



2020¹ Policy for Addressing Formal Complaints Under the Title IX Regulations

Introduction

What is the purpose of the Title IX Policy?

Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 prohibits any person in the United States from being discriminated against on the basis of sex in seeking access to any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. The U.S. Department of Education, which enforces Title IX, has long defined the meaning of Title IX's prohibition on sex discrimination broadly to include various forms of sexual harassment and sexual violence that interfere with a student's ability to equally access our educational programs and opportunities.

On May 19, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education issued a Final Rule under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that:

- Defines the meaning of “sexual harassment” (including forms of sex-based violence)
- Addresses how this institution **must** respond to reports of misconduct falling within that definition of sexual harassment, and
- Mandates a grievance process that this institution **must** follow to comply with the law in these specific covered cases before issuing a disciplinary sanction against a person accused of sexual harassment.

See, 85 Fed. Reg. 30026 (May 19, 2020). The full text of the Final Rule and its extensive Preamble are available here: <http://bit.ly/TitleIXReg>

Based on the Final Rule, College of the Atlantic (“the College” or “COA”) will implement the following Title IX Policy, effective August 2020.

How does the Title IX Policy impact other campus policies?

In recent years, “Title IX” cases have become a short-hand for any campus disciplinary process involving sex discrimination, including those arising from sexual harassment and sexual assault.

¹ On January 9, 2025, a U.S. District Court vacated the 2024 Title IX regulations. As a result, College of the Atlantic has reverted to this Policy and the Sexual Misconduct Policy, on an interim basis. COA will continue to monitor any changes to applicable law and policies; ensure that appropriate changes are reflected within COA's applicable policies; and keep the COA community apprised of any changes to COA policies. COA remains committed to maintaining a respectful living, working, and study environment for all community members.

But under the Final Rule, the College must narrow both the geographic scope of its authority to act under Title IX and the types of “sexual harassment” that it must subject to its Title IX investigation and adjudication process. ***Only*** incidents falling within the Final Rule’s definition of sexual harassment will be investigated and, if appropriate, brought to a live hearing through the Title IX Policy defined below.

COA remains committed to addressing any violations of its policies, even those not meeting the narrow standards defined under the Title IX Final Rule.

Specifically, our campus has:

- **A set of policies and community expectations** that define certain behavior as a violation of campus policy, and a separate **[Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)** that addresses the types of sex-based offenses constituting a violation of campus policy, and the procedures for investigating and adjudicating those sex-based offenses. *[Note: Our Sexual Misconduct Policy which runs parallel to this Title IX Policy, can only apply to how COA responds to violations falling outside Title IX jurisdiction.]*

To the extent that alleged misconduct falls outside the Title IX Policy, or misconduct falling outside the Title IX Policy is discovered in the course of investigating covered Title IX misconduct, the institution retains authority to investigate and adjudicate those allegations under the other relevant policies and procedures (see relevant sections of the COA website detailing those policies).

The elements established in the Title IX Policy under the Final Rule have no effect and are not transferable to any other policy of COA, or any civil rights violation except as narrowly defined in this Policy. This Policy does not set a precedent for other policies or processes of the College and may not be cited for or against any right or aspect of any other policy or process.

How does the Title IX Policy impact the handling of complaints?

Our existing Title IX team and reporting structure remains in place. What has changed is the way our Title IX team will handle different types of reports arising from sexual misconduct, as detailed in full throughout the Title IX Policy detailed in this document.

The Title IX Policy

General Rules of Application

Effective Date

The Title IX Policy is effective as of August 14, 2020, and will only apply to sexual harassment alleged to have occurred on or after August 14, 2020. Incidents of sexual harassment alleged to have occurred before August 14, 2020, will be investigated and adjudicated according to the process in place at the time the incident allegedly occurred.

Revocation by Operation of Law

Should any portion of the 2020 Title IX Final Rule, 85 Fed. Reg. 30026 (May 19, 2020), be stayed or held invalid by a court of law, or should the 2020 Title IX Final Rule be withdrawn or modified to not require the elements of this policy, this policy, or the invalidated elements of this policy, will be deemed revoked as of the publication date of the opinion or order and for all reports after that date, as well as any elements of the process that occur after that date if a case is not complete by that date of opinion or order publication. Should the 2020 Title IX Policy be revoked in this manner, any conduct covered under the 2020 Title IX Policy shall be investigated and adjudicated under the existing Sexual Misconduct Policy.

Non-Discrimination in Application

The requirements and protections of this policy apply equally regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or other protected classes covered by federal or state law. All requirements and protections are equitably provided to individuals regardless of such status or status as a Complainant, Respondent, or Witness. Individuals who wish to file a complaint about the institution's policy or process may contact the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights using contact information available at <https://ocrcas.ed.gov/contact-ocr>.

Definitions

Covered Sexual Harassment

For the purposes of this Title IX Policy, "covered sexual harassment" includes any conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. An employee conditioning educational benefits on participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (i.e., quid pro quo);

2. Unwelcome conduct that a reasonable person would determine is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the educational institution's education program or activity;
3. Sexual assault (as defined in the Clery Act), which includes any sexual act directed against another person, without the consent of the victim including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent;
4. Dating violence (as defined in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) amendments to the Clery Act), which includes any violence committed by a person: (A) who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; and (B) where the existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors: (i) The length of the relationship; (ii) The type of relationship; (iii) The frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.
5. Domestic violence (as defined in the VAWA amendments to the Clery Act), which includes any felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under Maine domestic or family violence laws or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of Maine.
6. Stalking (as defined in the VAWA amendments to the Clery Act), meaning engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to-- (A) fear for their safety or the safety of others; or (B) suffer substantial emotional distress.

Note that conduct that does not meet one or more of these criteria may still be prohibited under COA's Sexual Misconduct Policy or other relevant policies.

Consent

For the purposes of this Title IX Policy, "consent" is defined, the same as in COA's Sexual Misconduct Policy, as unambiguous, voluntary, and knowing agreement demonstrated by positive and active participation and cooperation between partners prior to and during a sexual encounter for any kind of sexual activity. Consent can only be given by a person with the capacity to do so and who has not been forced into doing so.

Education Program or Activity

For the purposes of this Title IX Policy, COA's "education program or activity" includes:

- Any on-campus premises; including COA’s farms, islands, and additional properties
- Any off-campus premises that COA has substantial control over. This includes buildings or property owned or controlled by a recognized student organization.
- Activity occurring within computer and internet networks, digital platforms, and computer hardware or software owned or operated by, or used in the operations of COA’s programs and activities over which the COA has substantial control.

Formal Complaint

For the purposes of this Title IX Policy, “formal complaint” means a document – including an electronic submission - filed by a complainant with a signature or other indication that the complainant is the person filing the formal complaint, or signed by the Title IX Coordinator, alleging sexual harassment against a respondent about conduct within COA’s education program or activity and requesting initiation of the procedures consistent with the Title IX Policy to investigate the allegation of sexual harassment.

Complainant

For the purposes of this Title IX Policy, Complainant means any individual who has reported being or is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute covered sexual harassment as defined under this policy.

Relevant Evidence and Questions

“Relevant” evidence and questions refer to any questions and evidence that tends to make an allegation of sexual harassment more or less likely to be true.

“Relevant” evidence and questions do not include the following types of evidence and questions, which are deemed “irrelevant” at all stages of the Title IX Process:

- Evidence and questions about the complainant’s sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior unless:
 - They are offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the conduct alleged by the complainant, or
 - They concern specific incidents of the complainant’s prior sexual behavior with respect to the respondent and are offered to prove consent. 34 C.F.R. § 106.45(6)(i).
- Evidence and questions that constitute, or seek disclosure of, information protected under a legally-recognized privilege.

- Any party's medical, psychological, and similar records unless the party has given voluntary, written consent. 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30294 (May 19, 2020).

Respondent

For the purposes of this Title IX policy, Respondent means any individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute covered sexual harassment as defined under this policy.

Privacy vs. Confidentiality

References made to *confidentiality* refer to the ability of identified confidential resources to not report crimes and violations to law enforcement or college officials without permission, except for extreme circumstances, such as a health and/or safety emergency or child abuse. References made to *privacy* mean COA offices and employees who cannot guarantee confidentiality but will maintain privacy to the greatest extent possible, and information disclosed will be relayed only as necessary to investigate and/or seek a resolution and to notify the Title IX Coordinator or designee, who is responsible for tracking patterns and spotting systemic issues. COA will limit the disclosure as much as practicable, even if the Title IX Coordinator determines that the request for confidentiality cannot be honored.

Disability Accommodations

This Policy does not alter any institutional obligations under federal disability laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Parties may request reasonable accommodations for disclosed disabilities to the Title IX Coordinator at any point before or during the Title IX Process that do not fundamentally alter the Process. The Title IX Coordinator will not affirmatively provide disability accommodations that have not been specifically requested by the Parties, even where the Parties may be receiving accommodations in other institutional programs and activities.

Making a Report Regarding Covered Sexual Harassment to the Institution

Any person may report sex discrimination, including sexual harassment (whether or not the person reporting is the person alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sex discrimination or sexual harassment), in person, by mail, by telephone, or by electronic mail, using the contact information listed for the Title IX Coordinator, or by any other means that results in the Title IX Coordinator receiving the person's verbal or written report.

Contact Information for the Title IX Coordinator:

Name: Puranjot Kaur

Title: Title IX Coordinator & HR Support

Address: 105 Eden Street, Bar Harbor, Maine 04609

Office Location: Second Floor Turrets Annex

Email Address: pkaur@coa.edu

Telephone Number: 207.288.5015, ext. 5614 (Office)

Such a report may be made at any time (including during non-business hours) by using the telephone number or electronic mail address, or by mail to the office address listed for the Title IX Coordinator.

Confidential Reporting

The following Officials will provide privacy, but not confidentiality, upon receiving a report of conduct prohibited under this policy:

- Title IX Coordinator or any member of COA's Title IX team
- Any staff or faculty member at the college
- Any Resident Advisor or Outdoor Orientation Program leader informed while performing their roles as student leader

The following Officials may provide confidentiality:

- Mental Health Counselor contracted by COA
- Family Nurse Practitioner at COA
- Confidential Resource Advisor

Amnesty for Personal Usage of Drugs or Alcohol

COA recognizes that students may be reluctant to seek assistance from COA officials or emergency services for themselves or others after experiencing prohibited conduct under this Policy because they fear being held responsible under COA's Student Code of Conduct for alcohol or drug violations relating to an incident. When a student reports prohibited conduct under this policy that involves drug or alcohol usage by the reporting student and/or other students involved, COA will not conduct a formal process under the Student Code of Conduct for drug or alcohol usage, provided that the misconduct did not endanger other's health and/or safety. However, COA does not extend this protection to the distribution of drugs or alcohol and/or the provision of alcohol and/or drugs to another individual for the purpose of inducing

incapacitation as defined in the Policy.

Non-Investigatory Measures Available Under the Title IX Grievance Policy

Supportive Measures

Complainants (as defined above), who report allegations that could constitute covered sexual harassment under this policy, have the right to receive supportive measures from COA regardless of whether they desire to file a complaint. These measures may include those listed below as appropriate. Supportive measures are non-disciplinary and non-punitive.

Possible Supportive Measures may include, but are not be limited to:

- *Counseling*
- *Medical attention*
- *Extensions of deadlines or other course-related adjustments*
- *Modifications of work or class schedules*
- *Campus escort services*
- *Restrictions on contact between the parties (no contact orders)*
- *Changes in work or housing locations*
- *Leaves of absence*

See 85 Fed. Reg. 30401.

Emergency Removal

COA retains the authority to remove a respondent from COA's program or activity on an emergency basis, where COA(1) undertakes an individualized safety and risk analysis and (2) determines that an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations of covered sexual harassment justifies a removal.

If COA determines such removal is necessary, the respondent will be provided notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal.

Administrative Leave

COA retains the authority to place a non-student employee respondent on administrative leave during the Title IX Process, consistent with COA's Faculty and Staff Manuals.

The Title IX Grievance Process

Filing a Formal Complaint

The timeframe for the Title IX Process begins with the filing of a Formal Complaint. The Grievance Process will be concluded within a reasonably prompt manner, and no longer than ninety (90) business days after the filing of the Formal Complaint, provided that the Process may be extended for a good reason, including but not limited to the absence of a party, a party's advisor, or a witness; concurrent law enforcement activity; or the need for language assistance or accommodation of disabilities. The procedure for applying for extensions is described below.

To file a Formal Complaint, a complainant must provide the Title IX Coordinator a written, signed complaint describing the facts alleged. Complainants are only able to file a Formal Complaint under this Policy if they are currently participating in, or attempting to participate in, the education programs or activities of COA, including as an employee. For complainants who do not meet this criteria, the College will utilize the existing Sexual Misconduct Policy.

If a complainant does not wish to make a Formal Complaint, the Title IX Coordinator may determine a Formal Complaint is necessary. COA will inform the complainant of this decision in writing, and the complainant need not participate in the process further but will receive all notices issued under this Policy and Process.

Nothing in the Title IX Policy prevents a complainant from seeking the assistance of state or local law enforcement alongside the appropriate on-campus process.

Multi-Party Situations

The institution may consolidate Formal Complaints alleging covered sexual harassment against more than one respondent, or by more than one complainant against one or more respondents, or by one party against the other party, where the allegations of covered sexual harassment arise out of the same facts or circumstances.

Determining Jurisdiction

The Title IX Coordinator will determine if the instant Title IX Process should apply to a Formal Complaint. The Process will apply when all of the following elements are met, in the reasonable determination of the Title IX Coordinator:

1. The conduct is alleged to have occurred on or after August 14, 2020;
2. The conduct is alleged to have occurred in the United States;

3. The conduct is alleged to have occurred in COA's education program or activity;
and
4. The alleged conduct, if true, would constitute covered sexual harassment as defined in this policy.

If all of the elements are met, COA will investigate the allegations according to the Policy.

Allegations Potentially Falling Under Two Policies

If the alleged conduct, if true, includes conduct that would constitute covered sexual harassment and conduct that would not constitute covered sexual harassment, the Title IX Process will be applied to investigation and adjudication of only the allegations that constitute covered sexual harassment.

Mandatory Dismissal

If any one of these elements are not met, the Title IX Coordinator will notify the parties that the Formal Complaint is being dismissed for the purposes of the Title IX Policy. Each party may appeal this dismissal using the procedure outlined in "Appeals," below.

Discretionary Dismissal

The Title IX Coordinator may dismiss a Formal Complaint brought under the Title IX Grievance Policy, or any specific allegations raised within that Formal Complaint, at any time during the investigation or hearing, if:

- A complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing that they would like to withdraw the Formal Complaint or any allegations raised in the Formal Complaint;
- The respondent is no longer enrolled or employed by the College; or,
- If specific circumstances prevent COA from gathering evidence sufficient to reach a determination regarding the Formal Complaint or allegations within the Formal Complaint.

Any party may appeal a dismissal determination using the process set forth in "Appeals," below.

Notice of Dismissal

Upon reaching a decision that the Formal Complaint will be dismissed, the institution will promptly send written notice of the dismissal of the Formal Complaint or any specific allegation within the Formal Complaint, and the reason for the dismissal, simultaneously to the parties

through their institutional email accounts. It is the responsibility of parties to maintain and regularly check their email accounts.

Notice of Removal

Upon dismissal for the purposes of Title IX, COA retains discretion to utilize other COA policies including but not limited to COA's Sexual Misconduct Policy to determine if a violation of COA policy has occurred. If so, COA will promptly send written notice of the dismissal of the Formal Complaint under the Title IX Process and removal of the allegations to the conduct process.

Notice of Allegations

The Title IX Coordinator will draft and provide the Notice of Allegations to any party to the allegations of sexual harassment. Such notice will occur as soon as practicable, after the institution receives a Formal Complaint of the allegations, if there are no extenuating circumstances.

The parties will be notified by their institutional email accounts if they are a student or employee, and by other reasonable means if they are neither.

The institution will provide sufficient time for the parties to review the Notice of Allegations and prepare a response before any initial interview.

The Title IX Coordinator may determine that the Formal Complaint must be dismissed on the mandatory grounds identified above and will issue a Notice of Dismissal. If such a determination is made, any party to the allegations of sexual harassment identified in the Formal Complaint will receive the Notice of Dismissal in conjunction with, or in separate correspondence after, the Notice of Allegations.

Contents of Notice

The Notice of Allegations will include the following:

- Notice of the institution's Title IX Process and a hyperlink to a copy of the process.
- Notice of the allegations potentially constituting covered sexual harassment, and sufficient details known at the time the Notice is issued, such as the identities of the parties involved in the incident, if known, including the complainant; the conduct allegedly constituting covered sexual harassment; and the date and location of the alleged incident, if known.

- A statement that the respondent is presumed not responsible for the alleged conduct and that a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of the process.
- A statement that the parties may have an advisor of their choice, who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney, as required under 34 C.F.R. § 106.45(b)(5)(iv);
- A statement that before the conclusion of the investigation, the parties may inspect and review evidence obtained as part of the investigation that is directly related to the allegations raised in the Formal Complaint, including the evidence upon which the institution does not intend to rely in reaching a determination regarding responsibility, and evidence that both tends to prove or disprove the allegations, whether obtained from a party or other source, as required under 34 C.F.R. § 106.45(b)(5)(vi);

Ongoing Notice

If, in the course of an investigation, the institution decides to investigate allegations about the complainant or respondent that are not included in the Notice of Allegations and are otherwise covered "sexual harassment" falling within the Title IX Policy, the institution will notify the parties whose identities are known of the additional allegations by their institutional email accounts or other reasonable means.

The parties will be provided sufficient time to review the additional allegations to prepare a response before any initial interview regarding those additional charges.

Advisor of Choice and Participation of Advisor of Choice

COA will provide the parties equal access to advisors and support persons; any restrictions on advisor participation will be applied equally.

COA has a long-standing practice of requiring students to participate in the process directly and not through an advocate or representative. Students participating as Complainant or Respondent in this process may be accompanied by an Advisor of Choice to any meeting or hearing to which they are required or are eligible to attend. The Advisor of Choice is not an advocate. Except where explicitly stated by this Policy, as consistent with the Final Rule, Advisors of Choice shall not participate directly in the process as per standard policy and practice of COA.

COA will not intentionally schedule meetings or hearings on dates where the Advisors of Choice for all parties are not available, provided that the Advisors act reasonably in providing available dates and work collegially to find dates and times that meet all schedules.

COA's obligations to investigate and adjudicate in a prompt timeframe under Title IX and other college policies apply to matters governed under this Policy, and COA cannot agree to extensive

delays solely to accommodate the schedule of an Advisor of Choice. The determination of what is reasonable shall be made by the Title IX Coordinator or designee. COA will not be obligated to delay a meeting or hearing under this process more than five (5) days due to the unavailability of an Advisor of Choice, and may offer the party the opportunity to obtain a different Advisor of Choice or utilize one provided by COA.

Notice of Meetings and Interviews

COA will provide, to a party whose participation is invited or expected, written notice of the date, time, location, participants, and purpose of all hearings, investigative interviews, or other meetings with a party, with sufficient time for the party to prepare to participate.

Delays

Each party may request a one-time delay in the process of up to five (5) days for good cause (granted or denied in the sole judgment of the Title IX Coordinator or designee) provided that the requestor provides reasonable notice and the delay does not overly inconvenience other parties.

For example, a request to take a five day pause made an hour before a hearing for which multiple parties and their advisors have traveled to and prepared for shall generally not be granted, while a request for a five day pause in the middle of investigation interviews to allow a party to obtain certain documentary evidence shall generally be granted.

The Title IX Coordinator or designee shall have sole judgment to grant further pauses in the Process.

Informal Resolution Process

Informal resolution is an alternative resolution process that does not include a full investigation and is typically a spectrum of facilitated, adaptable processes between the complainant and the respondent, that seeks to identify and meet the needs of the parties, acknowledge harm, and repair the harm experienced by the complainant and/or the College community. At any time after receiving a formal complaint of alleged prohibited conduct and prior to the completion of the formal grievance process, either party may request an informal resolution process. If either party seeks informal resolution, the party may submit a written request to the Title IX Coordinator. Please note that the College and both parties must agree, in writing, to the informal resolution process, which can include, but is not limited to mediation or restorative justice. At any time prior to agreeing to a resolution, any party has the right to withdraw from the informal resolution process and resume the grievance process with respect to the formal complaint.

The College does not offer or facilitate an informal resolution process to resolve allegations that

an employee sexually harassed a student.

Investigation

General Rules of Investigations

An investigator or team of investigators designated by the Title IX Coordinator will perform an investigation under a reasonably prompt timeframe of the conduct alleged to constitute covered sexual harassment after issuing the Notice of Allegations.

COA, and not the parties, has the burden of proof and the burden of gathering evidence, i.e. the responsibility of showing a violation of this Policy has occurred. This burden does not rest with either party, and either party may decide not to share their account of what occurred or may decide not to participate in an investigation or hearing. This does not shift the burden of proof away from COA and does not indicate responsibility.

COA cannot access, consider, or disclose medical records without a waiver from the party (or parent, if applicable) to whom the records belong or of whom the records include information. COA will provide an equal opportunity for the parties to present witnesses, including fact and expert witnesses, and other inculpatory and exculpatory evidence, (i.e. evidence that tends to prove and disprove the allegations) as described below.

Inspection and Review of Evidence

Prior to the completion of the investigation, the parties will have an equal opportunity to inspect and review the evidence obtained through the investigation. The purpose of the inspection and review process is to allow each party the equal opportunity to meaningfully respond to the evidence prior to conclusion of the investigation.

Evidence that will be available for inspection and review by the parties will be any evidence that is directly related to the allegations raised in the Formal Complaint. It will include any:

1. Evidence that is relevant, even if that evidence does not end up being relied upon by the institution in making a determination regarding responsibility;
2. Inculpatory or exculpatory evidence (i.e. evidence that tends to prove or disprove the allegations) that is directly related to the allegations, whether obtained from a party or other source.

All parties must submit any evidence they would like the investigator to consider prior to when the parties' time to inspect and review evidence begins. See, 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30307 (May 19, 2020).

The institution will send the evidence made available for each party and each party's advisor, if any, to inspect and review through an electronic format or a hard copy. The Institution is not under an obligation to use any specific process or technology to provide the evidence and shall have the sole discretion in terms of determining format and any restrictions or limitations on access.

The parties will have ten (10) calendar days to inspect and review the evidence and submit a written response by email to the investigator. The investigator will consider the parties' written responses before completing the Investigative Report.

Any evidence subject to inspection and review will be available at any hearing, including for purposes of cross-examination.

The parties and their advisors must sign an agreement not to disseminate any of the evidence subject to inspection and review or use such evidence for any purpose unrelated to the Title IX process. See, 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30435 (May 19, 2020).

The parties and their advisors agree not to photograph or otherwise copy the evidence. See, 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30435 (May 19, 2020).

Inclusion of Evidence Not Directly Related to the Allegations:

Evidence obtained in the investigation that is determined in the reasoned judgment of the investigator not to be directly related to the allegations in the Formal Complaint will not be disclosed, or may be appropriately redacted before the parties' inspection to avoid disclosure of personally identifiable information of a student. Any evidence obtained in the investigation that is kept from disclosure or appropriately redacted will be documented in a "privilege log" that may be reviewed by the parties and their advisors, if any. See, 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30438 (May 19, 2020).

Investigative Report

The investigator or team of investigators designated by the Title IX Coordinator will create an Investigative Report that fairly summarizes relevant evidence and will provide that Report to the parties at least ten (10) calendar days prior the hearing in an electronic format or a hard copy for each party's review and written response.

The Investigative Report is not intended to catalog all evidence obtained by the investigator, but only to provide a fair summary of that evidence.

Only relevant evidence (including both inculpatory and exculpatory – i.e. tending to prove and disprove the allegations - relevant evidence) will be referenced in the Investigative Report.

The investigator may redact irrelevant information from the Investigative Report when that information is contained in documents or evidence that is/are otherwise relevant. See, 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30304 (May 19, 2020).

Hearing

General Rules of Hearings

COA will not issue a disciplinary sanction arising from an allegation of covered sexual harassment without holding a live hearing unless otherwise resolved through an informal resolution process.

The live hearing may be conducted with all parties physically present in the same geographic location, or, at COA's discretion, any or all parties, witnesses, and other participants may appear at the live hearing virtually through Zoom or Google Meet. This technology will enable participants simultaneously to see and hear each other. At its discretion, COA may delay or adjourn a hearing based on technological errors not within a party's control.

All proceedings will be recorded through audiovisual recording. That recording or transcript will be made available to the parties for inspection and review.

Prior to obtaining access to any evidence, the parties and their advisors must sign an agreement not to disseminate any of the testimony heard or evidence obtained in the hearing or use such testimony or evidence for any purpose unrelated to the Title IX Process. Once signed, this Agreement may not be withdrawn See, 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30435 (May 19, 2020).

Continuances or Granting Extensions

COA may determine that multiple sessions or a continuance (i.e. a pause on the continuation of the hearing until a later date or time) is needed to complete a hearing. If so, COA will notify all participants and endeavor to accommodate all participants' schedules and complete the hearing as promptly as practicable.

Newly-Discovered Evidence:

As a general rule, no new evidence or witnesses may be submitted during the live hearing.

If a party identifies new evidence or witnesses that were not reasonably available prior to the live hearing and could affect the outcome of the matter, the party may request that such evidence or witnesses be considered at the live hearing.

The Hearing Board Chair will consider this request and make a determination regarding (1) whether such evidence or witness testimony was actually unavailable by reasonable effort prior to the hearing, and (2) whether such evidence or witness testimony could affect the outcome of the matter. The party offering the newly-discovered evidence or witness has the burden of establishing these questions by the preponderance of the evidence.

If the Hearing Board Chair answers in the affirmative to both questions, then the parties will be granted a reasonable pause in the hearing to review the evidence or prepare for questioning of the witness.

Participants in the Live Hearing

Live hearings are not public, and the only individuals permitted to participate in the hearing are as follows:

Complainant and Respondent (The Parties)

- The parties cannot waive the right to a live hearing.
- The institution may still proceed with the live hearing in the absence of a party, and may reach a determination of responsibility in their absence.
- COA will not threaten, coerce, intimidate or discriminate against the party in an attempt to secure the party's participation. See 34 C.F.R. § 106.71; see also 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30216 (May 19, 2020).
- The hearing board cannot draw an inference about the determination regarding responsibility based solely on a party's absence from the live hearing or refusal to answer cross examination or other questions. See 34 C.F.R. §106.45(b)(6)(i).

Hearing Board

- The hearing board will consist of a panel of 3 decision-makers.

- No member of the hearing board will also have served as the Title IX Coordinator, Title IX investigator, or advisor to any party in the case, nor may any member of the hearing board serve on the appeals body in the case.
- No member of the hearing board will have a conflict of interest or bias in favor of or against complainants or respondents generally, or in favor or against the parties to the particular case.
- The hearing board will be trained on topics including how to serve impartially, issues of relevance, including how to apply the rape shield protections provided for complainants, and any technology to be used at the hearing.
- The parties will have an opportunity to raise any objections regarding members of the hearing board's actual or perceived conflicts of interest or bias at the commencement of the live hearing.

Advisor of Choice

- The parties have the right to select an advisor of their choice, who may be, but does not have to be, an attorney.
- The advisor of choice may accompany the parties to any meeting or hearing they are permitted to attend, but may not speak for the party, except for the purpose of cross-examination.
- The parties are not permitted to conduct cross-examination; it must be conducted by the advisor. As a result, if a party does not select an advisor, the institution will select an advisor to serve in this role for the limited purpose of conducting the cross-examination at no fee or charge to the party.
- The advisor is not prohibited from having a conflict of interest or bias in favor of or against complainants or respondents generally, or in favor or against the parties to the particular case.
- The advisor is not prohibited from being a witness in the matter.
- If a party does not attend the live hearing, the party's advisor may appear and conduct cross-examination on their behalf. 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30340 (May 19, 2020).
- If neither a party nor their advisor appear at the hearing, COA will provide an advisor to appear on behalf of the non-appearing party. See, 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30339-40 (May 19, 2020).
- Advisors shall be subject to the institution's Rules of Decorum, and may be removed upon violation of those Rules.

Witnesses

- Witnesses cannot be compelled to participate in the live hearing, and have the right not to participate in the hearing free from retaliation. See, 85 Fed. Reg. 30026, 30360 (May 19, 2020).

Hearing Procedures

For all live hearings conducted under this Title IX Process, the procedure will be as follows:

- Hearing Board Chair will open and establish rules and expectations for the hearing;
- The Parties will each be given the opportunity to provide opening statements;
- Hearing Board Chair will ask questions of the Parties and Witnesses;
- Parties will be given the opportunity for live cross-examination after Hearing Board Chair conducts its initial round of questioning; During the Parties' cross-examination, the Hearing Board Chair will have the authority to pause cross-examination at any time for the purposes of asking the Hearing Board's follow up questions; and any time necessary in order to enforce the established rules of decorum.
- Should a Party or the Party's Advisor choose not to cross-examine a Party or Witness, the Party shall affirmatively waive cross-examination through a written or oral statement to the Hearing Board. A Party's waiver of cross-examination does not eliminate the ability of the Hearing Board to use statements made by the Party.

Live Cross-Examination Procedure

Each party's advisor will conduct live cross-examination of the other party or parties and witnesses. During this live-cross examination the advisor will ask the other party or parties and witnesses relevant questions and follow-up questions, including those challenging credibility directly, orally, and in real time.

Before any cross-examination question is answered, the Hearing Board Chair will determine if the question is relevant. Cross-examination questions that are duplicative of those already asked, including by the Hearing Board Chair may be deemed irrelevant if they have been asked and answered.

Review of Recording

The recording of the hearing will be available for review by the parties within 3 business days, unless there are any extenuating circumstances. The recording of the hearing will not be provided to parties or advisors of choice.

Determination Regarding Responsibility

Standard of Proof

COA uses the preponderance of the evidence standard for investigations and determinations regarding responsibility of formal complaints covered under this Policy. This means that the investigation and hearing determines whether it is more likely than not that a violation of the Policy occurred.

General Considerations for Evaluating Testimony and Evidence

While the opportunity for cross-examination is required in all Title IX hearings, determinations regarding responsibility may be based in part, or entirely, on documentary, audiovisual, and digital evidence, as warranted in the reasoned judgment of the Hearing Board.

The Hearing Board shall not draw inferences regarding a party or witness' credibility based on the party or witness' status as a complainant, respondent, or witness, nor shall it base its judgments in stereotypes about how a party or witness would or should act under the circumstances.

Generally, credibility judgments should rest on the demeanor of the party or witness, the plausibility of their testimony, the consistency of their testimony, and its reliability in light of corroborating or conflicting testimony or evidence.

Still, credibility judgments should not rest on whether a party or witness' testimony is non-linear or incomplete, or if the party or witness is displaying stress or anxiety.

The Hearing Board will afford the highest weight relative to other testimony to first-hand testimony by parties and witnesses regarding their own memory of specific facts that occurred. Both inculpatory and exculpatory (i.e. tending to prove and disprove the allegations) evidence will be weighed in equal fashion.

Except where specifically barred by the Title IX Final Rule, a witness' testimony regarding third-party knowledge of the facts at issue will be allowed, but will generally be accorded lower weight than testimony regarding direct knowledge of specific facts that occurred.

The Final Rule requires that COA allow parties to call "expert witnesses" for direct and cross examination. *COA does not provide for expert witnesses in other proceedings.* While the expert witness will be allowed to testify and be crossed as required by the Final Rule, the Hearing Board will be instructed to afford lower weight to non-factual testimony of the expert relative to

fact witnesses, and any expert testimony that is not directed to the specific facts that occurred in the case will be afforded lower weight relative to fact witnesses, regardless of whether the expert witness testimony is the subject of cross examination and regardless of whether all parties present experts as witnesses.

The Final Rule requires that COA allow parties to call character witnesses to testify. COA *does not provide for character witnesses in other proceedings*. While the character witnesses will be allowed to testify and be crossed as required by the Final Rule, the Hearing Board will be instructed to afford very low weight to any non-factual character testimony of any witness.

The Final Rule requires that COA admit and allow testimony regarding polygraph tests (“lie detector tests”) and other procedures that are outside of standard use in academic and non-academic conduct processes. While the processes and testimony about them will be allowed to testify and be crossed as required by the Final Rule, the Hearing Board will be instructed to afford lower weight to such processes relative to the testimony of fact witnesses.

Where a party or witness’ conduct or statements demonstrate that the party or witness is engaging in retaliatory conduct, including but not limited to witness tampering and intimidation, the Hearing Board Chair may draw an adverse inference as to that party or witness’ credibility.

Components of the Determination Regarding Responsibility

The written Determination Regarding Responsibility will be issued simultaneously to all parties through their institution email account, or other reasonable means as necessary. The Determination will include:

1. Identification of the allegations potentially constituting covered sexual harassment;
2. A description of the procedural steps taken from the receipt of the formal complaint through the determination, including any notifications to the parties, interviews with parties and witnesses, site visits, methods used to gather other evidence, and hearings held;
3. Findings of fact supporting the determination;
4. Conclusions regarding which COA policy, if any, the respondent has or has not violated.
5. For each allegation:
 - a. A statement of, and rationale for, a determination regarding responsibility;
 - b. A statement of, and rationale for, any disciplinary sanctions the recipient imposes on the respondent; and
 - c. A statement of, and rationale for, whether remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to the recipient’s education program or activity will be provided by the recipient to the complainant; and

6. The recipient's procedures and the permitted reasons for the complainant and respondent to appeal (described below in "Appeal").

Timeline of Determination Regarding Responsibility

If there are no extenuating circumstances, the determination regarding responsibility will be issued by COA within ten (10) business days of the completion of the hearing.

Finality

The determination regarding responsibility becomes final either on the date that the institution provides the parties with the written determination of the result of the appeal, if an appeal is filed consistent with the procedures and timeline outlined in "Appeals" below, or if an appeal is not filed, the date on which the opportunity to appeal expires.

Appeals

Each party may appeal (1) the dismissal of a formal complaint or any included allegations and/or (2) a determination regarding responsibility. To appeal, a party must submit their written appeal within five (5) calendar days of being notified of the decision, indicating the grounds for the appeal.

The limited grounds for appeal available are as follows:

- Procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter (i.e. a failure to follow the institution's own procedures);
- New evidence that was not reasonably available at the time the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal was made, that could affect the outcome of the matter;
- The Title IX Coordinator, investigator(s), or decision-maker(s) had a conflict of interest or bias for or against an individual party, or for or against complainants or respondents in general, that affected the outcome of the matter.

The submission of appeal stays any sanctions for the pendency of an appeal. Supportive measures and remote learning opportunities remain available during the pendency of the appeal.

If a party appeals, the institution will as soon as practicable notify the other party in writing of the appeal, however the time for appeal shall be offered equitably to all parties and shall not be extended for any party solely because the other party filed an appeal.

Appeals may be no longer than 5 pages (including attachments). Appeals should be submitted in electronic form using ARIAL or TIMES NEW ROMAN, 12 point font, and single-spaced. Appeals should use footnotes, not endnotes. Appeals that do not meet these standards may be returned to the party for correction, but the time for appeal will not be extended unless there is evidence that technical malfunction caused the appeal document not to meet these standards.

Appeals will be decided by the Appeals Office, who will be free of conflict of interest and bias, and will not serve as investigator, Title IX Coordinator, or hearing board member in the same matter.

Outcome of appeal will be provided in writing simultaneously to both parties, and include rationale for the decision.

Retaliation

COA will keep the identity of any individual who has made a report or complaint of sex discrimination confidential, including the identity of any individual who has made a report or filed a Formal Complaint of sexual harassment under this Title IX Policy, any Complainant, any individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of sex discrimination, any Respondent, and any witness, except as permitted by the FERPA statute, 20 U.S.C. 1232g, or FERPA regulations, 34 CFR part 99, or as required by law, or to carry out the purposes of 34 CFR part 106, including the conduct of any investigation, hearing, or judicial proceeding under this Title IX Policy.

No person may intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any individual for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 or its implementing regulations.

No person may intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any individual because the individual has made a report or complaint, testified, assisted, or participated or refused to participate in any manner in an investigation, proceeding or hearing under this Title IX Policy.

Any intimidation, threats, coercion, or discrimination, for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by Title IX or its implementing regulations constitutes retaliation. This includes any charges filed against an individual for other policy violations that do not involve sex discrimination or sexual harassment, but that arise from the same facts or circumstances as a report or complaint of sex discrimination or a report or Formal Complaint of sexual harassment.

Complaints alleging retaliation may be filed according to the Sexual Misconduct Policy.