

Human Resource Procedures

For

Report of Concerns and Climate & Culture Reviews

Our Culture, Our Commitment:

At the University of Idaho, we recognize that a positive living, learning and working environment is healthy and desirable for everyone, and it is essential to achieving our vision and fulfilling our highest goals. The university is a place of excellence where the culture reflects trust, respect, fairness, inclusiveness, openness, consistency, integrity and accountability. The University of Idaho is a learning environment where each individual can reach his or her highest potential and where a spirit of inquiry, understanding, transformational learning and knowledge creation is encouraged through the formal and informal exchange of ideas. The university is a nurturing place to learn and work, where people are engaged, friendly and helpful. We are committed to ongoing, honest self-examination of our current organization, culture and climate, and to continuous improvement in each these areas.

The procedures outlined apply to concerns reported to Human Resources regarding climate and culture concerns, employment issues, policy violations that involve University of Idaho employee(s), contractors or volunteers. (Throughout these procedures, employee, contractor, or volunteer are collectively referred to as “employee”). Human Resources generally has two different approaches for addressing concerns that are brought to our attention. Two processes are outlined in the document below and include:

- Climate and culture review. Complaints regarding the climate and culture of a college, unit, department, etc. are generally handled through the climate and culture review process conducted by Human Resources. Climate and culture reviews are primarily conducted to assess strategies that could improve the climate and culture of a given area, etc.
- A neutral fact-finding to assist in identifying factors that could be contributing to the concern reported. The intent of the fact-finding is to gather information surrounding the concern.

Note:

- *Complaints of illegal discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and retaliation whereas the alleged offender is a University of Idaho employee, contractor or volunteer are investigated by the Office of Civil Rights and Investigations, (OCRI).*
- *Complaints against University of Idaho students are investigated by the Office of the Dean of Students in consultation with the director of the Office of Civil Rights and Investigations, (OCRI).*

Overview:

As a part of our commitment to continuous improvement and honest self-examination there are times where Human Resources can provide a neutral structured and detailed fact-finding into a concern or review of a university department, site or sub-group.

Climate and Culture Review

Some situations when a climate and culture review could be appropriate include but are not limited to:

- There is an identified climate and culture concern
- New leadership wishes to gain a better understanding of their department
- Another authority on campus requests it
- It is a part of an ongoing fact-finding or related investigation

Fact-Finding

Some situations when a fact-finding could be appropriate include, but are not limited to:

- A policy violation has occurred
- There are performance issues
- Establish facts around a particular issue, event or set of circumstances
- Corrective action or disciplinary action may occur

Purpose:

Climate and Culture Review

The purpose of a climate and culture review is to provide leadership with information, from an external neutral perspective, to assist in identifying factors that could be contributing to unnecessary interpersonal conflict, workplace inefficiency or decreased morale. Human Resources may recommend ways to improve climate and culture, providing leadership with tools and resources to bring their department in-line with the overall culture of the University of Idaho. A climate and culture review is not anticipated to be disciplinary, rather to provide leadership with important information to make any adjustments necessary to ensure the working environment is conducive to success and fulfilling the goals of university. Although specific factors may be identified by leadership as areas of concern, at the onset of the process a climate and culture review is intended to be a neutral review of the unit as a whole and not individualized. Throughout the process, specific areas may be identified that could lead to additional focused review and transition into a fact-finding process. If it is determined, before or during the review process, that one or more of the concern(s) do not fall within Human Resources' purview, a referral will be made to the appropriate office immediately and the HR review for those concerns not in HR scope will cease and a summary report may not be completed.

As a part of our commitment to continuous improvement and honest self-examination there are times where Human Resources can provide, upon request, a structured and detailed climate and culture review of a university department, site or sub-group. A climate and culture review could be appropriate when:

- There is an identified climate and culture concern
- New leadership wishes to gain a better understanding of their department
- Another authority on campus requests it
- It is a part of an ongoing fact-finding or related investigation

Once the need for a climate and culture review has been identified, a Human Resources professional, typically the HR Business Partner, will be assigned to conduct the review. The Business Partner will communicate with the HR Director and other leadership about the requested review, seek any additional feedback needed, and then form a plan to proceed.

As a part of the climate and culture review Human Resources may assess:

- Reporting Structure: such as formal reporting and organizational structure to informal authority and social dynamics within a department
- Processes and Procedures: such as work flow or interpretation and application of University of Idaho policy and procedure
- Communication: such as concerns or perceptions about style, manner and effectiveness of communication
- Leadership: such as perceptions of levels of authority, leadership style and perceptions of stated or implied departmental expectations
- Morale: such as factors contributing to decreased department morale, increased turnover or increased complaints
- Other contributing factors: such as external pressures, recent changes in workload, stated or implied values, formal and informal authority dynamics, how people oriented versus task oriented the department is, impact of inter-departmental relationships or internal customers.
- Other areas of concern as noted by the requesting authority

Human Resources, in consultation with appropriate leadership, will determine the:

- Scope: Will the climate and culture review be department wide, a subgroup of the department or a particular office or site?
 - As information is gathered through the process, scope may be adjusted to fully capture any identified areas of concern or need for review
- Logistics and Communication: How will the information be collected; face-to-face interview, over the phone or otherwise? Who are the participants and when will they be interviewed? How will the participants be communicated with about their involvement in the climate and culture review?
 - Coordination with the department will occur as necessary for scheduling of meetings, etc. No formal notification process is required.

- Content: What type of questions should be asked? What information is needed in order to assess climate and culture effectively?

Fact-Finding

Prior to initiating a fact-finding, Human Resources will determine if the complaint falls within the purview of Human Resources, i.e., whether the complaint involves employment matters which include, but not limited to unprofessional conduct or policy violations. If it is determined, before or during the process, that all or part of the complaint does not fall within Human Resources' purview, a referral will be made to the appropriate office immediately for those concerns not in HR scope and the HR fact-finding will cease for those concerns and a summary report may not be completed. If other concerns remain that are within HR purview, the HR fact-finding will continue for those areas of concern only.

Although there are components of fact-findings that exist with larger investigations, Fact-findings are primarily conducted when a potential corrective or disciplinary action exists. Fact-findings often begin and end with visiting with the employee.

Fact-findings help to establish the facts around a particular issue or event or set of circumstances to develop a well-rounded review. Human Resources is able to provide trained assistance necessary should there be disciplinary action and/or termination of an employee. An independent fact-finding may also identify opportunities for process review or future training.

Once the need for a fact-finding has been identified a Human Resources professional, typically the HR Business Partner, will be assigned to conduct the independent fact-finding. The Business Partner will communicate with the HR Director and other leadership, seek any additional feedback needed, and then form a plan to proceed. Human Resources, in consultation with appropriate leadership, will determine the:

- Scope: Who is involved in the report of concern? Who would need to be interviewed to obtain facts relevant to the concern?
 - As information is gathered through the process, scope may be adjusted to fully capture any identified areas of concern or need for review
- Logistics and Communication: How will the information be collected; face-to-face interview, over the phone or otherwise? How will the participants be communicated with about their involvement in the fact-finding?
 - Coordination with the department will occur as necessary for scheduling of meetings, etc. No formal notification process is required.
- Content: What type of questions should be asked? What information is needed in order to assess the facts regarding the concern?

Timeline:

Depending on the size and scope, it could take from several days to several weeks to complete. The Human Resources professional(s) assigned will stay in communication with leadership about the timeline and progress of the review or fact-finding.

Reports, Findings and Possible Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the review or fact-finding, a confidential written summary or report of relevant findings, conclusions, and recommendations may be prepared. The confidential report or summary will be retained in Human Resources and a copy submitted to the Provost and Executive Vice President if regarding a faculty member, the Office of General Counsel, the supervisor, and the Dean/Unit Head as applicable. After consulting with HR to discuss access limitations, recipient leadership can request a redacted version of the confidential report. Although personnel matters are confidential, follow up with reporting employees may occur at the conclusion of a review or fact-finding as appropriate. Copies of the reports are not provided to the employees who reported concerns and/or participated in the review or fact-finding. If the review or fact-finding ceased because the scope was determined it fell outside of HR purview, a statement of referral briefly describing the nature of the complaint, the issues, why it was determined to be outside the purview of HR, and where the concern was referred to. For those concerns a summary report may not be completed. If a final summary report is completed for other concerns within HR scope, referred concerns will be noted within the summary document regarding the referral that occurs.

Climate and Culture Review

It is not always clear at the beginning of a climate and culture audit what the outcomes will be, however, some of the possibilities could be:

- Recommendations regarding departmental processes and procedures, workflow and expectations.
- Recommendations for change in structure and reporting, employee shift structure or physical location.
- Recommendations for additional training or continuing education.
- Recommendations for coaching, mentoring, disciplinary or corrective action.
- Recommendations for improved communication.
- Referrals to other authorities on campus such as, OCRI (Office of Civil Rights and Investigations), Internal Audit, OGC (Office of General Counsel), the Ombuds, EH&S (Environmental Health and Safety) or other appropriate campus entities.
- Other recommendations as appropriate and determined based on the review findings

Fact-Finding

It is not always clear at the beginning of a fact-finding what the outcomes will be, however, some of the possibilities could be:

- Recommendations for additional training or continuing education.
- Recommendations for setting clear expectations.
- Recommendations for honest and fair performance evaluation.
- Recommendations for coaching, mentoring, disciplinary or corrective action.
- Recommendations for improved communication.
- Referrals to other authorities on campus such as, Office of Civil Rights and Investigations, (OCRI), Internal Audit, Office of General Counsel, (OGC), the Ombuds, Environmental Health, and Safety, (EHS), or other appropriate campus entities.
- Other recommendations as appropriate and determined based on the findings.

Other Reports of Concern:

- On occasion, employees engage with HR regarding concerns that fall into one of the above areas, but not at a level of requesting action or assistance beyond advice, counsel, guidance, policy assistance, etc. Unless the nature of concern requires action beyond the request, HR will provide assistance to the extent requested and may address the concern with other appropriate leadership in a neutral and generic way if applicable.
 - If reports of concern become cumulative and/or create a pattern of behaviors/concerns, HR will engage with appropriate leadership to share the concerns and determine an appropriate course of action to look into the concerns further. This may include, but not limited to climate culture reviews and fact-findings. Consultation with supervisors/appropriate leadership will determine the course taken and what involvement if any HR will have in the process.

Questions:

If you have questions or concerns about the climate and culture review process or the fact-finding process the primary point of contact is the Director of Human Resources. In addition, each department's assigned HR Business Partner can serve as a resource as needed.