

# The University of Mississippi

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

**Summary/Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines and complaint procedures for sexual harassment complaints.

The University of Mississippi is committed to fostering an environment that prevents sexual harassment of students and employees. The University also has a commitment to professionalism, fostered by an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. These commitments are threatened when persons in positions of authority abuse the trust placed in them.

The educational mission of The University of Mississippi is promoted by professionalism in faculty-student, supervisor-subordinate, and athletics staff-student athlete relationships. This includes relationships between a faculty member and a student when the faculty member has a professional responsibility for the student. Therefore, consensual sexual relationships between the instructional staff and students, between supervisors and their subordinates, as well as those between athletics staff and student athletes, are considered unwise and are strongly discouraged. The respect and trust accorded a person by a subordinate or student, as well as the real or perceived power exercised by the instructor, supervisor, or athletics staff member may greatly diminish the student or subordinate's actual freedom of choice. Relationships between faculty and students, supervisors and subordinates, and athletics staff and student athletes, even though ostensibly consensual, hold the potential to be exploitive and involve inherent conflicts of interest. In the event that a sexual harassment complaint is made in such a situation, it may be exceedingly difficult to prove mutual consent.

For purposes of protecting employees from the impact of sexual harassment in the work environment, The University of Mississippi follows the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's guideline definition of sexual harassment as its guideline for defining sexual harassment. This guideline defines sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work environment. These definitions apply to students as well as to employees who may have a complaint of sexual harassment.

For purposes of protecting students from the impact of sexual harassment, The University of Mississippi adheres to the guidelines set forth by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The University of Mississippi prohibits acts of harassment of a sexual nature that is so objectively offensive, pervasive, or severe that it effectively denies the victim access to the

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University's resources and opportunities, unreasonably interferes with the victim's work or living environment, or deprives the victim of some other protected right.

If any employee or student believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment, he or she should immediately report this to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Regulatory Compliance, Post Office Box 1848, 217 Martindale Student Services Center, call 662-915-7735 or email [eeo@olemiss.edu](mailto:eeo@olemiss.edu). Such incidents may be reported to your immediate supervisor or, if a student, to a faculty member; however, it is mandatory that allegations of sexual harassment be reported to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Regulatory Compliance.

The Executive Director of Equal Opportunity and Regulatory Compliance will handle the matter with as much confidentiality as possible. An immediate investigation will be conducted in an attempt to determine all of the facts concerning the alleged harassment. The University will not tolerate retaliation against any employee or student who reports a claim of sexual harassment or against any employee or student who participates in the investigation of a complaint. If it is determined that sexual harassment has occurred, corrective action will be taken. Depending upon the circumstances, this corrective action may include a reprimand, demotion, discharge or other appropriate action. A person bringing a frivolous allegation of sexual harassment may be subject to disciplinary action, which could include termination.

Please refer to the University's Sexual Harassment Guide for Students and Employees for additional information. This document is available from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Regulatory Compliance.