STANDARDS OF CONDUCT POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES

SLT 3.3

Date of Last Update:
July 10, 2026

Approved By:

- Senior Leadership Team

Responsible Office:
Human Resources

POLICY STATEMENT

A. Policy Statement

The Standards of Conduct for Employees Policy exists to support Grand Valley State University ("GVSU") community members in raising, responding to, and resolving applicable employee-related grievances.

GVSU expects all faculty and staff to maintain the highest standard of ethical and respectful conduct. As members of an academic community, we have a responsibility to abide by ethical principles regarding academic freedom, intellectual integrity, and the fair and respectful treatment of others. This policy reflects these principles. A violation of this policy occurs when it is determined that an individual has negatively impacted the workplace environment by failing to uphold these standards of conduct or abide by these guiding principles.

Upon finding a policy violation, the University may address and remediate this behavior through appropriate disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment. Violations of this policy may be addressed in parallel with violations of other policies or laws as applicable. No part of this policy is intended to supersede federal, state, or local laws and regulations.

B. Standards of Conduct and Guiding Principles:

GVSU expects its employees to act in accordance with University Policies, applicable law, the University's mission, vision, and values, as well as GVSU employee core competencies. GVSU is guided by these principles as well as by principles of **Honesty, Integrity, Respect, and Professionalism**.

1. *Honesty*:

Honesty is the foundation of trust within the academic community. Faculty and staff are expected to behave honestly, including but not limited to:

- Communicating truthfully and transparently with students, colleagues, and community members.
- Accurately representing credentials, qualifications, data, and academic work.
- Avoiding plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts, and any form of academic or administrative fraud.
- Acknowledging mistakes and correcting them when discovered.

2. *Integrity:*

Integrity means aligning one's actions with ethical and professional standards, even in the face of pressure or personal interest. Faculty and staff are expected to behave with integrity, including but not limited to:

- Adhering to institutional policies, contractual obligations, and relevant legal requirements.
- Avoiding conflicts of interest and disclosing them when they arise.
- Upholding confidentiality and privacy, especially in handling student and personnel information.
- Refraining from using one’s position for personal gain or unfair advantage.
- Being accountable by following through on words with actions.

3. *Respect*:

Respect is essential to maintaining a healthy and inclusive academic and workplace environment. Faculty and staff are expected to behave respectfully, including but not limited to:

- Treating all individuals, including students, colleagues, and community members with dignity, equity, and courtesy.
- Embracing diversity of thought, identity, background, and experience.
- Fostering inclusive spaces where all voices are heard and valued.
- Avoiding behavior that is obscene, violent, discriminatory, harassing, bullying, or otherwise demeaning.

4. *Professionalism*:

Professionalism reflects a commitment to high standards in both conduct and performance. Faculty and staff are expected to behave professionally, including but not limited to:

- Maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in their roles as educators, supervisors, and colleagues.
- Exhibiting accountability and reliability in their decision-making.
- Collaborating in good faith, resolving conflicts constructively, and representing the University positively.

Conduct inconsistent with these standards and guiding principles that is a) ongoing or b) sufficiently severe as to have an objectively negative impact on the workplace environment, constitutes a violation of this policy.

C. General Provisions

1. This policy requires a good faith commitment to confidentiality, accuracy, and integrity in information shared within our community, particularly when it forms the basis of inquiries or actions. GVSU will make reasonable efforts to keep information confidential throughout any investigation under this policy. It will be considered a violation of this policy for employees to intentionally breach confidentiality in the absence of a legitimate business reason to do so.
2. It will be considered a violation of this policy for employees to intentionally misrepresent information provided during the intake or investigation processes. Employees experiencing a possible conduct issue should consult this and other relevant University policies and procedures. If an employee receives a complaint from a student that the employee believes is reportable under this policy, the employee should file a report and proceed as the Reporting Party under the Procedures below.
3. Processes under this or other relevant University policies or procedures may be necessary when there is an alleged policy violation. For concerns that do not rise to the level of a potential policy violation, Human Resources offers alternative ways to resolve concerns. Employees are also encouraged to address interpersonal matters directly with colleagues and supervisors in a professional manner.
4. The University is committed to supporting all participants, including keeping them informed of progress and providing resources as appropriate. GVSU prohibits retaliation or the threat of retaliation in any form. If an employee believes they have suffered retaliation or been threatened with retaliation in connection with filing a Complaint under this policy, please notify Labor and Employee Relations. See also SLT 3.3.1 (Non-Retaliation Policy for Faculty and Staff).

D. Employee Conduct Procedures

The conduct process will follow the steps below as outlined in more detail in the linked **procedures**.

1. Filing a Complaint
2. Intake Meeting with Reporting Party
3. Preliminary Review of Case
4. Notice of Investigation
5. Interview with Responding Party
6. Fact Finding
7. Report by Investigator
8. Response Period
9. Investigator Review Period
10. Appointing Officer Notice of Disciplinary Action
11. Appeal (if applicable)

PROCEDURES

Procedures for Standards of Conduct for Employees Policy SLT 3.3

1. **Filing a Complaint.** Potential violations of the Standards of Conduct for Employees Policy can be reported online at https://cm.maxient.com/reporting.php?GrandValley or by contacting Labor and Employee Relations via email at complaints@gvsu.edu. Complaints should include:

    a. a brief description of the matter,
    b. a timeline that includes any steps taken prior to filing the report,
    c. identifying information for the involved parties,
    d. any supporting documentation, and
    e. if applicable, a desired resolution.

In rare cases of significant disruption or danger to the Reporting Party, involved individuals, or the larger university community, at the determination of the Vice President of People, Equity and Culture, or designee, processes under this policy may:

i) be initiated without the Reporting Party's request (if this occurs, the Reporting Party will be notified that the matter is being pursued before the Responding Party is notified),
ii) be initiated without revealing the identity of one or more of the witnesses or the Reporting Parties, and/or
iii) include placing a Responding Party on administrative leave while the investigative process is underway.

2. **Intake Meeting with Reporting Party.** Within five (5) business days of receiving a

Complaint, a Human Resources Office designee (“Intake Designee”) will review the Complaint and, if appropriate, schedule an intake meeting with the Reporting Party to discuss the Complaint and to ask any questions regarding its substance. Efforts will be made to conduct the intake meeting within ten (10) business days of receiving the Complaint. The Reporting Party may decline attendance, understanding that it may limit the University’s ability to address the reported behavior. If the Intake Designee determines that an intake meeting is not appropriate, the Intake Designee will contact the Reporting Party to discuss potential alternatives to this process.

3. Preliminary Review. Within five (5) business days of the intake meeting, the Intake Designee will determine whether the facts, if proven, solely constitute an interpersonal conflict without any associated potential policy violation or if the behavior is not a) ongoing or b) sufficiently severe as to have an objectively negative impact on the workplace environment. In that case, the Reporting Party will be encouraged to engage in restorative practices with the assistance of Human Resources to resolve the issue. If the Intake Designee determines that the facts, if proven, would constitute a policy violation, an investigation under this policy will begin.

4. Notice of Investigation. If an investigation under this policy is initiated, the employee alleged to have violated policy (“Responding Party”), will be sent a Notice of Investigation, with a copy to the Responding Party’s Appointing Officer. The Notice will include:

a. a summary of the factual allegations,
b. a reference to the specific University policies alleged to have been violated,
c. the date and time for an Initial Interview to be conducted with the Responding Party within ten (10) business days of the Notice,
d. Notice that:

i. the Responding Party may submit any relevant documentation in advance of or during the meeting, and
ii. the Responding Party will be given an opportunity to provide their version of the facts and to respond to the allegations of policy violation at the meeting.

A copy of the Notice of Investigation will be sent to the Reporting Party and their Appointing Officer.

5. Interview with Responding Party. A Human Resources Office Designee (the “Investigator”) will conduct an initial interview with the Responding Party to discuss the report and to ask any questions regarding the substance of the report as well as to allow the Responding Party an opportunity to be heard regarding the facts and allegations and provide

documentation in support of their position. The Responding Party may decline attendance, understanding that it may limit the University's ability to understand their position in response to the reported behavior. The Appointing Officer will be invited to attend the meeting solely to observe the demeanor of the Responding Party, and will not engage in discussion or questioning during the interview.

6. Fact Finding. At any point following a Complaint, the Investigator may obtain and review information, up to and including contacting necessary departments and employees or accessing relevant documents or records as part of the Preliminary Review and/or in order to investigate a Complaint. Within five (5) days of their initial interview, either party may request that individuals with relevant information be interviewed by the Investigator during fact-finding. Each request will be evaluated by the Investigator to mitigate unnecessary harm that could be caused by conducting any potential interview. While each investigation is unique, the goal is to resolve fact-finding within 20 business days from the time the report is assigned to the Investigator. Delays will be communicated to both parties.

7. Report by Investigator. Following fact-finding, the Investigator will prepare an Investigation Report summarizing relevant information and including a finding of whether, based on a preponderance of evidence standard, a violation of the Standards of Conduct for Employees Policy (SLT 3) has occurred. The preponderance of evidence standard means the Investigator will determine whether the evidence indicates that it is more likely than not that the policy violation has occurred. The Investigation Report will be shared with both parties, and the Appointing Officer and Executive Officer of both parties.

8. Response Period. Both parties have five (5) business days from the date of the Investigation Report to submit a written response, attaching any other relevant evidence in response to the evidence submitted by the other party or witnesses. All responses will be submitted to the Investigator for consideration in advance of decision-making. Subsequent submissions of documentation, after the five (5) day response period, will not be accepted or reviewed.

For information purposes only, the Investigator will share a copy of all responses with the Appointing Officer and Executive Officer of both parties.

9. Investigator Review Period: After the conclusion of the Response Period, the Investigator will have two (2) business days to review any responses submitted by the parties during the Response Period and make any necessary revisions to the Investigation Report (if applicable).

10. Appointing Officer Notice of Disciplinary Action. If there is a finding of responsibility by the Investigator appropriate action will be decided by the Responding Party's Appointing

Officer, in consultation with their Executive Officer and a Human Resources representative (which may or may not include the Investigator). Appropriate action will include one or more of the following:

a. coaching,
b. verbal warning with plan for remediation,
c. a written warning with plan for remediation,
d. leave of absence without pay (lasting up to six months in duration), or
e. termination of employment.

The Appointing Officer for the Responding Party will prepare a Notice of Disciplinary Action, communicating their decision to the Responding Party in writing within five (5) business days of the conclusion of the Investigator Review Period. At the same time, the Investigator will communicate to the Reporting Party if action is being taken, without disclosing the nature of the action.

Terminations resulting from an investigation under these procedures are for cause, and do not entitle the Responding Party to any severance pay.

11. Appeals. Either party may appeal an outcome under this policy by submitting a Statement of Appeal, in writing, within three (3) business days of receiving the Notice of Disciplinary Action, citing reasons for appeal. If there is no finding of responsibility, the appeal must be submitted within three (3) business days of the conclusion of the Investigator Review Period. Written appeals must be sent to complaints@gvsu.edu .

a. The statement must list i) the grounds for the appeal as outlined below, ii) explain why the employee disagrees with the outcome, and iii) provide any documentation in support of the appeal, including any witness statements.
b. A copy of the Statement of Appeal will be provided to Human Resources, both parties and their Appointing Officers.
c. Appeals are limited to the following grounds:

i. A procedural irregularity that would change the outcome.
ii. New evidence that would change the outcome and that was not reasonably available at the time of the investigation.
iii. The disciplinary action or finding regarding responsibility was substantially contrary to the weight of the evidence.
iv. The individuals involved in making the determination had a conflict of interest or bias for or against a party or other involved individuals that would change the outcome.

d. Appeals will be considered by the Vice President of People, Equity and Culture, or designee, with the decision being final. If the Vice President of People, Equity and Culture, or designee, was involved in decision-making at any stage of this process, an alternate designee will be required to handle the appeal.