Overview of the sexual misconduct complaint resolution process

The Office of Equity receives a report of sexual misconduct.

An Office of Equity staff member contacts the person who may have experienced sexual misconduct to provide information about resources and options and extend an invitation to meet.

The person decides whether or not to meet with the staff member.

The person chooses to meet. The staff member goes over resources and options. The person may request interim measures and support services and may elect to proceed with an investigation.

The person chooses not to meet or requests not to proceed with an investigation. The University typically can honor that request.

The complainant chooses to proceed with an investigation. One or more investigators from the Office of Equity meet with the complainant to gather information about the concern. The complainant can suggest witnesses and provide evidence.

An Office of Equity staff member contacts the person who is alleged to have committed sexual misconduct (respondent) to notify them of the complaint, the resolution process, and the resources available to them.

One or more investigators meet with the respondent to get information. The respondent can suggest witnesses and provide evidence.

If the respondent is a student and the matter has the potential to result in separation from the University, the complainant and respondent each have the opportunity to review a preliminary investigative report and provide additional information.

The investigators complete the investigation and send the complainant and the respondent a final investigative report containing information collected, findings of fact, and a finding of whether there has been a policy violation.

When a policy violation is found, the Office of Equity will refer the matter to the Office of Student Conduct and a sanctioning panel will be convened. The complainant and respondent meet with the panel separately but are given the opportunity to listen to one another. The Office of Student Conduct informs the complainant and respondent of the sanction in writing.

When a policy violation is found and the respondent is a student, the Office of Equity will determine any sanctions or corrective actions.

When a policy violation is found and the respondent is a faculty member, the findings will be forwarded to the faculty member’s dean, department chair, and/or the vice provost for academics and associate provost for faculty. Any sanctions or corrective actions will be determined in accordance with the Faculty Handbook.

When a policy violation is found and the respondent is a staff member, the findings will be forwarded to the Office of Human Resources and the respondent’s manager. Any sanctions or corrective actions will be decided in accordance with the Staff Handbook.

Any party may appeal a finding or sanction. Information on how to appeal is included in the outcome letters provided to the parties.

This flowchart is intended to provide a general overview. A full explanation of the sexual misconduct complaint resolution process can be found at www.northwestern.edu/sexual-misconduct/university-policy/process.html.