

DEES Policy for Resolving
Concerns from Students
Department of Earth and Environmental Science, Columbia University 2026

Premise & Purpose:

DEES is deeply committed to providing an environment that is respectful, nurturing and scientifically rigorous.

In an effort to maintain and improve students learning experience further, this document outlines the process by which students can share concerns regarding instruction, mentoring, and any interactions with DEES faculty, students and staff.

The primary objective is to provide the DEES Department Chair with first-hand information, so they can effectively assess, act upon and resolve issues in a fair and reasonable manner.

Reporting Procedures:

Students are encouraged to report concerns regarding DEES teaching and mentoring to DEES senior personnel (a DEES staff member, the DGS, DUS, Associate Chair, or Chair). When this occurs, a number of steps may be taken, again, with the goal of providing the DEES Chair with first-hand information.

- Students will be encouraged to speak directly with the DEES Chair, on the condition of confidentiality if desired (subject to mandatory reporting requirements, as below). The initial DEES contact may offer to accompany the student if they wish.
- If the student prefers not to speak directly with the DEES Chair, they may submit their concerns in writing directly to the Chair, or ask DEES senior personnel to convey the information on their behalf, and/or speak to the Associate Chair.
- The DEES staff member contacted by the student will document the concern in writing using a provided template, making every effort to record comments verbatim.

Concerns regarding sexual harassment or gender-based misconduct must be reported directly to the Columbia Office of Institutional Equity, which handles Title VI, VII, and IX allegations. Columbia University also maintains a centralized clearinghouse for reporting any university-life concerns at universitylife.columbia.edu/report.

Response & Resolution:

Information shared with the Dept Chair will help them develop a plan to resolve the situation.

This may involve reaching out to involved parties, facilitating discussion, tasking a committee or DEES senior personnel to guide resolution, making teaching or advising recommendation, and/or referring to other CU resources.

If requested, the Department Chair will strive to maintain the highest level of confidentiality possible and will not reveal the identity of the reporting student without their consent and will -

if necessary - take steps to protect the reporting student from any sort of retaliation. On the other hand, it can be most helpful to finding solutions if parties are able to identify themselves.

The ultimate goal is to assure both students and faculty that their voices are heard and that definitive actions are being taken to reach a fair outcome for both students and faculty.