

Grievance Procedures at Columbia

Columbia believes that both students and faculty have the right to express their views freely, within an atmosphere of tolerance and civility. Faculty may present students with ideas and interpretations that surprise, and even offend them. But they must do so in an environment that is open to divergent views. Faculty, of course, must not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or other inappropriate categories.

The University offers several avenues of assistance to students who feel that their professors have not lived up to these responsibilities. These range from informal counseling and mediation to formal grievance processes. It is a violation of University policy to retaliate against any student who brings a grievance procedure in good faith.

The Ombuds Office. When students encounter problems that they feel they cannot discuss with their professors, they may, instead, turn to the University Ombuds Office -- <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ombuds/> -- for information, clarification of University policies, and confidential advice. The Ombuds Officer may refer students to other offices for further assistance or engage in informal mediation at the request of students. The Ombuds Officer does not have the authority to conduct formal investigations.

Deans and Department Chairs. Students may also approach the chair of the department in which their course is given for advice and assistance in resolving problems with individual faculty. If they are not satisfied with the assistance they receive or consider the chair to be part of the problem, they may seek assistance from the dean of the School within which they are enrolled or the dean or vice president overseeing the School within which the course is offered. The deans and vice presidents are authorized to conduct formal investigation of student

complaints against their professors and, when they consider it appropriate, provide relief to the student or impose sanctions against the professor in a manner that is consistent with the University's disciplinary policies for faculty. The form such investigations take is left to the discretion of the deans and vice presidents

Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. When students believe that they have been the victims of discrimination or sexual harassment by faculty, they may seek assistance from the Office of the Associate Provost for Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action -- <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/vpaa/eoaa/> . As described in the University's [*Policy Statement on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment*](#), the Associate Provost is empowered to conduct investigations of their complaints, with certain exceptions, as well as provide confidential advice and engage in informal mediation. The Associate Provost may exercise those responsibilities herself or delegate them to a designee. If at any time a complaint is filed with a governmental agency or court, the University procedures must cease immediately.