

# Michigan State University Student Rights & Responsibilities / General Student Regulations Revision Process

## Update and Summary of Major Changes/Edits

In the fall of 2022, MSU launched an initiative to review, update, and edit both the Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) and General Student Regulations (GSR). The goals of the review focused on ensuring the documents are meeting the needs of the MSU community, that current policy is appropriately responding to evolving societal norms and modern challenges, and to improve clarity and consistency, all through a lens of equity and inclusiveness.

The current version of the document edits and combines the Student Right and Responsibilities (SRR) and General Student Regulations (GSR) into a single document. The purpose of merging the documents was to create a more comprehensive, universal, and "user-friendly" student rights document. The outline below highlights the major edits within each newly formatted section. Additionally, edits were made throughout the document with the following in mind:

- Strengthening clarity and plain language
- Removing redundancy
- Reviewing with a DEI lens, including removing gender-based language

## 1. Guiding Values & Principles

- **Truncating the Forward and Preface:** Key points outlined in the original documents Forward and Preface have been incorporated into the introduction of section 1- Guiding Values and Principles. This change was made with the intent to reduce redundancy while also preserving the spirit of the original documents.
- **Land Acknowledgement:** MSU's Brief Land Acknowledgement language was requested to be added by the Advisory Group, as well as the removal of language related to "land-grant University".
- **Definition of "Student" and Jurisdiction:** A clear outline and definition of a "student", as well as jurisdiction, was requested by constituents through the course of the revision process. The current definitions incorporate language previously vetted and currently being used by MSU while also considering benchmarking, best practice, and the model code.
- **Retaliation Policy and Definition:** A clear outline and definition of retaliation was requested by constituents through the course of the revision process. This definition incorporates language previously vetted by MSU's Title IX policy while also considering benchmarking and leading practice.

## 2. Academic Rights & Responsibilities

- **Truncating the Preamble:** The Preamble section of the original Article 2: Academic Rights and Responsibilities was edited to ensure clarity and remove redundancy.
- **Incorporation of Footnotes:** To ensure clarity, footnotes in the original document were removed and their text was incorporated directly into policy where possible.
- **Academic Bullying/Academic Harassment:** Per constituent's request, a clause was updated to underscores the importance of ensuring that students are treated fairly and respectfully in their

academic environment while also clearly prohibiting academic bullying/academic harassment.

### 3. General Student Regulations

- **Burden of Proof:** A call out and definition of MSU's burden of proof (preponderance of the evidence) was added to ensure understanding of needed criteria to be found in violation of a policy as well as to better align with leading practices.
- **Free Speech Language:** The Introduction of the GSR section now includes a definition around free speech and First Amendment rights. The language used is pulled directly from MSU's Free Speech Policy.
- **Hazing Definition:** The explanation of hazing was expanded upon, with multiple illustrative examples provided, as requested.
- **Animal Cruelty Policy:** A specific policy was requested to be added to cover behavior that would include cruelty to animals. Language in the current draft of this policy is congruent with MSU's College of Veterinary Medicine Code of Conduct.
- **Unauthorized Access Policy:** A policy specifically prohibiting individuals from granting an unknown entity unauthorized access to MSU buildings was requested. It was also requested that the language relate to already utilized language in MSU's on-campus housing policies.
- **Federal, State, and Local Law:** A clause was added to clearly allow the University to address federal, state, or local issues as requested. Similar clauses exist in university rights and responsibilities documents across the country as well as the Model Code of Conduct.
- **Gambling Policy:** A clear prohibition of gambling was requested by constituents through the course of the revision process. The language included in the current draft of this policy is in line with the current residence hall regulations language.
- **Compliance Policy:** A clear "non-compliance" policy was requested, and current language focuses on a student complying with the directions of any person/office/department employed by, or acting for, the University. Language considered benchmarking, leading practice, and the model code.

### 4. Resolution Process

- **Document Flow and Truncation:** Section 4-Resolution Process was created to combine and remove redundancy from previous Article 5: Adjudication of Non-Academic Cases and Article 7: Adjudication of Academic Cases.
- **Move Toward an Investigative Model:** A review of the current complainant driven system in comparison to a more investigative model was requested by constituents through the course of the revision process. It has been requested by University leadership that MSU begin to move toward a more investigative model. As such, Language was added to clearly indicate the burden of investigation and proof lies with the University. This language is in line with model codes and benchmarking.
- **Informal Resolution:** A more robust definition/explanation of informal resolution options was requested by constituents through the course of the revision process. The current definition wording incorporates and aligns with language utilized in MSU's Anti-Discrimination policy.
- **Filing a Complaint:** Language updated to remove reference to any specific community member requirements for filing a complaint in light of move toward more of an investigative model.
- **Preponderance of the Evidence:** Additional language added clarifying the definition of the burden of proof: preponderance of the evidence.
- **Rights of Parties:** Section reclassified to more clearly outline and articulate the rights of individuals participating in a hearing process.
- **Role of an Advisor:** Updated the section to allow for any advisor of the parties choosing, including an attorney, and to outline the role and scope of an advisor throughout the student conduct process.
- **Sanctions and Appeals:** Added language to allow an option for some sanctions, particularly related to cases involving hazing or acts causing or explicitly threatening to cause serious bodily harm to other individuals, to remain in place during appeal proceedings.
- **Confidentiality Requirement:** Removed language requiring a complainant or respondent to maintain

confidentiality of related documents. This may be viewed as a "gag" order. Instead, language was added to request that the parties keep the information private but not to mandate that it remains confidential.

- **Second Appeal:** Edited to remove second appeal option for suspension/dismissal cases. The removal of a second appeal was requested by University leadership and better aligns with practices in the field.
- **Disruptive Behavior Definitions:** A clearer definition of "disruptive behavior" was requested and added to the policy.

## 5. Office of the Ombudsperson

- **Wording Changes:** Edits to this section were submitted by the current Ombudsperson, incorporated into the current document, and work to better clarify and explain the role of the office.

## 6. Student Records

- **Wording Changes:** Section was updated for clarity and removal of redundancy with no substantive or material changes.

## 7: Hearing Board Composition and Guidelines

- **Number of Hearing Boards and Pool of Board Members:** A review of the current number and make-up of hearing boards was requested by University leadership through the course of the revision process. There may be an opportunity to restructure the number of boards and utilize a centralized pool of board members (trained on all case types) to serve on specific cases as necessary. Board chairs or individual members could also receive special training on identified topics such as appeal proceedings.
- **Second Appeal:** Options for second appeal on academic cases removed as requested by University leadership.

## 8: Independent and University-Supported Student Publications

- No substantive changes to this section

## 9: Procedures for Amendments and Revisions of Related Regulations & Policies

- No substantive changes to this section

## 10: Procedures for Amendments and Revisions of this Document

- **Separate Governance Processes:** Certain sections of this document (i.e., 6-Student Records, 7-Hearing Board Composition, 8-Independent and University-Supported Student Publications, 11-Definitions and Acronyms) may not need to go through full governance with final approval at the Board of Trustees level. Section 10: Procedures for Amendments and Revisions of this Document section could be updated to outline which specific sections of the document will be subject to full governance and which would use an abridged governance process (perhaps ending at the level of the University Council for Student Life and Engagement).

## 11: Definitions and Acronyms

- **General Updates:** Definitions and acronyms were updated throughout the document to reflect, incorporate and align with any changes or additions in the edited document.

## History of Approval

- No substantive changes to this section

