

Biological Sciences Division Postdoctoral Researcher Complaint Resolution Process

Applicability

This process is available to all postdoctoral researchers appointed in the University of Chicago's Biological Sciences Division.

Summary

This process statement sets forth informal and formal guidelines for resolving both academic and non-academic complaints of BSD-appointed postdoctoral researchers. This Complaint Resolution Process is designed to supplement, not to replace, other resources in the BSD and at the University of Chicago for postdoctoral researchers.

Informal Resources

Every effort should be made to resolve complaints informally. There are resources available to assist postdoctoral researchers in the informal resolution of complaints. For example, postdoctoral researchers are encouraged to participate in the activities of the [Biological Sciences Division Postdoctoral Association](#) and to discuss complaints on an informal basis with the [BSD's Dean for Postdoctoral Affairs](#). Postdoctoral researchers may also contact the University of Chicago's Employee Assistance Program, [Perspectives Ltd.](#), for confidential resources.

The steps to be followed to resolve an informal complaint are described below. Depending on the circumstances, these steps may be taken out of order.

1. Discussion between the parties directly involved in the complaint where appropriate and with the postdoctoral researcher's sponsor(s) (PI).
2. Accessing informal resources listed above, as well as administrative staff who report to Section Chiefs (in the clinical departments) or Department Chairs.
3. Consultation with the Section Chief (in the clinical departments) or Department Chair, as appropriate, to discuss the complaint.
4. Consultation with the [BSD's Dean for Postdoctoral Affairs](#).

Definition of Formal Complaint

Any postdoctoral researcher appointed in the Biological Sciences Division who believes that s/he has been subjected to an improper decision or action or treated in a manner inconsistent with University policy, may file a formal complaint to obtain an independent review of the decision or action or treatment. A complaint, in the context of these guidelines, is always a written document addressed to the Dean concerning such a decision or action or treatment. Complaints should be submitted to oa@bsd.uchicago.edu, which is a secure mailbox.

Postdoctoral researchers at the University of Chicago are subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the [University of Chicago Postdoctoral Researcher Policy Manual](#). For issues of academic misconduct, postdoctoral researchers must follow the University of Chicago [Policy on Academic Fraud](#). Postdoctoral researchers who believe that they or others have been subjected to unlawful discrimination or harassment must follow the University of Chicago [Policy on Unlawful Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct](#). Postdoctoral researchers are also subject to the University of Chicago [Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment Policy](#).

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Filing a Formal Complaint

If informal means described above do not yield a satisfactory resolution, the postdoctoral researcher may then file a formal complaint in writing to the Dean, c/o the [BSD Office of Academic Affairs](#). The complaint should be submitted in writing within 60 days of the decision or action or treatment that is the subject of the grievance. A delay in the filing of the complaint may constitute grounds for rejection of the complaint, although individual circumstances may be taken into account. The complaint document must include a description of the decision or action or treatment in dispute, the reasons why the postdoctoral researcher believes the decision or action or treatment was improper, and all supporting materials. The complaint document should also include a description of the remedy sought and the informal efforts that have been pursued.

Formal Complaint Investigation

The steps to be following in investigating a complaint are described below.

1. The Dean may select one or more Complaint Investigators or charge an ad hoc Complaint Committee to consider the complaint and report to the Dean as the Dean directs. The Complaint Investigator(s) or ad hoc Complaint Committee may request a response to the complaint from any individuals believed to have relevant information, including faculty, other academic appointees, postdoctoral researchers, students, and staff.
2. The Complaint Investigator(s) or ad hoc Complaint Committee shall initially review the complaint and determine whether the complaint is complete, timely, within the jurisdiction of this policy, and alleges specific facts that, if true, support the allegations made in the complaint. If the Complaint Investigator(s) or the ad hoc Complaint Committee determines that the complaint is untimely or outside the jurisdiction of the Complaint Resolution Process, the complaint will be dismissed. If the Complaint Investigator(s) or the ad hoc Complaint Committee determines that the complaint is incomplete or factually insufficient, the postdoctoral researcher will be informed in writing with regard to the deficiency of the complaint and the timeframe to correct the deficiency. If the postdoctoral researcher fails to make the complaint complete or provide sufficient facts, the complaint will be dismissed. If all, or any part, of a complaint is dismissed at this stage, the Complaint Investigator(s) or ad hoc Committee will provide the postdoctoral researcher with a written explanation of the basis for the dismissal.
3. The Dean will inform the parties to the complaint in writing of his or her decision and the reasons for the decision, ordinarily within 30 days of the filing of the perfected complaint.

Discontinuing a Formal Complaint

At every stage of the steps set forth above, the postdoctoral researcher may discontinue the Complaint Resolution Process if s/he feels that the conflict has been resolved successfully. If a formal written complaint has been filed, the postdoctoral researcher must immediately inform the Dean in writing, c/o the [BSD Office of Academic Affairs](#), that s/he has decided to discontinue the complaint. No reason(s) need be given to discontinue a formal written complaint.

Additional Matters

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1. No adverse action may be taken or retaliation may be made against any postdoctoral researcher for his or her good faith use of the Complaint Resolution Process.
2. The time frames set forth in Complaint Resolution Process are guidelines only. They may be extended by the Dean or his/her designate for legitimate reasons.
3. Questions concerning the filing and appeal of complaints under this process should be directed to the [BSD Office of Academic Affairs](#).
4. Only written complaints will be considered.
5. In view of the substantial processes associated with the determination of a suspension or discharge, any postdoctoral researcher who has been suspended or discharged may not invoke this procedure.
6. Any complaint that also is the subject of an external process or venue is ineligible for review through the Complaint Resolution Process. "External process or venue" includes, for example, situations where a postdoctoral researcher has retained an attorney, filed a lawsuit or complaint with an administrative agency or threatened to do so.
7. The Dean's decision under the Complaint Resolution Process is final and may not be appealed. The Provost will not review a decision under the Complaint Resolution Process unless s/he agrees to do so upon the request of the Dean, who has the sole authority to make such a request. If such a request is made by the Dean and the Provost agrees to review the decision, the Provost will restrict his or her review to process matters only.