Graduate College Handbook Chapter 10 – Grievance Procedures

**10.7 Postdoctoral Scholars Grievance Procedures**

Outlined in this section are procedures designed for all Postdoctoral Scholars to assure prompt and impartial review and consideration of disputes and/or complaints that may arise in their working environment.

These procedures do not apply to workplace and sexual violence issues. Such issues should be immediately referred to ISU Police. Sexual misconduct matters should be referred to the Office of Equal Opportunity. See policy references below.

**10.7.1 Informal Grievance Options**

A Postdoctoral Scholar who has a work-related dispute or complaint may choose to first attempt informal resolution by discussing the matter with the individual involved, if they are 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 could 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);

**10.7.2 Formal Grievance Options**

If a resolution cannot be reached through the informal options outlined above, the Postdoctoral Scholar has the right to file a formal grievance. Grievances must be filed in a timely manner. All formal grievances must be filed within 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. 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 Grievances that have been withdrawn may not be refiled.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; identify the key people involved; possible witnesses; and state preferred outcomes/remedies. The supporting documentation should include emails, departmental procedures, University policies, letters, etc.

**Step 3:** **Grievance Review.** The person or committee who receives the written grievance statement (reviewing party) will promptly review the materials submitted. The reviewing party shall respond in writing to the Postdoctoral Scholar within ten (10) business days, unless 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. Once the review of the grievance is complete, the reviewing party shall meet with the Postdoctoral Scholar and provide a written decision.

**Step 4**: **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, the postdoctoral school may advance directly to Step 4. The Dean shall respond in writing within thirty (30) business days of receiving the appeal, unless that is insufficient time to appropriately investigate and consider the substance of the grievance. If additional time is needed, the dean shall contact the parties (i.e., the Postdoctoral Scholar and the reviewing party) to 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 supervisor.

**Step 5**: **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 dean issuing his/her decision, per Step 4. The Provost shall respond in writing within thirty (30) business days of the receiving the appeal, unless that is insufficient time to appropriately investigate and consider the substance of the grievance. 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 Dean, department chair, and faculty supervisor. Any further appeal may be made to the Board of Regents as provided under its Regents Procedural Guide.

**10.7.3 Concerns/Complaints Involving Unlawful Discrimination and Harassment**

Iowa State University takes all claims of discrimination and harassment seriously.  If a Postdoctoral Scholar feels that he/she has been discriminated against or harassed based on his/her race, color, age, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. veteran, 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 3350 Beardshear Hall; phone: (515) 294-7612, email: [eoofice@mail.iastate.edu](mailto:eoofice@mail.iastate.edu), or visit OEO’s webpage: <http://www.eoc.iastate.edu/>.

10.7.4. Non-Retaliation

Retaliation against persons who file complaints is strictly prohibited.

**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/)