

Climate and Culture Review Procedure

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Our Culture, Our Commitment

At the University of Idaho, we recognize that a positive living, learning and working environment is essential to achieving our vision and fulfilling our highest goals. The university is a place of excellence where the culture and climate reflect trust, respect, fairness, inclusiveness, openness, consistency, integrity and accountability. We are committed to ongoing, honest self-examination of our current organization, culture and climate, and to continuous improvement in each of these areas.

The procedures outlined below are used to respond to concerns reported to Human Resources about climate and culture issues, employment issues, or policy violations that involve University of Idaho employees, contractors or volunteers (note: throughout this document employees, contractors and volunteer are collectively referred to as “employees”). Human Resources generally has two possible approaches for addressing concerns that are brought to our attention:

- **Climate and culture review.** Conducted in response to complaints regarding the climate and culture of a college, unit, department, etc. The goal is to assess strategies that could improve the climate and culture of a given area.

- **Fact-finding.** Conducted in response to complaints of policy violations and performance issues, including those with a potential for disciplinary action. The goal is to gather information surrounding the concern and make appropriate recommendations for action.

Before beginning a climate and culture review or a fact-finding, we will determine if the concern falls within the purview of Human Resources. If we determine before or during the process that all or part of the concern does not fall within HR purview, we will refer the concern to the appropriate office immediately and the HR review or fact-finding will cease. If other concerns remain that are within HR purview, the HR process will continue for those areas of concern only.

Note: complaints of illegal discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment) and retaliation against University of Idaho employees, contractors or volunteers 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 OCRI.

Climate and Culture Review

As a part of our commitment to continuous improvement and honest self-examination, Human Resources can provide a neutral structured review of a university department, site or sub-group.

Purpose

The purpose of a climate and culture review is to provide leadership with information from an external and neutral perspective to help identify factors that may be contributing to interpersonal conflict, workplace inefficiency or decreased morale. A climate and culture review is a neutral review of the unit as a whole (not of individuals within the unit) and is not intended to be disciplinary.

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 a review
- It is a part of an ongoing fact-finding or related investigation

Scope

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

- Reporting Structure: such as formal reporting and organizational structure, informal authority and social dynamics within a department
- Processes and Procedures: such as workflow 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 about levels of authority, leadership style and 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, 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

During the process, we may identify specific areas of concern that would benefit from additional focused review. In that case, the review may transition into a fact-finding process if appropriate. If we determine before or during the process that all or part of the concern does not fall within HR purview, we will refer the concern to the appropriate office immediately and the HR review or fact-finding will cease.

Outcome

It is not always clear at the beginning of a climate and culture review what the outcomes will be. However, we may offer recommendations for:

- Departmental processes and procedures, workflow and expectations
- Change(s) in structure and reporting, employee shift structure or physical location
- Additional training or continuing education
- Coaching, mentoring, or disciplinary or corrective action
- Improved communication
- Referrals to other authorities on campus such as, Office of Civil Rights and Investigations (OCRI), Internal Audit and Advisory Services (IAAS), Office of General Counsel (OGC), the Ombuds, Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) or other appropriate campus entities.
- Other recommendations as determined based on the findings

Fact-finding

To assist supervisors with addressing issues of employee performance, Human Resources can conduct a neutral fact-finding.

Purpose

The purpose of a fact-finding is to establish the facts around a particular issue, event or set of circumstances. Although there may be fact-finding components within larger investigations, fact-findings are usually conducted when corrective or disciplinary action is being considered. An independent fact-finding may also identify opportunities for process review or future training.

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

- There is a need to establish facts around a particular issue, event or set of circumstances
- A policy violation has occurred
- An employee is experiencing performance issues
- Corrective action or disciplinary action may occur

Outcome

It is not always clear at the beginning of a fact-finding what the outcomes will be. However, possibilities include:

- 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 and Advisory Services (IAAS), 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

Process

Once the need for a climate and culture review or a fact-finding has been identified, a Human Resources professional, typically an HR Business Partner, will be assigned to conduct the review or fact-finding. In consultation with appropriate leadership, the HR professional will determine the following:

- Scope
 - For a climate and culture review, will the review be department wide, a subgroup of the department or a particular office or site?
 - For a fact-finding, who is involved in the report of concern? Who needs to be interviewed to obtain facts relevant to the concern?
 - As information is gathered during the process, the scope may be adjusted to fully capture any identified areas of concern or need for review.
- Logistics and Communication
 - Will information be collected in 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?
 - 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 effectively assess climate and culture or determine the facts of the situation?

Timeline

Depending on the scope of the review or fact-finding, 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 report will be retained in Human Resources and copies 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, 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 it was determined to be outside the purview of HR, a referral statement will be prepared that briefly describing the nature of the complaint, 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.

Other Reports of Concern

Employees sometimes engage with HR regarding concerns that fall into one of the above areas, but do not request action or assistance beyond advice or policy assistance. Unless the nature of concern requires additional action, HR will provide assistance to the extent requested and may address the concern with appropriate leadership in a neutral and generic way if applicable.

If reports of concern become cumulative and/or reveal a pattern of behaviors/concerns, HR will engage with appropriate leadership to share the concerns and determine an appropriate course of action. This may include, but is not limited to, climate culture reviews and fact-finding. 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, please contact the Director of Human Resources or the HR Business Partner assigned to your unit.