**10.6 Postdoctoral Scholars Dispute/Complaint Resolution**

This policy assures Postdoctoral Scholars a prompt and impartial review and consideration of disputes and/or complaints that may arise in the work environment while recognizing the University’s interests.

Certain types of concerns/complaints are to be addressed through separate, existing policies. This policy does not apply to sexual violence or sexual harassment issues. Sexual violence should be immediately referred to ISU Police. Sexual misconduct involving harassment should be referred to the Office of Equal Opportunity. See policy references below.

**10.6.1 Informal Complaint Options**

A Postdoctoral Scholar who has a work-related dispute or complaint should first attempt informal resolution by discussing the matter with the individual involved, if the Postdoctoral Scholar is comfortable doing so. If the concerns or complaints relate to a general policy or contractual issue, rather than an individual, the Postdoctoral Scholar should bring the matter to the attention of the Dean of the Graduate College.

If these approaches are not viable options or they are not successful, the Postdoctoral Scholar is encouraged to visit the [Ombuds Office](http://www.public.iastate.edu/~ombuds/homepage.shtml). The Ombuds Office is a professional, confidential, independent, and neutral resource available to informally work through work-place challenges. Ombuds Office contact information: 37 Physics Hall, (515) 294-0268, [ombuds@iastate.edu](mailto:ombuds@iastate.edu).

**10.6.2 Formal Grievance Option**

If a resolution cannot be reached through the informal options outlined above, the Postdoctoral Scholar may file a formal grievance.

Grievances must be filed in a timely manner. All grievances must be filed within ten (10) business days after occurrence of the event that is the cause of the concern, or, if informal resolution has been attempted, within ten (10) business days after use of the informal grievance option described above has concluded.

A grievance must be filed in good faith and not be of a frivolous or repeated nature. A Postdoctoral Scholar may withdraw his or her grievance at any point during the process. Grievances that have been withdrawn may not be refiled.

**Step 1**: **File with Appropriate Person or Committee.** All grievances related to scholarly and professional issues in the workplace must start at the department, appointing unit or program level. The Postdoctoral Scholar must first contact the Department Chair / unit director, or if the department has a department grievance committee, the grievance should be referred to the committee’s chair. If the Department Chair / unit director is directly involved in the issue in question, then the grievance should be discussed with the Dean of the Graduate College, who shall review the matter or create an ad-hoc committee to review.

**Step 2**: **Prepare Written Grievance.** To file a grievance, the Postdoctoral Scholar shall provide a written statement with supporting documentation attached. This written grievance statement should be concise and clearly state the relevant background facts and the primary issues/concerns/complaint, including the related policies in question; identify the key people involved and possible witnesses; and state requested outcomes/remedies. The supporting documentation should include emails, departmental procedures, University policies, letters, and other such documentation.

**Step 3:** **Grievance Review and Decision.** The person or committee who receives the written grievance statement (reviewing party) will review the materials submitted. The reviewing party shall respond in writing to the Postdoctoral Scholar within ten (10) business days, unless, in the opinion of the reviewing party, that is insufficient time to appropriately investigate and consider the substance of the grievance. If additional time is needed, the reviewing party shall contact the Postdoctoral Scholar to provide a new date by which the decision shall be made and so inform the Graduate Dean. Once the review of the grievance is complete, the reviewing party shall meet with the Postdoctoral Scholar and provide a written decision.

**10.6.3 Appeals**

**Limited Grounds for Appeal.** Grounds for an appeal are limited to: 1) a violation of University rules, regulations or policies or a state or federal law pertaining to the Postdoctoral Scholar’s relationship with the University that adversely affected the Postdoctoral Scholar; or 2) a specific act by the University that was arbitrary or capricious and adversely affected the Postdoctoral Scholar. Non-renewal of an appointment upon expiration of the term and termination of an appointment due to loss of funding are not appealable unless such acts fall within the above-described limitations.

**Appeal to the Graduate College Dean.** Either party may appeal the decision of the reviewing party to the Dean of the Graduate College. Such appeals must be filed within ten (10) business days of meeting with the reviewing party. (If the Dean has already made a determination as provided under Step 2 above, the postdoctoral scholar may advance directly to “Appeal to the Provost” below.) The Dean shall respond in writing within thirty (30) business days of receiving the appeal, unless, in the opinion of the Graduate College Dean, that is insufficient time to appropriately investigate and consider the substance of the appeal. If additional time is needed, the Dean shall contact the parties (i.e., the Postdoctoral Scholar and the reviewing party) to provide a new date by which the decision shall be made.

The Dean of the Graduate College will make a decision and inform all parties involved, including the Postdoctoral Scholar, Department Chair, and the faculty PI/Supervisor.

**Appeal to the Provost.** Decisions of the Graduate College may be appealed by either party to the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost (Provost). Such appeals must be filed within ten (10) business days of the Graduate College Dean issuing his/her decision. The Provost shall respond in writing within thirty (30) business days of the receiving the appeal, unless, in the opinion of the Provost, that is insufficient time to appropriately investigate and consider the substance of the appeal. If additional time is needed, the Provost shall contact the parties to provide a new date by which the decision shall be made.

The Provost will make the final institutional decision and inform all parties involved, including the Postdoctoral Scholar, Graduate College Dean, Department Chair, and faculty PI/Supervisor.

**Further Appeal.** Any further appeal may be made to the Board of Regents as provided per the Regents Policy Manual.

**10.6.4 Complaints Involving Unlawful Discrimination and Harassment**

Iowa State University takes all claims of discrimination and harassment seriously. Concerns or complaints of this nature are addressed through a separate, existing policy. (See the Discrimination and Harassment Policy.)

If a Postdoctoral Scholar feels that he/she has been discriminated against or harassed based on his/her protected class status (see Discrimination and Harassment Policy), the Postdoctoral Scholar should directly contact the University’s Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO).

OEO has an internal complaint resolution process. OEO can investigate allegations of discrimination and harassment following its own formal or informal process. For more information about these options or for additional information regarding what may constitute unlawful discrimination or harassment, contact OEO.

OEO is located at 3410 Beardshear Hall; phone: (515) 294-7612, email: [eooffice@iastate.edu](mailto:eooffice@iastate.edu), or visit OEO’s webpage.

**10.6.5. Non-Retaliation**

Retaliation against persons who file complaints is strictly prohibited (see Non-Retaliation Against Persons Reporting Misconduct Policy).

**Resources and References**

Non-Retaliation Against Persons Reporting Misconduct

[Discrimination and Harassment Policy](http://www.policy.iastate.edu/policy/discrimination/)

[Violence Free University Policy](http://www.policy.iastate.edu/policy/violence)

[Research Misconduct Policy](http://www.policy.iastate.edu/policy/research/misconduct)

[Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Assault, and Sexual Harassment Involving Student Policy](http://www.policy.iastate.edu/policy/students/sexualmisconduct#intro)

[Office of Equal Opportunity](http://www.eoc.iastate.edu/)

[Ombuds Office](http://www.public.iastate.edu/~ombuds/)

[Employee & Family Resources (EAP)](http://www.hrs.iastate.edu/hrs/eap)

[Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)](http://www.celt.iastate.edu/about-celt/)