

Standard Practice Guide Policies

Professional Standards for Faculty

201.96

Applies to: Faculty

I. Policy

The University of Michigan strives to create and maintain a community that enables all of its members to reach their full potential. To do so requires an environment of trust, openness, civility and respect. The University is firmly committed to a policy of prohibiting behaviors which adversely impact a person's ability to participate in the scholarly, research, educational, patient care, and service missions of the University. The University has a compelling interest in ensuring an environment in which productive work and learning may thrive. At the same time, the University has an interest in respecting freedom of speech and protecting academic freedom and in preserving the widest possible dialogue within its instructional and research settings. As such, the University recognizes and expects there to be open discourse and exchanges that may cause some of its members to feel uncomfortable. It is through such exchanges that the flow of ideas and countervailing thoughts and experiences are expressed which can facilitate deeper understanding and learning.

However, the University also expects its members to engage each other in a professional manner, with civility and respect. This is particularly true of its faculty, as the faculty has not only the obligations of all citizens in the community at large but also the obligations that derive from common membership in the community of scholars. The faculty has a particular responsibility in this regard, since one of its obligations is to model informed, rational discourse not only to students, but also to the university community and the general public. The faculty operates under an ethical imperative not to bring the University into disrepute and to conduct themselves consistent with these obligations and responsibilities.

While this policy affirms the commitments set forth in SPG 601.01, "Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression," the University will not tolerate conduct which hinders other members of the community in the exercise of their professional responsibilities and academic freedoms. The University is prepared to act to prevent or remedy behaviors that interfere with, or adversely affect, a community member's ability to learn or fulfill the individual's professional responsibilities. Efforts to ensure compliance with this and other University/unit policies are consistent with the SPG.

The schools and colleges may supplement this policy with unit-specific measures that enhance the policies expressed in this SPG. All such policies must be in accordance with all of the policies of the University and with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

II. Definitions

The following types of behaviors may be subject to professional sanction, including discipline up to and including dismissal in accordance with the appropriate procedures.

These behaviors include oral, written, visual, or physical actions by a member of the faculty that, according to a reasonable person standard:

- a) Have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's employment or educational performance; and/or
- b) Have the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, offensive or abusive climate for an individual's employment, academic pursuits, living environment, or participation in a University activity.

Some examples of conduct that may violate this policy include, but are not limited to: threatening behavior, actions, or comments; bullying behavior (defined as a persistent pattern of negative behavior based upon a real or perceived power or status imbalance which belittles another member of a unit); undue interference with functions or activities sponsored or authorized by the University; forcible detention, threats of physical harm to, or harassment of another member of the University community; and behavior that results in a hostile working or learning environment. This list is not exhaustive, and faculty may be subject to sanction and disciplinary action for any type of conduct which, although not specifically enumerated, meets the standard for unacceptable faculty behavior set forth above under a) or b).

III. Alleged Violations of this Policy

Alleged violations of this policy should be reported on a timely basis to an administrator (e.g., Dean, Chair or Director in an academic unit, Academic Human Resources, or the immediate supervisor of the person alleged to be in violation of the policy). This administrator must ensure that appropriate action is taken to address the situation. If warranted, a prompt inquiry shall be undertaken, and the faculty member shall be afforded an opportunity to respond to the allegations against him or her prior to a determination as to whether the policy has been violated. Such responsive information will be considered prior to this determination.

Prior to the imposition of any significant sanction or disciplinary action, to ensure that a level of peer review has occurred, the administrator shall consult with a relevant faculty executive or advisory committee. Each unit will determine the process by which peer review can be effectively and efficiently achieved and the appropriate sanction or sanctions recommended. Concerns regarding alleged unprofessional conduct may arise from a pattern of behavior and interactions, or from a single significant event. The faculty who provide the peer review should look at the totality of the circumstances and not just the precipitating event.

The University will take appropriate steps to ensure that a person who, in good faith, reports or participates in a resolution of a concern brought forward under this policy is not subject to retaliation. In addition, subjecting such a person to retaliation is itself a violation of this policy. A person who knowingly and intentionally files a false complaint under this policy may be subject to University discipline.

Violation of this policy may result in appropriate sanction or disciplinary action. If dismissal of a faculty member is proposed, the matter will be addressed through the appropriate procedure (e.g. Regents' Bylaw 5.09, SPG 201.12). A faculty member who is sanctioned or disciplined under this policy has the right to appeal such action under the applicable procedure, typically the school/college faculty grievance procedure.

File Attachments

Printable PDF of SPG Section 201.96 (<http://spg.umich.edu/sites/default/files/201x96.pdf>)

Printable PDF of SPG Section 201.96, Professional Standards for Faculty (<http://spg.umich.edu/sites/default/files/201x96.pdf>)

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Related Links:

Faculty Handbook, Section 2.B.8 Standards of Faculty Conduct (<http://www.provost.umich.edu/faculty/handbook/2/2.B.html#2.B.8>)

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