Grey Zone

THE INVESTIGATION DECISION FRAMEWORK

10 Questions to Ask Before Opening a Case

A formal investigation may be the right response. It should not be the automatic one.

START HERE

If the alleged facts were established exactly as reported, could they constitute a policy violation within the institution's jurisdiction?

THE 10 QUESTIONS

01 What conduct is actually alleged? Separate concrete facts from conclusions, labels, and policy buzzwords.	**06 Are speech, academic freedom, or other legal considerations present?** Identify issues that may affect the institution's authority or available response.
02 Which policy or policies may apply? Identify the provisions, definitions, and elements potentially implicated.	**07 What material information is missing?** Seek only the clarification needed to select a pathway, not to conduct a hidden investigation.
03 Would the alleged conduct violate policy if true? Apply the policy to the allegations before testing credibility or resolving disputed facts.	**08 What outcome does the reporting person seek?** Use the requested outcome to inform the response without treating it as controlling.
04 Does the institution have jurisdiction? Consider the people, location, program, activity, timing, and policy version.	**09 What response options are available?** Compare investigation with referral, education, coaching, support, informal resolution, threat assessment, or monitoring.
05 Are there immediate safety or support needs? Address urgent risks, supportive measures, evidence preservation, and reporting obligations.	**10 Why is the selected response appropriate?** Document the policy analysis, alternatives considered, rationale, handoff, and follow-through.

A DEFENSIBLE DECISION RECORD SHOULD SHOW

What was reported • What policies were considered • What facts were known • What information was needed • What alternatives were evaluated • Why the selected pathway was chosen • How the matter will be monitored

An investigation is a tool, not a compliance strategy.

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This resource is for general informational purposes and is not legal advice. Apply governing law, institutional policy, contractual obligations, and required procedures to the specific matter.