

Appointment of “ombudsperson” in all Graduate Programs Approved: EC meeting of December 16, 2019

One of the most important responsibilities of the School of Graduate Studies and the constituent graduate programs is to ensure that all students and faculty can accomplish goals in an environment of the highest levels of professionalism (see *School of Graduate Studies Code of Responsible Conduct and Professionalism in Graduate Education* below and at <https://gsnb.rutgers.edu/code-responsible-conduct-and-professionalism-graduate-education>).

Students need to be aware of the avenues available to hear and address concerns. It is also important that programs encourage positive behaviors, and that students be able to seek and obtain advice about issues that do not rise to the level of the inappropriate behaviors or ethical violations described in the Code.

To facilitate the programs’ ability to support and implement these goals, SGS requires that each program designate a Member of their graduate faculty to serve as an Ombudsperson. The Graduate Director may, at the discretion of the program, serve as the Ombudsperson, or take on one or more of the responsibilities of the Ombudsperson listed below. By early spring, 2020, programs must share the name of this person with dean of SGS, as well as sharing the name and list of responsibilities (see below) with their program faculty, students and graduate student organizations.

Programs will be required to report on their activities relevant to all seven responsibilities listed below as part of the annual SGS program assessments to be conducted in spring, 2020.

The responsibilities of the programs are the following:

- Ensuring that all faculty and graduate students are aware of the expectations for professional conduct as summarized in the School of Graduate Studies Code of Responsible Conduct and Professionalism.
- Holding periodic (once/year or more) events or workshops for students and faculty, calling upon SGS or university experts for assistance as needed, in order to promote professional conduct and facilitate communication among faculty and students. One-time only events (for example, at the students’ entry into the program) are not sufficient, nor are events that are all directed solely to students without any with faculty participation.
- Sharing information with students and faculty about events or initiatives related to responsible conduct and professionalism organized by SGS or other units.
- Providing information to students about the available avenues for resolving concerns, complaints and appeals, consistent with and adhering to program bylaws, SGS bylaws, and the requirements for mandatory reporting of inappropriate behaviors (see Note on mandatory reporting below). The avenues open to students within the program may include consultation with either the program’s ombudsperson, the program’s Graduate Director, or faculty committees established by the program. Avenues open outside the program include reports to the deans of School of Graduate Studies (especially Senior Associate Dean Barbara Bender, who is in charge of Problem Resolution), or other offices within the university (see “Note on mandatory reporting below”).

- Advising students of the avenues available within or outside the program for discussing commonly-encountered issues that are typical of faculty-student or student-student interactions, and do not involve misconduct, inappropriate behaviors or ethical violations. The avenues within programs may include consultation with either the ombudsperson, the graduate director, or designated faculty committees. Avenues outside the program include the deans of School of Graduate Studies (Senior Associate Dean Barbara Bender who is in charge of Problem Resolution), the university counseling service (CAPS: <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>) or the offices listed below under “Notes on mandatory reporting”.
- Making sure that program faculty and students are aware of mandatory reporting requirements (see Note on mandatory reporting below) for harassment or misconduct.
- Incorporating training in the “Responsible Conduct of Research” into the graduate program. RCR deals with ethical practices in research, authorship, publication and collaborations and is relevant to all disciplines. Programs that do not already offer RCR training covering the topics proscribed by groups such as the US Office of Research Integrity (ORI, <https://ori.hhs.gov/>) or the National Academy of Sciences (<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/12192/on-being-a-scientist-a-guide-to-responsible-conduct-in>) may consider designing their own events or sending students to the CITI Training free online course (see link at the Rutgers Office of Research Integrity site: <https://orra.rutgers.edu/ritokit>). The Rutgers ORI site also contains many useful resources for faculty. Programs may contact the Rutgers Office of Research Integrity (<https://orra.rutgers.edu/ricontact>) for assistance in developing courses, workshops or events.

Note on mandatory reporting: Legal obligations to report instances of harassment, assault or misconduct are summarized here and <http://compliance.rutgers.edu/Title-ix/> and <https://uec.rutgers.edu/>

“Confidential resources” are people in the university who are not obligated to share any personally identifying information about a report of sexual violence (such as the survivor or accused’s name) with law enforcement, the Title IX Coordinator, or any other University administrator. Confidential resources include SGS Senior Associate Dean Barbara Bender as well as organizations listed here <http://compliance.rutgers.edu/resources/student-resources/confidential-resources/>

The School of Graduate Studies Code of Responsible Conduct and Professionalism in Graduate Education:

We expect and encourage:

- Honesty and integrity
- Respect and tolerance
- Sensitivity to differences among individuals
- Professionalism
- Attention to goals and responsibilities

Timely and constructive feedback
Acceptance of constructive feedback

Inappropriate behaviors

Mistreatment, abuse, bullying, or harassment, whether by actions or language
Unprofessional criticism
Requests for personal services
Assigning tasks as punishment or retribution
Sexual assault or sexual harassment
Discrimination
Indifference to inappropriate behaviors that are witnessed