

Conflict Resolution Procedure

College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Florida

This document exists to guide graduate students and faculty in the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) at the University of Florida (UF) through conflicts to a fair and appropriate resolution in a timely manner. This is to ensure that you are given adequate opportunity to raise concerns (aside from grades), including, but not limited to, academic issues, lack of best mentor/advisor practices, discrimination, employment problems, scholarly misconduct (e.g., plagiarism) abuse of authority, mistreatment (i.e., academic, financial, verbal, and emotional). If you believe you have been subjected to mistreatment that cannot be corrected directly with your supervisor, you can initiate the online report on the CVM ORGS's www page on professionalism and mistreatment

<https://research.vetmed.ufl.edu/studies/professionalism-mistreatment-policies-2/>

Anyone who has knowledge of an occurrence of sexual misconduct should promptly reach out to the Title IX Coordinator. <https://hr.ufl.edu/forms-policies/policies-managers/sexual-harassment/>

Notice:

- It is encouraged to write down the grievances and any communications about the issue. The communications can then be summarized in emails and shared with those involved to ensure open communication and can serve as a record of how the grievance was resolved.
- You may have a third party of your choice accompany you to any of the meetings as support, but the third-party person may only serve as a witness. In addition, you may consider contacting an officer of VGSA, a CVM Human Resources representative, or a University Ombuds representative to ensure an unbiased resolution.
- When a resolution is achieved, please describe the resolution, sign the Conflict Resolution Form as resolved and send copies to all involved parties.

Procedure:

Step 1 Prevention:

- Major professors play a key role as mentors. Key roles include guidance, emotional support, and life-balance to their mentees—in addition to supervision of student academic tasks or responsibilities.
- It is important to use UF CVM available resources for mentor-mentee best practices. All PhD students are required to create and update an individual development plan (IDP) on an annual basis, in consultation with their major professors <http://graduateschool.ufl.edu/faculty--staff/resources/individual-development-plan-idp-policy/>. The IDP is intended to be a working document, to guide new and continuing PhD students in identifying, pursuing, and meeting their professional and personal goals (e.g., communication, management, leadership, life-balance). Plan your research and coursework. Form 1 is an instrument designed to plan the student's research and coursework in consultation with their major professor and supervisory committee members. Both the IDP and Form 1 should be completed by the end of the first semester (or within one semester of identifying a major professor).

- To assess and manage student academic progress, the student and their major professor (and supervisory committee) should complete a semi-annual evaluation (twice per year).
- If academic conflicts arise, the student or the major professor can take the following steps to address and resolve them:

Step 2 Mitigation:

- The student and the major professor should address problems as soon as possible in an attempt to solve the situation or restore the relationship.
- The student or the major professor can contact the **Department's Graduate Coordinator**, in an effort to resolve the conflict informally. If necessary, the student or the major professor can present their concerns in writing. The Department Graduate Coordinator must respond to the person reporting the conflict either orally or in writing within 10 business days.
- Students can also reach out to UF Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution for guidance and assistance [Conflict Resolution | SCCR \(ufl.edu\)](https://www.sccr.ufl.edu/).

Step 3 Management:

- If Step 2 does not resolve the conflict to your satisfaction, submit a formal grievance by filling out the Conflict Report Form and supporting documentation (your record of communications, emails, etc.) to your **Department Chair**, who must respond to you in writing within 15 business days.

For good coordination and communication, the CVM's Dean or Executive Associate Dean should be notified when a conflict escalates at Step 3-5 levels.

Step 4 Management:

- If Step 3 does not resolve the conflict to your satisfaction, submit your Conflict Report Form and supporting documentation to the CVM **Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies**, who will investigate the matter and respond to you in writing within 15 business days.

Step 5 Management:

- If Step 4 does not resolve the conflict to your satisfaction, submit your Conflict Report Form and supporting documentation to the **UF Office of the Ombuds**. Appeals to and decisions of the UF Ombuds are final. For more information, click this online link to the Ombuds website: UF Ombuds.

All communications should be summarized after each step to ensure that the information is maintained, the process was followed, and the grievance was appropriately addressed. After each step and once a resolution has been found, the conflict report form should be signed by all parties and dated. The form should be saved by those involved in the conflict. If the grievance becomes a formal complaint (moves past step 2) the form should be saved by all parties and kept on record with the Office of Research and Graduate Studies.

The student has the ability to directly contact the Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Research, or the Ombuds at any stage of the grievances process. In this circumstance, the Department Chair (if not already contacted) and the Department Graduate Coordinator will be informed. The major professor should also be informed. However, depending on the gravity of the conflict, the major professor may be informed at the end of the process, but must be informed and provided an opportunity for response

before any action is made. This is to give the possibility to evaluate the conflict under all points of view, and to provide fairness to all parties.

Most employment-related grievances are covered by Article 22 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Florida Board of Education of the State University System and Graduate Assistants United (GAU). In such cases, call the GAU office at 352-392-0274 or UF Human Resources at 352-392-2477 for information and instructions.

The table below shows key prevention, mitigation, and/or management roles by different stakeholders at selected steps:

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Stakeholder	Prevention	Mitigation	Management		
Graduate student	Individual Development Plan & professional development activities; Form 1: coursework, research plan; semi-annual evaluations; communication	Assessment Mitigation Communication			
Major professor	Supervision Mentoring (guidance, emotional support, life-balance) Communication				
Department Graduate Coordinator	Program advise Education Communication				
Department Chair	Communication		Assessment Mitigation Management Communication		
Associate Dean	Resources Communication Monitoring Compliance			Assessment; Mitigation; Management in consultation with corresponding unit(s): CVM Academic Department, Human Resources, Dean's	

				Office, UF Graduate School, Other Unit; Communication	
UF Ombuds					

Mitigating and management strategies:

Step 1 Prevention: Student, Major Professor, Department Graduate Coordinator, Department Chair, Associate Dean

- Conflicts can be prevented by consistent, direct, professional, and open communication. Students are advised to engage and use UF CVM resources available to assess, monitor, manage, and enhance academic performance, life balance, and mentor-mentee best practices (e.g., Individual Development Plan & professional development activities; Form 1: coursework, research plan; semi-annual evaluations; communication). This is the preferred point at which conflicts can be avoided, by following guidelines to ensure expectations are understood and everyone remains “on the same page”.

Step 2 Mitigation: Student, Major Professor, and Department Graduate Coordinator

- Prompt, direct, and respectful communication as soon as possible after a conflict occurs.
- Assess and discuss conflict with the student and major professor involved. Meet separately if requested.
- Suggest potential resources and resolutions. The role of the Graduate Coordinator at this point is one of facilitating communication and attempting to identify resolutions.
- Major professor and student may agree to respect each other’s needs and continue to work together, with a new understanding and agreement to not let the same issue recur.
- Major professor and student may agree to respect each other’s needs and do not work together as closely. They may choose to communicate primarily via email and/or Zoom.

Step 3 Management Options: Department Chair

Conflict Report becomes a formal grievance and goes on record.

Assess, mitigate, and/or manage the Conflict Report of interest.

- If the issue is immediately harmful to the student or major professor, take necessary steps to mitigate the situation and avoid escalating tensions.
- Limit direct interactions between the major professor and the student.
- If justified, reach out to UF Counseling and Wellness Center for guidance and assistance to support the student and/or major professor.
- If justified, enroll major professor in mentoring training.
- Other options considered feasible and acceptable to all stakeholders can be considered for implementation.
- Within 15 business days, inform all stakeholders in writing about the results of the investigation and mitigating/management measures that will be implemented in response to the academic conflict of interest.
- For good coordination and communication, the CVM’s Dean or Executive Associate Dean should be notified when a conflict escalates at Step 3-5 levels.

Step 4 Management Options: CVM Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Student, and Faculty

- Assess, mitigate, and/or manage the Conflict Report of interest in consultation with corresponding unit(s): CVM Academic Department, Human Resources, Dean’s Office, UF Graduate School, other units.
- Within 15 business days, inform all stakeholders in writing about the results of the investigation and mitigating/management measures that will be implemented in response to the academic conflict of interest.
- If necessary, provide resources needed to provide a productive resolution to the situation.

Step 5: Ombuds

Repercussions:

If the allegations are found to be falsified the case will be forwarded to the UF Human Resources department.

Contacts:

CVM Office of Research & Graduate Studies 352-294-4241

Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Services (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/resources-by-audience/students/conflict-resolution/>)

Emergency (Police/Fire/Paramedic) 911

Campus Police (Non-Emergency) 352-392-1111

Counseling and Wellness Center 352-192-2575

GatorWell 352-273-4450

Graduate School 352-392-6622

Student Health Care Center 352-392-1161

Note:

The UF CVM Conflict Resolution Procedure shall be reviewed by the CVM Graduate Studies Committee at least every year for necessary changes.