

Filing a Concern Involving Bias at the School of International Affairs

Penn State University is committed to addressing discrimination, bias, and concerns regarding the safety of students and employees in our community. Below we outline the resources available to the School of International Affairs (SIA) students, staff, and faculty for reporting a wide range of concerns. We also outline for you, the process within SIA for reporting bias-related concerns. **Our goal within SIA is to support all students, staff, and faculty.** SIA encourages individuals to communicate with the individual(s) they believe have engaged in bias related conduct in order to promote open dialogue and building of our community. In the event that an individual is not comfortable or does not wish to discuss an incident with the individual(s) who they believe engaged in bias related conduct, there are two methods for reporting within SIA, which we outline in Section III.

Section I. Resources Available at Penn State University:

- [Affirmative Action Office](#) – The Affirmative Action Office response to complaints of or concerns about prohibited harassment or discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, physical or mental disability, gender, perceived gender, gender identity, genetic information or political ideas.
- [Office of Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Response](#) – Penn State is committed to fostering an environment free from sexual or gender-based harassment or misconduct. The University is also committed to providing support to those who may have been impacted by incidents of sexual or gender-based harassment or misconduct and may provide various resources and support services to individuals who have experienced one of these incidents.
- [Office of Student Conduct](#) – The office upholds and enforces behavioral standards, administers conduct processes, provides system-wide staff training and educates students through mediation, leadership development, conduct sanctions and other educational intervention efforts.
- [Report Bias](#) – Students may use the Report Bias form to report any act of intolerance they experience themselves or observe directed against anyone else.
- [Behavioral Threat Management Team](#) - In order to enhance emergency preparedness and prevention efforts, Penn State has established a Behavioral Threat Management Team (BTMT). The objective of the BTMT is to systematically identify, evaluate, and manage potentially threatening situations, including persons of concern, at the University. Individuals can submit a report to share a concern.

SIA will only handle bias-related conduct concerns. Central administration offices within the university have the jurisdiction and obligation to process other actionable concerns. Importantly, some concerns raised by an individual may trigger mandatory reporting obligations under University policies. See e.g., [AD72](#). Some concerns may also be referred to the Dean or Human Resources within Penn State Law/School of International Affairs. When appropriate, resolutions for faculty and staff may include disciplinary action under appropriate University and Penn State Law/SIA policies, but these resolutions fall outside the process outlined in this document.

SIA students can also email: siastudentserv@psu.edu for assistance in better understanding the resources available to you at Penn State University.

Section II. Scope for Bias Reporting at the School of International Affairs

Any faculty, staff, or student at SIA can raise a concern entailing bias-related conduct by a member of the faculty, staff, or student body at SIA. The jurisdiction of this process includes bias-related conduct that occurs in any classroom taught by an instructor at SIA, including guest speakers and students from other units such as Penn State Law. In addition, bias-related conduct outside of the classroom but inside the Lewis Katz building, in the hallways, or the building premises is also covered by this policy. Finally, it may also include activities of bias-related conduct made through electronic communications.

The individuals named in item III can receive concerns alleging bias, discrimination, sex or gender-based discrimination, or harassment. Unless a bias-related concern is filed internally, SIA cannot guarantee that it will have knowledge about the concern. Beyond bias-related concerns, all other concerns listed here will be referred directly to the [Affirmative Action Office](#), the [Office of Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response](#), or the [Office of Student Conduct](#) for handling. See below for definitions of acts of bias and retaliation.

Acts of Bias: Bias incidents refer to conduct that involves harm toward other individuals or groups based on characteristics including, but not limited to, age, ancestry, color, mental or physical disability, genetic information, immigration status, nationality, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or veteran status. (See policy [AD91](#)).

Retaliation: Any adverse action taken by a faculty, staff, or student against any individual on the basis of a good faith report made by such individual, or on the basis of such individual's participation in an investigation, hearing, or inquiry by the university or an appropriate authority, or participation in a court proceeding relating to suspected wrongful conduct at the university. Examples of retaliation include harassment, discrimination, threats of physical harm, job termination, punitive work schedule or research assignments, decrease in pay or responsibilities, or negative impact on academic progress. (see policy [AD67](#)).

III. SIA Process for Bias Reporting

SIA encourages individuals to first communicate with the individual(s) they believe have engaged in bias-related conduct in order to promote greater channels for open dialogue and building community. If, however, an individual is not comfortable or does not wish to discuss an incident with the individual(s) who they believe engaged in bias related conduct, there are two methods for reporting.

1. Scheduling a meeting with the Director of Academic Advising and Student Affairs in the School of International Affairs or the Director, School of International Affairs. Depending on the nature of the concern, the Director may also ask for permission from the person who brought the concern to discuss the matter with the individual who allegedly engaged in the bias-related conduct.
2. Individuals may also raise a concern via email, telephone, webform, mail, or in person. There are several individuals who may receive a concern. They include:
 - Director of Academic Advising and Student Affairs, School of International Affairs (DEI Resource Liaison)
 - Director, School of International Affairs
 - Associate Director, School of International Affairs
 - Dean, School of International Affairs
 - Human Resources, School of International Affairs

- 2A. Individuals may also report concerns anonymously. Those who wish to make an anonymous concern must lodge the concern through the [webform](#) to preserve their privacy. Third parties may also keep anonymous the name of the person alleged to have experienced bias related conduct. Anonymous concerns, however, will not receive the same feedback as non-anonymous complaints.
- 2B. Written concerns should include as much of the following information as possible:
- Name (leave blank if you wish the report to be anonymous)
 - Name of the person experiencing potential bias (if a third party is bringing the complaint)
 - Name of the person alleged to have engaged in bias related conduct
 - A brief description of what happened
3. If the concern entails conduct by a professor in the classroom, the Dean of Law and SIA, the Director of SIA, or their designee shall inform the professor of the concern and consult with the professor on next steps.
4. If the SIA Director, Dean, or Human Resources determine that a concern raised involved bias, the individual bringing or receiving the concern will have the choice to participate in one or more of the following:
- a. Participate in an informal dialogue with one or more of the individuals in Section III, item #2
 - b. Education or training related to eliminating bias
 - c. Participate in mediation with an external trained mediator
 - d. Restorative Justice Circle that brings the community or parties together to address harmful behavior in a process that explores harms and needs, obligations, and necessary engagement. The parties might include:
 1. Individual(s) who engaged in the bias related conduct
 2. Individual(s) who directly experienced the bias related conduct
 3. Affected Parties—others who consider themselves or their community to have been harmed by the bias related conduct
 4. Supporting Parties—friends or family of either party
 5. Facilitators—trained staff
 - e. Choose not to participate

Other Action and Resources

SIA encourages individuals to also submit a formal University-wide [Report Bias form](#) or inform the individual that SIA can submit a Report Bias form noting the incident should they prefer not to do so. Upon submission to the Report Bias website, additional support in addressing bias concerns and information directing students, faculty, and staff to appropriate campus resources (i.e., Affirmative Action Office, Office of Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response, Office of Student Conduct, CAPS) can be provided.