



# Procedure 235.3A Discrimination & Harassment Employee Disciplinary Hearing Procedure

*Policy 235 - Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment*

## **I. Order of Precedence**

This supplemental employee discipline procedure applies to allegations of Sexual Harassment subject to Title IX jurisdiction pursuant to regulations promulgated by the United States Department of Education. See 34 C.F.R. § 106. Disciplinary proceedings against an employee alleged to have engaged in sexual harassment in violation of Title IX shall be governed by the Lower Columbia College's administrative hearing practices and procedures, Chapter 132M-108 WAC, and this supplemental hearing procedure. To the extent the supplemental hearing procedure conflicts with Chapter 132M-108 WAC and/or provisions set forth in employment contracts, collective bargaining agreements, employee handbooks, and other Lower Columbia College's employment policies and procedures, this supplemental hearing procedure will take precedence.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, if Respondent is a tenured or probationary faculty member and the Director of Human Resources determines that the allegations in the investigation, if true, would warrant Respondent's dismissal from the College, the Director of Human Resources will refer the matter to the Tenure Termination Committee for a hearing pursuant to RCW 28B.50.863 and applicable procedures set forth in the faculty union Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). To the extent the Tenure Termination Committee procedures are inconsistent or conflict with Sections

II through VII of this Supplement Procedure, those Supplemental Procedure sections will prevail. At the end of the hearing, the Tenure Termination Committee will issue a Recommendation consistent with the provisions set forth in Section VIII. Complainant shall have the same right to appear and participate in the proceedings as the Respondent, including the right to present their position on the Recommendation to the Board of Trustees before final action is taken.

## **II. Prohibited Conduct Under Title IX**

Pursuant to Title IX of the Education Act Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. § 1681, the Lower Columbia College may impose disciplinary sanctions against an employee who commits, attempts to commit, or aids, abets, incites, encourages, or assists another person to commit, an act(s) of “sexual harassment.”

For purposes of this supplemental procedure, “Sexual Harassment” means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following :

- A. Quid pro quo harassment. A Lower Columbia College employee conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the College on an individual’s participation in unwelcome sexual conduct.
- B. Hostile environment. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the College’s education programs or activities, or employment.
- C. Sexual assault. Sexual assault includes the following conduct:
  - 1. Nonconsensual sexual intercourse. Any actual or attempted sexual intercourse (anal, oral, or vaginal), however slight, with any object or body part, by a person upon another person, that is without consent and/or by force. Sexual intercourse includes anal or vaginal penetration by a penis, tongue, finger, or object, or oral copulation by mouth to genital contact or genital to mouth contact.
  - 2. Nonconsensual sexual contact. Any actual or attempted sexual touching, however slight, with any body part or object, by a person upon another person that is without consent and/or by

force. Sexual touching includes any bodily contact with the breasts, groin, mouth, or other bodily orifice of another individual, or any other bodily contact in a sexual manner.

3. Incest. Sexual intercourse or sexual contact with a person known to be related to them, either legitimately or illegitimately, as an ancestor, descendant, brother, or sister of either wholly or half related. Descendant includes stepchildren and adopted children under the age of eighteen (18).

4. Statutory rape. Non-forcible sexual intercourse between someone who is eighteen (18) years of age or older and someone who is under the age of sixteen (16).

D. Domestic violence. Physical violence, bodily injury, assault, the infliction of fear of imminent physical harm, sexual assault, coercive control, damage or destruction of personal property, stalking, or any other conduct prohibited under RCW 10.99.020 committed by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the State of Washington, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the State of Washington, RCW 26.50.010.

E. Dating violence. Physical violence, bodily injury, assault, the infliction of fear of imminent physical harm, sexual assault, or stalking committed by a person (i) who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; and (ii) where the existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors:

1. The length of the relationship;
2. The type of relationship; and
3. The frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.

- F. Stalking. Engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety or the safety of others, or suffer substantial emotional distress.

### **III. Title IX Jurisdiction**

- A. This supplemental procedure applies only if the alleged misconduct:
1. Occurred in the United States;
  2. Occurred during a College education program or activity; and
  3. Meets the definition of Sexual Harassment as that term is defined in this supplemental procedure.
- B. For purposes of this supplemental procedure, an “education program or activity” is defined as locations, events, or circumstances over which the College exercised substantial control over both the Respondent and the context in which the alleged Sexual Harassment occurred. This definition includes any building owned or controlled by a student organization that is officially recognized by the College.
- C. Proceedings under this supplemental procedure must be dismissed if the impartial decision maker determines that one or all of the requirements of Section A (1)-(3) have not been met. Dismissal under this supplemental procedure does not prohibit the College from pursuing disciplinary action against a Respondent based on allegations that the Respondent engaged in other misconduct prohibited by federal or state law, employment contracts or handbooks, or other College policies.
- D. If the Director of Human Resources/designee determines the facts in the investigation report are not sufficient to support Title IX jurisdiction and/or pursuit of a Title IX violation, the Director of Human Resources/designee will issue a notice of dismissal in whole or part to both parties explaining why some or all of the Title IX claims have been dismissed.

## **IV. Initiation of Discipline**

- A. Upon receiving the Title IX investigation report from the Title IX Coordinator, the Director of Human Resources/designee will independently review the report to determine whether there are sufficient grounds to pursue a disciplinary action against the Respondent for engaging in prohibited conduct under Title IX.
- B. If the Director of Human Resources/designee determines that there are sufficient grounds to proceed under these supplemental procedures, the Director of Human Resources/designee will initiate a Title IX disciplinary proceeding by filing a written disciplinary notice with the impartial decision maker and by serving the notice on the Respondent and the Complainant, and their respective advisors. The notice must:
  - 1. Set forth the basis for Title IX jurisdiction;
  - 2. Identify the alleged Title IX violation(s);
  - 3. Set forth the facts underlying the allegation(s);
  - 4. 4. Identify the range of possible sanctions that may be imposed if the Respondent is found responsible for the alleged violation(s);
  - 5. 5. Explain that each Party is entitled to be accompanied by an Advisor of their own choosing during the hearing and that:
    - a. Advisors will be responsible for questioning all witnesses on the Party's behalf;
    - b. An Advisor may be an attorney and/or, if the Party is a represented employee, a union representative;
    - c. A represented employee who chooses an Advisor who is not a union representative must submit a signed waiver of union representation that includes consent from the union; and

- d. The College will appoint the Party an Advisor of the College's choosing at no cost to the Party, if the Party fails to choose an Advisor; and
- 6. Explain that if a Party fails to appear at the hearing, a decision of responsibility may be made in the Party's absence.
- C. Service of the disciplinary notice or any other document required to be served under this supplemental procedure may be done personally or by first class, registered, or certified mail, or by electronic mail to the Party's college email address.

## **V. Pre-Hearing Procedure**

- A. Upon receiving the disciplinary notice, the impartial decision maker will send a hearing notice to all parties in compliance with WAC 10-08-040. Pursuant to the Title IX Grievance Procedure 235.2A, the hearing date may not be scheduled less than ten (10) days after the Title IX Coordinator provided the Final Investigation Report to the Parties. The college may, at its discretion, contract with an administrative law judge or other person to act as the decision maker.
- B. A Party is entitled to be accompanied by an Advisor of their choice during the disciplinary process at the party's own expense. The Advisor may be an attorney and/or, if the Party is a represented employee, a union representative.
  - 1. A party may choose to have an attorney serve as their advisor at the party's own expense. This right will be waived unless, at least five (5) days before the hearing, the attorney files a notice of appearance with the Director of HR/designee with copies to all parties and the Student Conduct Officer.
  - 2. If a Party is a represented employee who chooses not to use a union-provided Advisor, the Party must provide the impartial decision maker with a signed waiver of union representation, including written consent from the union.
- C. In preparation for the hearing, the Parties will have equal access to all evidence gathered by the investigator during the investigation,

regardless of whether the College intends to offer the evidence at the hearing.

## **VI. Rights of Parties**

- A. The provisions of this supplemental procedure shall apply equally to all parties.
- B. The College bears the burden of offering and presenting sufficient testimony and evidence to establish that the Respondent is responsible for a Title IX violation by a preponderance of the evidence.
- C. The Respondent will be presumed not responsible until such time as the disciplinary process has been finally resolved.
- D. During the hearing, the Complainant and the Respondent shall be represented by an Advisor. These Parties are entitled to an Advisor of their own choosing and the Advisor may be an attorney or, if the Respondent holds a represented position, a union representative. If a party does not choose an Advisor, then the Title IX Coordinator will appoint an Advisor of the College's choosing on the Party's behalf at no expense to the Party.

## **VII. Evidence**

The introduction and consideration of evidence during the hearing is subject to the following procedures and restrictions:

- A. Relevance: The impartial decision maker shall review all questions for relevance and shall explain on the record their reasons for excluding any question based on lack of relevance.
- B. Relevance means that information elicited by the question makes a fact in dispute more or less likely to be true.
- C. Questions or evidence about a Complainant's sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant and must be excluded, unless such question or evidence:
  - 1. Is asked or offered to prove someone other than the Respondent committed the alleged misconduct; or

2. Concerns specific incidents of prior sexual behavior between the Complainant and the Respondent, which are asked or offered on the issue of consent.
- D. Complainant and Respondent may not ask questions directly of one another. Questions may be asked through a party's advisor or by the Chair, but only after the Chair determines the question is relevant and not privileged or otherwise impermissible. The Chair has discretion to follow this procedure for other witnesses, as well.
- E. No negative inference: The impartial decision maker may not make an inference regarding responsibility solely on a witness's or party's absence from the hearing or refusal to answer questions.
- F. Privileged evidence: The impartial decision maker shall not consider legally privileged information unless the holder has effectively waived the privilege. Privileged information includes, but is not limited to, information protected by the following:
1. Spousal/domestic partner privilege;
  2. Attorney-Client and attorney work product privileges;
  3. Privileges applicable to members of the clergy and priests;
  4. Privileges applicable to medical providers, mental health therapists, and counsellors;
  5. Privileges applicable to sexual assault and domestic violence advocates; and
  6. Other legal privileges identified in RCW 5.60.060.

## **VIII. Initial Order**

- A. The impartial decision maker will be responsible for drafting an Initial Order that:
1. Identifies the allegations of sexual harassment;
  2. Describes the procedural steps taken from receipt of the formal complaint through the determination, including any notifications

to parties, interviews with witnesses and parties, site visits, methods used to gather evidence, and hearings held;

3. Makes findings of fact supporting the determination of responsibility;
  4. Reaches conclusions as to whether the facts establish whether the Respondent is responsible for engaging in Sexual Harassment in violation of Title IX or any other college policy;
  5. Contains a statement of, and rationale for, the impartial decision maker's determination of responsibility for each allegation;
  6. Describes any disciplinary sanction or conditions imposed against the Respondent, if any;
  7. Describes to what extent, if any, Complainant is entitled to remedies designed to restore or preserve Complainant's equal access to the College's education programs or activities; and
  8. Describes the process for appealing the Initial Order to the College President.
- B. The impartial decision maker will serve the Initial Order on the Parties simultaneously.

## **IX. Appeals**

- A. All Parties, including the Director of HR/designee in their capacity as a representative of the College, have the right to appeal from the determination of responsibility and/or from a dismissal, in whole or part, of a formal complaint during the investigative or hearing process. Appeals must be in writing and filed with the President or the President's delegate within twenty-one (21) days of service of the Initial Order or Notice of Dismissal. Appeals must identify the specific findings of fact and/or conclusions of law in the initial order or dismissal being challenged and must contain argument as to why the appeal should be granted. Failure to file a timely appeal constitutes a waiver of the right to appeal and the Initial Order or Notice of Dismissal shall be deemed final.

- B. Upon receiving a timely appeal, the President or the President's delegate will serve a copy of the appeal on all non-appealing parties, who will have ten (10) days from the date of service to submit written responses to President or the President's delegate addressing issues raised in the appeal. Failure to file a timely response constitutes a waiver of the right to participate in the appeal. Upon receipt of written responses, President or the President's delegate shall serve copies of the responses to the appealing party.
- C. The appealing party shall have five (5) days from the date of service to submit a written reply addressing issues raised in the responses to the President or the President's delegate.
- D. The President or the President's delegate, based upon their review of the parties' submissions and the hearing or investigative record, will determine whether the grounds for appeal have merit, provide the rationale for this conclusion, and state whether a dismissal is affirmed or denied, or if the disciplinary sanctions and conditions imposed in the Initial Order are affirmed, vacated, or amended, and, if amended, set forth the new disciplinary sanctions and conditions.
- E. The President or President's delegate shall serve the Final Decision on the parties simultaneously.
- F. All decisions reached through this process are final and may be judicially appealed pursuant to applicable provisions of RCW 34.05, including, but not limited to, the timelines set forth in RCW 34.05.542.

## **Procedure History**

- Cabinet Review 4/30/25
- Governance Council Review 5/14/25
- WFSE/UMCC May 2025
- Cabinet Approved June 18, 2025