



## Lehigh University Human Resources Policy

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Effective Date:	5/1/1979
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Applicability:	All Classified Staff

### PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR STAFF MEMBERS POLICY

#### **Purpose:**

Policy on the informal and formal stages of solving employee problems

#### **Policy:**

#### ***Introduction***

The University is committed to establishing and maintaining harmonious working relationships between supervisors and staff members. The University also recognizes the right of staff members to request and receive a review of problems or concerns relating to any terms or conditions of employment, including sexual harassment and equal opportunity issues. This process provides a means to seek fair and objective solutions to problems or concerns without fear of harassment or repercussion.

The steps listed below will work for many situations; however, there are times when other problem solving avenues are more appropriate. Such issues as sexual harassment and equal opportunity should be brought directly to the attention of Human Resources or the Harassment Policy Officer, who will advise the staff member on the appropriate steps to be followed.

#### ***Eligibility***

All classified staff members are eligible to use this process. Temporary wage employees may refer their problems or concerns directly to Human Resources.

#### ***The Problem Solving Process***

##### **Informal Stage:**

Job-related problems or concerns may be discussed with a Human Resources representative, who will review the problems or concerns. The HR representative will suggest possible options to resolve the situation in a confidential meeting.

When possible, staff members should meet with their supervisor to attempt to resolve their problems or concerns. If staff members and their supervisor cannot reach a mutually satisfactory solution, the staff

member may request the direct involvement of the HR representative to assist in resolving problems or concerns.

If the HR representative needs additional information to make a recommendation, s/he will conduct an informal review. This review may include discussions with the immediate supervisor and/or any other University personnel deemed appropriate by the HR representative. At the conclusion of this review, the HR representative will prepare a written summary, including recommendations based on any findings. A copy of the summary will be sent to all parties concerned.

If the results of the Informal Stage are unsatisfactory, the employee may choose to use the Formal Stage of the Problem Solving Procedure.

### **Formal Stage:**

#### *Step 1 - Meeting with Immediate Supervisor*

Submit a completed [\*Problem Solving Process\*](#) form to your immediate supervisor. Indicate on the *Problem Solving Process* form a full description of the conditions and events on which the problems or concerns are based. Suggest proposed solution(s). The *Problem Solving Process* form is available from Human Resources or on the HR website.

The supervisor and the staff member will discuss the stated problems or concerns in an attempt to resolve them in a mutually satisfactory manner. After the discussion, the supervisor will prepare a written response on the *Problem Solving Process* form. The form will be forwarded to the staff member within five (5) working days.

The staff member will review the supervisor's determination on the *Problem Solving Process* form and decide whether or not further action is needed. If no further action is desired, the staff member will forward the *Problem Solving Process* form to Human Resources for records retention with a copy to the immediate supervisor. If further review is desired, the employee will forward the *Problem Solving Process* form to the next level supervisor with a copy to the immediate supervisor within five (5) working days after receipt of the determination.

#### *Step 2 - Meeting with Next Level Supervisor*

The next level supervisor will meet with the staff member and the immediate supervisor to discuss the problems or concerns. After the discussion, the next level supervisor will prepare a written determination of the problems or concerns on the *Problem Solving Process* form. The form will be forwarded to the staff member within five (5) working days, with a copy to the immediate supervisor.

The staff member will respond to the next level supervisor's determination on the *Problem Solving Process* form and decide whether or not further review is desired. If no further action is desired, the staff member will forward the *Problem Solving Process* form to Human Resources for records retention with a copy to the next level supervisor. If the staff member feels further review is required, the *Problem Solving Process* form must be forwarded to the attention of Human Resources with a copy to the next level supervisor within five (5) working days after receipt of this determination.

#### *Step 3 - Meeting with the Associate Vice President, Human Resources*

Upon receipt of the *Problem Solving Process* form, the Associate Vice President, Human Resources, or a representative, will conduct an independent review of the problems or concerns. This review will include discussions with the staff member, the immediate supervisor, the next level supervisor, and any other University personnel deemed appropriate.

Upon completion of the review, the Associate Vice President, Human Resources, or a representative, will prepare a written report. The report will set forth the recommendations of the Associate Vice President, Human Resources. The report will be forwarded to all parties concerned within ten (10) working days after receipt of the *Problem Solving Process* form.

If the results of this step are unsatisfactory to the staff member or supervisor, either party may proceed to Step 4 within five (5) working days after receipt of this determination.

#### *Step 4 - Review by Problem Solving Committee*

A request for review by the Problem Solving Committee must be submitted in writing to the Vice President for Finance and Administration, who will request the President to appoint a Problem Solving Committee to review the case. The President will appoint a three-member committee consisting of one exempt staff member, one nonexempt staff member, and one faculty member. The supervisor and staff member may each challenge up to two of the committee appointees.

The Associate Vice President for Human Resources will act as an advisor to the Committee and will provide copies to the committee members of all documents pertaining to the case in question, including the *Problem Solving Process* form, the report submitted as part of Step 3, and any supporting documentation. The staff member and the supervisor are each permitted to be accompanied by a University faculty/staff member to the committee meeting(s).

The Committee will investigate the problems or concerns and conduct an impartial hearing. Upon completion of the investigation, the Committee will prepare a written report to the President, including recommendations for a course of action based on their findings. Attached to the Committee's report will be a copy of the *Problem Solving Process* form, the report prepared by the Associate Vice President for Human Resources, and all the supporting documents submitted during Steps 1 through 3. The President will review the Committee's report and all attachments and render a decision within ten (10) working days. The President's written decision will be forwarded to the Committee and all parties concerned. The President's decision will be final and binding to all parties concerned. All records concerning the case will be retained in Human Resources.

**Keywords:** Problem Solving, Formal, Informal