

A vertical image on the left side of the page showing a library aisle with tall bookshelves and a person sitting on a small stool in the distance.

## Higher Education Checklist

# Title IX-Compliant Policies Against Sexual Harassment

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*The Department of Education (ED) implemented final regulations under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which forbids sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, by educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance.*

The regulations represent a major shift from prior guidance on administrative enforcement; while they narrow the definition of “sexual harassment” to which a school must respond under Title IX, they also impose highly prescriptive requirements for investigating and adjudicating matters that fall under Title IX’s jurisdiction.

United Educators (UE) created this checklist and a companion checklist, **Title IX-Compliant Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedures in Higher Education**. Higher education members should use the checklists together to help ensure compliance with numerous mandates in the regulations.

## Compliance with Other Laws

These checklists specifically address the obligation to prevent and respond to sexual harassment of students and employees under Title IX only, but institutions also must comply with other requirements governing sex discrimination and sexual harassment under federal law — primarily Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (for employees) and the Violence Against Women Act of 2013 (VAWA) (for students and employees) — and state laws (including state mandatory reporting laws and criminal laws regarding

sexual abuse of minors). VAWA, for example, imposes training mandates that are broadly similar — but not identical — to Title IX training requirements under the Title IX regulations. Institutions must comply with both.

Although ED takes the position that the final Title IX regulations don't impair institutions' ability to comply with other federal laws, it explicitly states that the final regulations pre-empt conflicting state laws. Public institutions and those with collective bargaining agreements or binding faculty handbook provisions may face additional competing legal or contractual requirements.

UE strongly recommends that institutions consult experienced counsel about their compliance obligations under all applicable laws and agreements and how to coordinate the institutional response to sexual harassment, particularly if other requirements may be inconsistent with Title IX regulations.

## Terminology

This checklist adopts the terms and definitions the final regulations use. Accordingly, “complainant” refers to an alleged victim of sexual harassment and “respondent” to an alleged perpetrator of sexual harassment, regardless of whether a formal complaint exists. Similarly, the checklist follows the final regulations in referring to the official presiding over Title IX hearings and making the determination regarding responsibility as the “decision-maker” (singular, but depending on the institution, this could mean one or more people).

## Sexual Harassment Outside Title IX Parameters

While the regulations redefine sexual harassment and limit the conduct that can (and must) be addressed under Title IX, they also make clear that institutions are free to address sexual harassment that falls outside Title IX — such as alleged harassment off campus, including in study abroad programs — under other policies or codes of conduct.

For each item in the checklist, check the appropriate box (“Yes,” “No,” or “N/A (Not Applicable)”) and note any additional needed actions in the space to the right.

### Policy Adoption/Publication, Grievance Procedures

### Actions Needed

Has your institution adopted a policy stating that it complies with Title IX, which prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, against students and employees?  Yes  No  N/A

Is your institution's policy published on its website?  Yes  No  N/A

Is your institution's policy published in handbooks or catalogs provided to:

- Current students and employees?  Yes  No  N/A

- Applicants for admission or employment?  Yes  No  N/A

- Parents or guardians of elementary and secondary school students (who may be involved in programs the institution offers)?  Yes  No  N/A

- Unions or professional organizations that have collective bargaining or professional agreements with the institution?  Yes  No  N/A

**Has your institution adopted the following Title IX grievance procedures:**

- A general grievance procedure that provides for “prompt and equitable resolution” of complaints by students or employees of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX (such as allegations of discrimination in admissions, athletics, or employee pay, or retaliation allegations)?  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

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- A separate grievance procedure that complies with specific requirements for grievance processes applicable to formal complaints of sexual harassment, as mandated by the final regulations as addressed [here](#)?  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

**Reporting to Title IX Coordinator**

**Has your institution designated, and given necessary authority to, at least one Title IX coordinator who is responsible for coordinating the institution’s response to allegations of Title IX violations and for overseeing Title IX investigations?**  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

**Does your institution identify the Title IX coordinator by including the relevant name or job title, office address, telephone number, and email address in a written notice to:**

- Current students and employees?  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

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- Applicants for admission or employment?  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

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- Parents or guardians of elementary and secondary school students (who may be involved in programs the institution offers)?  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

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- Unions or professional organizations that have collective bargaining or professional agreements with the institution?  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

**Does your institution prominently display the Title IX coordinator’s contact information on its website?**  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

**Does your institution’s policy make clear that:**

- The Title IX coordinator is the primary institutional contact for receiving reports or complaints of sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, under Title IX?  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

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- Any person may file a report or complaint with the Title IX coordinator at any time, including outside regular business hours (such as by email or completing an online form)?  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

**If your institution chooses to designate employees as “responsible employees” or “mandatory reporters” (or a similar term) who must report to the Title IX coordinator any allegations of sexual harassment they witness or learn about, does the policy clearly explain the requirement?**  Yes  
 No  
 N/A

**Jurisdictional Definitions: Sexual Harassment**

Does your institution’s Title IX policy explain that under current ED regulations, it must respond in a manner that isn’t deliberately indifferent when it has actual knowledge of sexual harassment occurring in the institution’s education program or activity against a person in the United States?

Yes  
 No  
 N/A

Does your institution’s Title IX policy incorporate the definition for “actual knowledge” as notice or allegations of sexual harassment to:

- The Title IX coordinator?  
 Yes  
 No  
 N/A

- Any official with authority to institute corrective measures on your institution’s behalf?  
 Yes  
 No  
 N/A

Does your institution’s Title IX policy incorporate the definition for “sexual harassment” as conduct on the basis of sex that is any of the following:

- *Quid pro quo* harassment by an employee, meaning an employee conditioning educational benefits on participation in unwelcome sexual conduct?  
 Yes  
 No  
 N/A

- Hostile environment sexual harassment, meaning unwelcome conduct that a reasonable person would determine is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the institution’s education program or activity?  
 Yes  
 No  
 N/A

- Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking as defined by the Clery Act (as amended by the Violence Against Women Act of 2013 (VAWA)) and its regulations?  
 Yes  
 No  
 N/A

Does your institution’s Title IX policy incorporate the definition for “education program or activity” as all operations of the institution, including:

- Locations, events, or circumstances over which your institution has substantial control over both:

- The respondent?  
 Yes  
 No  
 N/A

- The context in which the sexual harassment occurs?  
 Yes  
 No  
 N/A

- Any building owned or controlled by a recognized student organization, such as certain Greek organization houses?  
 Yes  
 No  
 N/A

Does your institution’s Title IX policy incorporate the definition for “deliberate indifference” as a response that is clearly unreasonable under the known circumstances?  
 Yes  
 No  
 N/A

## Additional Definitions

## Actions Needed

Does your institution's Title IX policy define:

- **Complainant** as a person who has allegedly been subjected to possible sexual harassment?  Yes  No  N/A

- **Respondent** as a person reported to have engaged in possible sexual harassment?  Yes  No  N/A

Does your institution clearly define "consent" to sexual activity and apply that definition consistently, including between males and females and between the parties in a Title IX grievance process?  Yes  No  N/A

Does the Title IX policy make clear that it applies to conduct:

- Between students?  Yes  No  N/A

- Between employees?  Yes  No  N/A

- Between an employee and a student?  Yes  No  N/A

## Sexual Harassment Not Covered by Title IX

Has your institution determined whether it will prohibit sexual harassment that doesn't fall under Title IX, such as because:

- Even if the allegations are true, the conduct doesn't qualify as severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive?  Yes  No  N/A

- It occurs outside the institution's education program or activity?  Yes  No  N/A

- The conduct isn't the subject of a formal complaint?  Yes  No  N/A

- It occurs in a study abroad program or otherwise outside the United States?  Yes  No  N/A

- It occurs in off-campus housing the institution doesn't control, including a building owned or controlled by an unrecognized Greek organization?  Yes  No  N/A

If your institution has made this determination, has it:

- Decided under which alternative policies or codes of conduct it will address alleged sexual harassment that isn't covered by Title IX?  Yes  No  N/A

- Explained to the campus community in writing which policies or conduct codes may apply to non-Title IX sexual harassment and how to report alleged violations?  Yes  No  N/A

## Retaliation

## Actions Needed

Does your institution prohibit retaliation (including intimidation, threats, coercion, or discrimination) against any person:

- For the purpose of interfering with a right or privilege under Title IX?

Yes  
 No  
 N/A

- Because the person made a report or complaint, testified, assisted, or participated or refused to participate, in an investigation, proceeding or hearing under Title IX?

Yes  
 No  
 N/A

Does your institution state that exercising First Amendment rights doesn't constitute prohibited retaliation under Title IX?

Yes  
 No  
 N/A

Does your institution make clear that a person won't be charged with an additional code of conduct violation not involving sex discrimination or sexual harassment but arising from the same facts or circumstances as a report or complaint of sex discrimination or sexual harassment (such as underage drinking), if such a charge is for the retaliatory purpose of interfering with a right or privilege under Title IX or the regulations?

Yes  
 No  
 N/A

To reduce the potential for retaliation, does your institution protect the confidentiality of people involved in its Title IX process?

Yes  
 No  
 N/A

Does your institution state that complaints of retaliation are addressed under the general Title IX grievance procedure providing for "prompt and equitable resolution" of Title IX discrimination allegations?

Yes  
 No  
 N/A

## More From UE

Webinar Unpacking the Final Title IX Regulations, Part 1

Webinar: Unpacking the Final Title IX Regulations, Part 2: More Q&A With Josh Richards

## Additional Resources

[Final regulations], Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance

ED: Title IX Website

ED: Office for Civil Rights Blog

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