

WSR 23-20-097

PROPOSED RULES

EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

[Filed October 2, 2023, 3:11 p.m.]

Original Notice.

Preproposal statement of inquiry was filed as WSR 23-16-083.

Title of Rule and Other Identifying Information: Student conduct code, chapter 172-121 WAC.

Hearing Location(s): On November 27, 2023, at 12:00 p.m., at 215A Tawanka Commons, Cheney, WA 99004.

Date of Intended Adoption: December 8, 2023

Submit Written Comments to: Annika Scharosch, 211 Tawanka [Commons], Cheney, WA 99004, email ascharosch@ewu.edu, website https://inside.ewu.edu/policies, by November 27, 2023.

Assistance for Persons with Disabilities: Contact Annika Scharosch, phone 509-359-6724, email ascharosch@ewu.edu, by November 22, 2023.

Purpose of the Proposal and Its Anticipated Effects, Including Any Changes in Existing Rules: Updates Eastern Washington University's student conduct code. Adds options for adaptable dispute resolution. Updates the definitions of assault and threats.

Reasons Supporting Proposal: See above.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 28B.35.120(12).

Statute Being Implemented: RCW 28B.10.902.

Rule is necessary because of federal court decision, *Counterman v. Colorado*, United States Supreme Court decision on June 27, 2023.

Name of Proponent: Eastern Washington University, governmental.

Name of Agency Personnel Responsible for Drafting: Annika Scharosch, 211 Tawanka Commons, Cheney, WA 99004, 509-359-6724; Implementation and Enforcement: Dr. Shari McMahan, 214 Showalter Hall, Cheney, WA 99004, 509-359-6200.

A school district fiscal impact statement is not required under RCW 28A.305.135.

A cost-benefit analysis is not required under RCW 34.05.328. Not subject to RCW 34.05.328(5).

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt from requirements of the Regulatory Fairness Act because the proposal:

Is exempt under RCW 19.85.025(3) as the rules adopt, amend, or repeal a procedure, practice, or requirement relating to agency hearings; or a filing or related process requirement for applying to an agency for a license or permit.

Is exempt under RCW 19.85.025(4).

Scope of exemption for rule proposal:

Is fully exempt.

October 2, 2023  
Annika Scharosch  
Associate Vice  
President for Civil Rights, Compliance  
and Enterprise Risk Management

OTS-4997.1

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 23-11-109, filed 5/19/23, effective 6/19/23)

**WAC 172-121-100 Complaints. (1) Filing of complaints.**

(a) Any person or the university may file a complaint against a student or student organization for violation of the student conduct code.

(b) A person wishing to file a complaint under the student conduct code must submit the complaint, in writing, to one of the following:

(i) Student rights and responsibilities ([www.inside.ewu.edu/srr](http://www.inside.ewu.edu/srr));  
or

(ii) Title IX coordinator ([www.inside.ewu.edu/titleix](http://www.inside.ewu.edu/titleix)).

(c) Filing a complaint under the student conduct code does not prohibit or limit a person's right to file complaints or charges with other civil and/or criminal authorities for violations of local, county, state, or federal law.

(d) All student conduct code complaints will be forwarded to the director of SRR for further review and action.

(e) In cases where the university is pursuing a student conduct case on its own behalf, an EWU employee shall initiate the complaint. For Title IX complaints, a complaint must either be filed by the person subject to the alleged misconduct or by the Title IX coordinator. If a complaint is filed by the Title IX coordinator, the Title IX coordinator will not be considered a complainant for the purposes of participating in the investigation and hearing process.

(2) **Complaint review.** Upon receipt of a complaint, the director of SRR shall review the complaint to determine whether it includes allegations of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence, may lead to suspension or expulsion and/or felony level criminal conduct to determine which student conduct process applies and if appropriate law enforcement or other authorities should be notified. If a complaint falls within such categories, it shall be referred to a hearing under WAC 172-121-122. For all other complaints, the director may determine whether or not to dismiss the complaint, refer the matter to adaptable dispute resolution under WAC 172-121-102, or refer the matter for a brief or full hearing.

(3) **Sexual misconduct and interpersonal violence proceedings.** Except where specifically stated, this section applies to all allegations the university receives of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence regardless of the possible level of sanction or whether there is a formal Title IX complaint.

(a) Report to Title IX coordinator. The director of SRR shall report all complaints which may constitute any form of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence to the university Title IX coordinator within 24 hours.

(b) Title IX complaints. The Title IX coordinator will determine whether or not the allegation of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence constitutes a Title IX complaint under this code. Solely in cases of Title IX complaints, the university will not move forward with initiating a Title IX investigation or student conduct hearing unless a formal complaint from the person alleged to have been subjected to sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence or a complaint from the Title IX coordinator requesting initiation of the student conduct process has been received.

The Title IX coordinator is responsible for determining whether or not the allegations constitute a formal Title IX complaint. If al-

legations include sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence but do not meet the definition of a Title IX complaint, the Title IX coordinator will inform the complainant and the respondent that the complaint is not considered a Title IX complaint and the reasons it does not fit within the required elements of a formal Title IX complaint. If the complainant or respondent disagrees with the Title IX coordinator's decision, the party may file an appeal with the dean of students within three calendar days of the Title IX coordinator's decision. The dean of students can affirm, reverse, or remand the Title IX coordinator's decision and such decision must be communicated in writing simultaneously to the parties.

SRR may proceed, however, with pursuing a student conduct case against the respondent for misconduct outside of Title IX including, but not limited to, sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence that does not fit the definition of a Title IX complaint.

(c) Prompt resolution. The university shall investigate any complaint alleging sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence when it is legally required to do so. The university's goal is to have complaints of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence resolved within 90 days. If the university needs additional time, the investigator or director of SRR should provide written notice to the complainant and respondent of the delay and the reasons for the delay. Delays and extensions beyond the 90 days must be based on good cause.

(d) Investigations.

(i) Sexual misconduct and interpersonal violence. The university will investigate complaints of sexual misconduct and interpersonal violence, including Title IX complaints, and may, at its discretion, ask for an investigation of other alleged misconduct. During the investigation, the investigator is responsible for gathering evidence relating to the complaint. The investigator will contact the complainant, respondent, and other witnesses to ask questions and gather relevant evidence. Parties may be assisted by an advisor during the investigative process. During the investigation, parties will be provided with an equal opportunity to identify witnesses and other evidence that supports their position. Prior to any investigatory interview regarding a Title IX complaint, the investigator will provide written notice of the meeting with the date, time, location, participants, and purpose with sufficient time for the person to prepare to participate in the interview.

Prior to the completion of the investigative report for a Title IX complaint, the investigator will send to each party the evidence obtained during the investigation that is directly related to the allegations raised, including the evidence upon which the university does not intend to rely in reaching a determination regarding responsibility and inculpatory and exculpatory evidence. Each party will then have at least 10 calendar days to submit a written response for a Title IX complaint. The investigator will consider the written response prior to the completion of the investigative report. At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator will prepare a final written report that fairly summarizes the relevant evidence. The investigative report, along with any evidence collected during the investigation, shall then be transmitted to the director of SRR at least 10 days prior to any hearing or other determination of responsibility. In cases of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence, a copy of the report must also be provided to the parties for their review and written response.

(ii) Other types of conduct. The director may request an investigation for other types of alleged misconduct. During the investigation, the investigator is responsible for gathering evidence relating to the complaint. An investigation may be completed by a single investigator or team of investigators. The investigator will contact the complainant, if applicable, respondent, and other witnesses to ask questions and gather relevant evidence. During the investigation, parties will be provided with an equal opportunity to identify witnesses and other evidence that supports their position. At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator will prepare a final written report that fairly summarizes the relevant evidence gathered during the investigation. The investigative report, along with any evidence collected during the investigation, shall then be transmitted to the director of SRR.

(e) Confidentiality. To facilitate the investigative process and protect the privacy of those involved, all information will be maintained in a confidential manner to the fullest extent permissible by law. During an investigation, complaint information will be disseminated on a need-to-know basis. If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, the university will take all reasonable steps to investigate the allegation without disclosing the name of the complainant to the extent allowed by state and federal law. If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, the university shall inform them that its ability to investigate and respond to the allegation will be limited. The university cannot ensure confidentiality, as its legal obligations under federal or state law may require investigation of the allegation and possible disclosure of the complainant's name. Reports of crimes to the campus community shall not include the names of the complainants. Files subject to public disclosure will be released to the extent required by law.

(f) Right to file a criminal report. Once the university is notified of an allegation of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence that could constitute a crime, it will notify the potential complainant of their right to file a criminal complaint with campus or local law enforcement. If the complainant in such circumstances wishes to report the conduct to local law enforcement, the university will assist them in doing so. The university will also notify the complainant that they are not required to file a report with local law enforcement. The university will report allegations of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence to law enforcement or other authorities when it is required to do so under federal, state, and local law.

(4) **Supportive measures and interim restrictions.** During the complaint review, the director of SRR or Title IX coordinator will review whether any supportive measures or interim restrictions are needed. Supportive measures and interim restrictions are addressed in WAC 172-121-140.

(5) **SRR will follow up with the parties as described below.**

(a) The director of SRR will contact the respondent, and the complainant in cases of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence, and provide them with the following information:

(i) The respondent's and complainant's rights under the student conduct code;

(ii) A summary of the allegations the complainant has against the respondent;

(iii) The potential conduct code violations related to the allegations; and

(iv) How to report any subsequent problems or retaliation, including intimidation, threats, coercion, or discrimination.

(b) In all cases alleging sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence, the director of SRR will, in addition to the information specified under (a) of this subsection, provide both parties with written information that will include, at a minimum:

(i) The student's rights and options, including options to avoid contact with the other party; a list of available university and community resources for counseling, health, mental health, victim advocacy, legal assistance, visa and immigration assistance, student financial aid, and other academic and housing services at the university and in the community; and options for, available assistance in, and how to request changes to academic, living, transportation, and working situations or protective measures;

(ii) The importance of preserving evidence of the alleged incident and procedures to follow to preserve evidence of the alleged incident;

(iii) Who will receive a report of the allegation;

(iv) Their right to file or not file a criminal complaint as detailed above and the ability to be assisted by campus authorities in notifying law enforcement authorities if the complainant wishes to do so;

(v) A list of resources for obtaining protective, no contact, restraining, or similar orders, if applicable;

(vi) The procedures the university will follow when determining if discipline is appropriate;

(vii) Steps the university will take to ensure confidentiality of complainants and other necessary parties and the limits this may place on the university's ability to investigate and respond, as set forth above; and

(viii) Information regarding the university's policy against retaliation, steps the university will take to prevent and respond to any retaliation, and how the student should report retaliation or new incidents.

**(6) Following the complaint review, the director of SRR will either dismiss the matter, refer it to adaptable dispute resolution, or arrange a prehearing conference.**

(a) Dismiss the matter. If the director of SRR determines the allegations, even if true, would not rise to the level of a conduct violation, they may dismiss the matter. In such cases, the director of SRR will prepare a written record of the dismissal. The director of SRR will also notify the complainant of their decision, if such notification is permissible under FERPA. The dismissal letter, along with the original complaint and any other related documents, will be maintained as described in WAC 172-121-080. In cases of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence or for a Title IX complaint, the complainant may request a review of the dismissal by the dean of students by filing a request for review with the director of SRR within seven business days of receiving notice of the dismissal.

(b) Adaptable dispute resolution. The director may refer the complaint to the adaptable dispute resolution process contained in WAC 172-121-102.

(c) Prehearing conference. If the director of SRR does not dismiss the matter they will arrange a prehearing conference as described in WAC 172-121-110 unless a respondent is opting to admit responsibility under WAC 172-121-118.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 28B.35.120(12). WSR 23-11-109, § 172-121-100, filed 5/19/23, effective 6/19/23; WSR 23-01-027, § 172-121-100, filed 12/9/22, effective 1/9/23; WSR 21-01-102, § 172-121-100, filed 12/11/20, effective 1/11/21; WSR 20-19-046, § 172-121-100, filed 9/10/20, effective 10/11/20; WSR 20-01-032, § 172-121-100, filed 12/6/19, effective 1/6/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 28B.35.120(12) and 42.56.070. WSR 19-01-047, § 172-121-100, filed 12/13/18, effective 1/13/19. Statutory Authority: RCW 28B.35.120(12). WSR 17-17-031, § 172-121-100, filed 8/9/17, effective 9/9/17; WSR 15-24-050, § 172-121-100, filed 11/23/15, effective 12/24/15; WSR 13-24-123, § 172-121-100, filed 12/4/13, effective 1/4/14; WSR 09-12-001, § 172-121-100, filed 5/20/09, effective 6/20/09.]

#### NEW SECTION

**WAC 172-121-102 Adaptable dispute resolution.** (1) A CRO or their designee may resolve a matter by agreement. Agreements may be reached directly or through an adaptable dispute resolution process. Adaptable dispute resolution includes various processes of voluntary, structured facilitation between impacted parties aimed to balance support and accountability. Examples of adaptable dispute resolution include, but are not limited to, restorative justice circles, restorative justice conferences, negotiation, facilitated dialogues, impact panels, and mediation. The various types of adaptable dispute resolution available at the university and the procedures for resolution are available on student rights and responsibilities' website.

(2) When resolution of a matter is reached by agreement or an adaptable dispute resolution process, the agreement must be in writing and signed by the parties and the conduct officer or designee. In the agreement, the parties must be advised in writing that:

(a) The disposition is final and they are waiving any right to a hearing on the matter, including any right to appeal; and

(b) If a student does not successfully complete all aspects of an agreement, they may be charged with the following violations of the student conduct code:

(i) Failure to comply; and

(ii) Any possible alleged conduct code violations from the initial incident or case that was reported to the SRR office. Failure to abide by the terms of the agreement will be considered a violation of the student conduct code.

(3) If any party decides to leave the adaptable dispute resolution process or the CRO or designee determines it is no longer appropriate, then the matter shall be referred back to the director to determine the next steps under WAC 172-121-100.

[ ]

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 21-01-102, filed 12/11/20, effective 1/11/21)

**WAC 172-121-140 Supportive measures and interim restrictions.**

(1) Supportive measures. During the complaint review, the director of

SRR, Title IX coordinator, or designee will evaluate the circumstances and determine if any supportive measures to assist or protect the parties during the conduct code process are needed. For sexual misconduct and interpersonal violence cases, supportive measures are available before or after the filing of a complaint or where no formal complaint is filed. Supportive measures are provided to students free of charge and may include, but are not limited to, safety planning with the university, mutual restrictions on contact between the parties, academic or workplace modifications, providing counseling for the complainant and/or respondent, or campus housing modifications. The purpose of a supportive measure is to provide an equitable process for both students that minimizes the possibility of a hostile environment on campus. For Title IX complaints, supportive measures are designed to restore or preserve equal access to the university's educational programs or activities without unreasonably burdening either party, including protecting the safety of all parties and the university's educational environment, or deterring sexual harassment. Supportive measures in cases of sexual misconduct and interpersonal violence are coordinated by the Title IX coordinator or designee.

(2) Interim restrictions. For Title IX complaints, in situations where there is cause to believe that a student or a student organization poses an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual, including themselves, the Title IX coordinator in conjunction with the director of SRR may take immediate action(s) against the student or student organization after conducting an individualized safety and risk analysis without prior notice or hearing.

Simultaneous with such action(s), the director of SRR will refer the allegations to the conduct review officer, who will process such allegations in accordance with the provisions of this student conduct code.

For all non-Title IX cases, the director may take immediate action(s) against the student or student organization after conducting an individualized safety and risk analysis without prior notice or hearing. Simultaneously, the director shall refer the allegations to the conduct review officer. For non-Title IX cases, interim restriction is subject to the following:

(a) Interim restriction actions may only be imposed in the following situations:

(i) When a student or student organization poses an immediate threat to:

(A) The physical health or safety of any student or any other individual;

(B) The student's own physical safety and well-being; or

(C) Any property of the university community; or

(ii) When it is believed that the student's or student organization's continued attendance or presence may cause disorder, substantially interfere with or impede the lawful activities of others, or imperil the physical or mental health and safety of members of the university community.

(b) During the interim restriction period, a student may be restricted by any or all of the following means:

(i) Denial of access including, but not limited to: Assignment to alternate university housing or removal from university housing, limitation of access to university facilities, or restriction of communication with specific individuals or groups;

(ii) Interim suspension, including temporary total removal from the university or restriction of access to campus. For Title IX complaints, a student may only be placed on interim suspension if, after conducting an individualized safety and risk analysis, the director determines the person poses an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence;

(iii) Mandatory medical/psychological assessment of the student's capability to remain in the university.

(3) The director of SRR will determine what restriction(s) will be placed on a student.

(4) The director of SRR will prepare a brief memorandum for record containing the reasons for the interim restriction. The director will serve the memorandum on the restricted student and notify all other persons or offices bound by it. At a minimum, the memorandum will state:

(a) The alleged act(s) or behavior(s) of the student or student organization which prompted the interim restriction;

(b) How those alleged act(s) or behavior(s) could constitute a violation of the student conduct code;

(c) How the circumstances of the case necessitated the interim restriction action(s); and

(d) An explanation of the process for emergency appeal reviews.

(5) Notice to complainant. In cases alleging sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence, the complainant will be provided with notice of any interim restrictions that relate directly to the complainant. If the respondent appeals such interim restrictions, the complainant will be given notice of the respondent's appeal and an opportunity to submit a statement within five business days of the notice as to why the interim restriction should or should not be modified.

(6) Emergency appeal review.

(a) If a student has been suspended on an interim basis, the student will automatically receive an emergency appeal review with the vice president for student affairs, or designee. If the interim restriction is something less than a suspension, the student or student organization subject to the interim restriction must file a written appeal with the vice president for student affairs within five business days after service of the interim restriction. In all cases, the student must submit any information the student wishes the vice president to consider submitted within (~~ten~~) 10 business days after service of the interim restriction. The appealing party should outline the desired modification(s) to the interim restriction as well as the specific challenge(s) to the interim restriction decision. Challenges to interim restriction decisions are limited to the criteria identified in WAC 172-121-140(1) upon which the interim restriction was imposed (threat to health or safety of the university community, potential for creating campus disorder, impeding the lawful activity of others, etc.). Appealing parties are limited to submitting their own written statements. Any other evidence should be submitted to the investigator or provided to the CRO under the regular hearing process.

(b) The vice president for student affairs, or designee, will conduct an emergency appeal review after receiving the respondent's review and complainant's response, if any. Emergency appeal reviews will address only the interim restriction decision of the director and the basis on which the restriction modification or termination is requested by the appealing party. The emergency appeal review does not replace the regular hearing process. In the emergency appeal review,



the vice president will only review materials available to and information considered by the director and/or dean of students at the time the interim restriction was imposed, written statements by the two parties, and information that becomes available as a part of the university's investigation that the vice president deems relevant.

(c) In cases alleging sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence, if a complainant believes the interim restriction does not adequately protect their health and safety, the complainant may appeal the interim restriction using the process outlined in this subsection. If the complainant files an appeal, all parties shall be given notice of the appeal and shall be provided the opportunity to submit a written statement to the vice president within five business days of receiving notice of the complainant's appeal.

(d) During the emergency appeal review, the vice president for student affairs will review available materials and statements. The vice president for student affairs will issue a written decision upholding, modifying, or terminating the interim restriction action. The written decision shall include a rationale for the basis of the decision and be issued within (~~fifteen~~) 15 business days of the date of service of an interim restriction.

(e) The interim restriction does not replace the regular hearing process, which will proceed as quickly as feasible consistent with this chapter.

(f) Duration. An interim restriction will remain in effect until terminated, in writing, by the student disciplinary council, CRO, or the vice president for student affairs.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 28B.35.120(12). WSR 21-01-102, § 172-121-140, filed 12/11/20, effective 1/11/21; WSR 20-19-046, § 172-121-140, filed 9/10/20, effective 10/11/20; WSR 20-01-032, § 172-121-140, filed 12/6/19, effective 1/6/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 28B.35.120(12) and 42.56.070. WSR 19-01-047, § 172-121-140, filed 12/13/18, effective 1/13/19. Statutory Authority: RCW 28B.35.120(12). WSR 17-17-031, § 172-121-140, filed 8/9/17, effective 9/9/17; WSR 15-24-050, § 172-121-140, filed 11/23/15, effective 12/24/15; WSR 13-24-123, § 172-121-140, filed 12/4/13, effective 1/4/14; WSR 09-12-001, § 172-121-140, filed 5/20/09, effective 6/20/09.]

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 23-01-027, filed 12/9/22, effective 1/9/23)

**WAC 172-121-302 Abuse, threats, bullying, and harassment. (1)**

Abuse. Assault and other forms of physical abuse. Assault is intentionally touching or striking another person in a harmful or offensive way.

(2) Threats. A threat is any conduct (~~or statement~~) and/or speech that, when viewed objectively, threatens bodily harm to another person or that endangers the health or safety of another person. If the threat primarily involves speech, the speaker also must have consciously disregarded a substantial, unjustifiable risk that the communications could be viewed as threatening violence.

(3) Bullying. Bullying is behavior that is:

(a) Intentional;

(b) Targeted at an individual or group; and

(c) Creates an intimidating and/or threatening environment that is so severe or pervasive, and objectively offensive, that it substantially interferes with another's ability to work, study, participate in, or benefit from the university's programs and activities.

(4) Discriminatory harassment. Physical, verbal, electronic, or other conduct based on an individual's race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, citizenship or immigration status, disability, or veteran status when one of the conditions outlined in subsection (3)(a) or (b) of this section are present:

(a) Submission to, or rejection of such conduct is made implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of a person's instruction, academic standing, employment, or participation in any university program, activity, or benefit, or is used as a basis for evaluation in making academic or personnel decisions; or

(b) Such conduct creates a hostile environment. A hostile environment is created when the conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive, and objectively offensive, that it unreasonably interferes with an individual's academic or work performance, ability to participate in or benefit from the university's programs, services, opportunities, or activities. Unreasonable interference is viewed from both a subjective and objective standard.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 28B.35.120(12). WSR 23-01-027, § 172-121-302, filed 12/9/22, effective 1/9/23.]