeing on a plan for working together constructively. Actions in the plan may include supervision rearrangements; committee member rearrangement; shifted meeting schedules; creating work schedule with deadlines; agreements on use of spaces and data; acceptable and preferred modes/times to communicate; and others. This action plan should take the form of a written summary that all parties agreed to. **All action plans include a zero tolerance policy for retribution on any student for raising complaints.**

A record of the complaint and the action plan will be deposited with the Department Business Officer (see below). If the agreed-upon plan is not implemented, or there are multiple documented complaints of the same nature, the Department may take further measures, including but not limited to: changing the student's advisor, establishing co-advisors, limiting the recruitment of graduate students by that advisor.

- If a direct complaint is deemed **beyond the scope** of Department responsibilities (see above) (e.g. an accusation of a Title IX violation or accusation of scientific misconduct), the Faculty Graduate Advisor or a representative of the Executive Committee will refer the matter to the Dean of Social Sciences. A record of the complaint will be deposited with the Department Business Officer (see below on Departmental Record Keeping).

3.2 Anonymous complaints

As above, to file a complaint anonymously, the student, or a third-party on their behalf, must document their complaint in writing and submit it to the Faculty Graduate Advisor or a member of the Department Executive Committee (membership of this committee include the Department Chair and rotating faculty representatives of each wing of the Department). The Faculty Graduate Advisor will then consult with Executive Committee to review the complaint. Should the complaint concern the Faculty Graduate Advisor or a member of the Department Executive Committee, they will be excluded from this process. An anonymous complaint limits the Department's ability to move forward with conflict resolution, since in most cases conflict resolution will require identities to be revealed. However, a record of this complaint will be filed with the Business Officer (see below on Departmental Record Keeping).

4. Departmental Record Keeping

Students should be aware that a record of all official complaints, both direct and anonymous will be maintained by the Departmental Business Officer. Information in this record may be made available to the relevant offices should a faculty member be under investigation for a potential Title IX or Faculty Code of Conduct Violation. However, as outlined above, the Department does not conduct investigations into alleged violations.

In addition to retaining a formal record, the Business Officer will coordinate with the Faculty Graduate Advisor to produce an anonymized annual report on student grievances to be presented to faculty and discussed at the end of each academic year (both student and faculty identity will be kept anonymous). The purpose of this report is to make faculty aware of collective student concerns and any recurrent conflicts, with the objective of informing initiatives to improve graduate student experience. If the nature of the complaint means that it is not possible to obscure a student or faculty members identity, then a complaint will be recorded, but not included in the annual report.

5. Office of the Ombuds

Students also have access to Ombuds services, which may be a useful source of independent consultation. The Office of the Ombuds at UC Santa Barbara provides confidential consultation services to faculty, staff, students, parents, or anyone else with a campus-related concern. The ombuds addresses workplace issues, interpersonal conflict, academic concerns, policy questions, and many other problems, whether as a first step, last resort, or at any point along the way. The Office of the Ombuds is dedicated to ensuring fairness throughout the University and regularly makes recommendations for systemic change.

RESOURCES

- [Student Grievance Procedure at UCSB](#)
- [Office of Title IX and Sexual Harassment Policy Compliance](#)
- [Faculty Code of Conduct](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Office of the Ombuds](#)