

Physics and Astronomy Graduate Student Code of Conduct

PAGSC Equity and Inclusion Committee

Updated November 5, 2018

Message from the Chair:

Dear Members of the Department of Physics and Astronomy,

This document was proposed and assembled by graduate students who have a genuine concern for fairness and the social environment of our department. I am very pleased to see their initiative and the thoughtful work that they have done voluntarily.

This department has two primary goals: scientific research and education. A wide variety of people come together to contribute to these two goals, and we will best succeed if everyone can make his or her contribution unfettered and with confidence. Therefore, I urge everyone in the department to behave in a manner that does not interfere with the scientific aspirations or the education of any single member of the department.

Please read this document completely and attentively. If anyone would like to discuss its contents with me, I would be happy to meet him or her for a discussion.

Regards,
Prof. Michael Schmitt, Chair
Department of Physics and Astronomy

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1 Scope of this code

The purpose of this code is as follows,

- To outline the expectations of the Physics and Astronomy graduate student (PAGS) community regarding interactions between graduate students.
- To review the options and resources available in the case of violations of the student code of conduct and provide a guide for handling conflicts that may arise within the PAGS community.
- To provide contacts and information about University resources for settling specific issues that may arise within the PAGS community.

For clarification on the following community values and unacceptable behaviors contact the chair of the PAGSC Equity and Inclusion committee (for current chair see PAGSC website).

2 Community principles and values

The following is a summarized version of the community principles and values from 2017-18 NU student handbook, which can be found here.

First and foremost,

- Civility and respect are expected behaviors.
- Individual differences and unique perspectives are respected.
- Disagreement and conflict are acknowledged in respectful discourse.
- Remember that *the University is your workplace and your peers are your colleagues and should be treated in a professional manner.*
- *As a Physics and Astronomy department our main goal is scientific progress and integrity; conflict and inequality among graduate students is detrimental to this goal.*¹

Northwestern University is an educationally purposeful community, a place where faculty and students share academic goals and work together to strengthen teaching and learning on campus. The University is also an open community, a place where civility is powerfully affirmed and where freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected.

- Individuality is affirmed while all strive to build a stronger sense of community.
- Freedom of choice is balanced with responsibility to the community.

¹Italics indicate components that are not from the NU student handbook.

Northwestern University is a just community, a place where the sanctity of the person is honored and where diversity is “aggressively pursued.”

Northwestern University is a disciplined community, a place where individuals accept their obligations to others and where well-defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good.

- Freedom is balanced with duty.
- Integrity and honesty are expected.
- Consideration for the needs and rights of others is the norm.

Northwestern University is a caring community, a place where the well being of each member is sensitively supported and where service to others is encouraged.

- “Do no harm to others” is a non-negotiable value.
- Accurate self-understanding is the foundation for empathy, compassion, and understanding others.
- Social responsibility and an ethic of service to others are extended to all members of the community.

Northwestern University is a celebratory community, one in which the heritage of the institution is remembered and where rituals affirming both tradition and change are widely shared.

- Unique cultural and ceremonial practices are affirmed.
- Individual religious and spiritual beliefs are accepted.

Most importantly, *respect your peers*.

- Realize that the experiences of others differ from your own; consider the viewpoints and experiences of others before reaching conclusions.
- Be respectful of other cultural, religious, or political beliefs; avoid telling jokes/stories that can be offensive or disrespectful in the workplace.
- Work together to resolve issues; avoid turning a conflict into a competition.

3 Unacceptable behaviors

The following behaviors contradict the values of the community.

3.1 Physically harming others

3.2 Hazing

According to the NU student handbook hazing is defined as “an action or situation created (intentionally or unintentionally) to produce mental, physical, or emotional discomfort; servitude; degradation; embarrassment; harassment; or ridicule for the purpose of initiation into, or affiliation with, in a group, team, or other organization.”

- Incidents of hazing should be reported to the Dean of Students Office (847-491-8430) or the Office of Student Conduct (847-491-4582) or online via NUhelp at www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp)

3.3 Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination

- **Harassment** unwanted attention perceived as intimidating, demeaning, or bothersome to an individual: if its unwanted, its harassment.
- **Bullying** “There is no universal definition of bullying, however, it is widely agreed upon that bullying is a subcategory of aggressive behavior characterized by the following three minimum criteria: (1) hostile intent, (2) imbalance of power, and (3) repetition over a period of time.”²

Bullying can be either physical or emotional or both and involves a power imbalance; this power imbalance can be either “real” (e.g. a boss or supervisor interacting with lower-ranking employees) or perceived.

- **Discrimination** The NU discrimination policy (found here) states that:

“Northwestern University does not discriminate or permit discrimination by any member of its community against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, parental status, marital status, age, disability, citizenship status, veteran status, genetic information, or any other classification protected by law in matters of admissions, employment, housing, or services or in the educational programs or activities it operates [...] *Harassment, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based on any of these characteristics is a form of discrimination.* This includes [...] interfering unreasonably with an individual’s academic or work performance, or creating what a reasonable person would perceive is an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment[.]”

²Burger, Christoph; Strohmeier, Dagmar; Sprber, Nina; Bauman, Sheri; Rigby, Ken (2015). “How teachers respond to school bullying: An examination of self-reported intervention strategy use, moderator effects, and concurrent use of multiple strategies”. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 51: 191202. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2015.07.004.

3.3.1 Campus resources for bullying, harassment, and discrimination

Bullying and/or harassment, as well as discrimination complaints against students can be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. More details about the process of reporting an incident can be found on the Office of Student Conduct webpage.

- Details on the student conduct process can be found here.
- Resolutions can be handled in a formal or informal manner.
- Students who believe they have been victims of discrimination can visit the NU Human Resources Equal Opportunity website where to get advice and help section.

3.3.2 Interim measures

Interim measures for general (non-sexual) misconduct such as bullying, harassment, and hazing (quoted directly from the Student Conduct Office website interim measures section; see the link for additional information):

“At times, the University may take action to ensure the safety and security of the Northwestern community and its members while resolution of a student conduct case is pending.

Upon receipt of a report but prior to the resolution of an allegation of misconduct, the Office of Student Conduct or designee(s) may take interim action (including protective measures and accommodations) to ensure the safety and security of the University community, University community members, or University property. Interim actions are all placed pending prompt hearing through UHAS [University Hearings and Appeals System]. In such instances the University will typically attempt to speak with the respondent and give them an initial opportunity to respond to the allegation of policy violation prior to issuing the interim actions.

These actions may be applied to the reporter, the respondent or the broader University community and include (but are not limited to):

- A no contact directive placed between students or between a student and another member of the University community.
- Changes in academic, work, or living arrangements.
- Assistance in requesting academic allowances.
- A formal request or warning that a student cease current behaviors.
- Removal of privileges or suspension of activity (including attendance in a specific class).

- Issuance of a timely warning to the University community.
- A forensic threat assessment or fitness for duty evaluation and required follow-through on recommendations at the decision of the Behavioral Consultation Team.”

Office of Student Conduct contact

Lucas Christain, Director of Student Conduct and Assistant Dean of Students
(lucas.christain@northwestern.edu)

3.4 Sexual misconduct

The following definitions and examples are taken directly from the NU sexual misconduct policy.

- Sexual assault (rape, sexual contact without consent, incest, statutory rape).
- Sexual exploitation (for example, obtaining and publicizing nude or sexually suggestive photographs or videos of a person without that person’s consent).
- Stalking (knowingly engaging in conduct directed at a specific person in a way that makes that person fear for their safety or for the safety of a third party, see the NU sexual misconduct policy linked above for examples of stalking).
- Dating/ domestic violence (physical, psychological, or sexual abuse of an intimate partner).
- Sexual harassment (examples include pressure for a romantic relationship, unwanted sexual gestures, remarks about a person’s gender identity or sexual orientation, general unsolicited remarks of a sexual nature that do not fall under sexual assault).

3.4.1 Campus resources for sexual misconduct

Cases of sexual misconduct can be reported either online or by email. See www.northwestern.edu/sexual-misconduct for more details.

- To file a report via email students can contact the Title IX Coordinator at TitleIXCoordinator@northwestern.edu or the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students at DeputyTitleIXCoordinator@northwestern.edu.
- Students can also report sexual misconduct online at: bit.ly/NUReportSexualMisconduct.

- Reports of sexual misconduct are handled on a case-by-case basis. For more information on the reporting process see this flowchart which gives an overview of the sexual misconduct complaint and resolution process or see this link for a full explanation of the process.
- The NU Center for Awareness, Response & Education (CARE) offers support for students who have been victims of sexual violence, relationship violence, or stalking. For more information or to make an appointment please visit the CARE website.

3.4.2 Interim measures

The following is quoted directly from the NU sexual misconduct policy.

“Interim measures and accommodations are reasonable measures the University can put in place for an individual who reports having experienced sexual misconduct. Interim measures and accommodations can provide immediate support and help protect the individual’s safety and ability to access their education and employment, at no cost to that individual. These measures can be temporary in duration pending the results of an investigation, but can become permanent. Interim measures and accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- A no-contact directive issued by the Title IX Coordinator, Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students, or their designee;
- Housing or work space relocation;
- Adjustment of course schedules or other changes to an individual’s academic situation;
- Changes to work schedules or other changes to an individual’s employment situation;
- Time off from class or work, or a leave of absence;
- Transportation arrangements;
- Safety planning;
- As feasible, honoring an order of protection entered by a court if the University has been notified of the order and its terms.

Interim measures and accommodations are available regardless of whether an individual chooses to report an incident to University Police or local law enforcement or pursue a complaint with the University. The Title IX Coordinator, Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students, or their designee will determine whether interim measures and accommodations are reasonable and should be implemented, and, if so, will work to ensure that these measures and accommodations are implemented as soon as possible.

The University will keep confidential any interim measures and accommodations provided, to the extent that maintaining such confidentiality would not impair the ability of the institution to provide these measures.”

Important note: interim measures and accommodations *may only be put in place by the Office of Equity*. Students, staff and faculty, including departments and groups, should not put interim measures in place on their own.

3.4.3 Reporting obligation

According to NU Title IX policy, All University employees (including student employees [this includes graduate students]), as well as non-employees with teaching or supervisory authority, are obligated to promptly report sexual misconduct of which they become aware in the scope of their work for the University to the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students, unless they are a resource listed below. The University encourages all individuals to report sexual misconduct.

Student contact for interim measures for sexual misconduct

Amanda DaSilva, Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students; Office of Equity (amanda.dasilva@northwestern.edu or DeputyTitleIXCoordinator@northwestern.edu).

4 TGS policies on professor-student conduct

- **Family leave:** professors (graduate advisers) are expected to understand that Title IX applies to pregnant and parenting students and to ensure that students are able to access Northwestern’s child and family resources, including the TGS parental accommodation leave.

Family leave funding: According to section 10.2 of the TGS family leave policy, “Funded graduate students (graduate assistants, research assistants, teaching assistants, trainees, fellows) who receive tuition and stipend from the University at the time of the requested accommodation as well as graduate students who are funded from an external source may request paid leave from their duties for a 12 week accommodation period.

- Funding will be provided by The Graduate School for the 12 week accommodation period. Funding will be applied in the quarter closest to the dates of the accommodation.
- If a student is not receiving funding as of the start date of the parental accommodation, none will be provided by this accommodation.
- Graduate students who are funded from an external source supported on external fellowships or awards are obliged to inform their funding

agency and should consult Financial Administration in The Graduate School.”

See the above link for more information on the TGS family leave policy.

- **General leaves of absence** The TGS policy on paid family leave is separate from its policy on leaves of absence for medical reasons or general leaves of absence. For information about TGS’s leave of absence policy see this link.
- In 2011 TGS, as well as TGS’s Administrative Board, the Graduate Faculty and the Graduate Leadership Council (GLC), has ratified the following Graduate Education Expectations Document as a guide for student-advisor relations.

Additionally, in 2018 TGS’s Administrative Board approved new Guidance for Positive Graduate Student and Faculty Adviser Relationships. According to the News section of the TGS website this document “outlines the guiding principles intended to support positive mentoring relationships between graduate students and their faculty advisers. These guidelines are an official statement of TGS expectations and may be used at the discretion of programs to guide conversations between students and faculty as they navigate their work together.”

- For TA issues see the Physics and Astronomy TA Handbook and the TA expectations form which professors can fill out to specify what responsibilities they give their TAs. Both of these documents can be found on the PAGSC Resources page.

5 TGS Non-Retaliation Policy

All Northwestern community members including faculty, staff, students, post-doctoral scholars, researchers, visitors, contractors, and volunteers are protected from retaliation under the TGS Non-Retaliation Policy. The policy statement is as follows:

“Northwestern strictly prohibits retaliation against any member of its community for reporting or inquiring in good faith about what the member believes to be wrongful or unlawful activity, or for participating in an investigation or proceeding related to such activity. The University considers such reporting, inquiring, or participating to be protected activities in which all members of the Northwestern community may freely engage.”

For more details please see the policy linked above.