



# HEARINGS IN A POST REGULATORY WORLD

Towson University

Martha Compton

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Interim Senior Director of Business  
Development  
*she/her/hers*

# MEET YOUR FACILITATOR

## Martha Compton

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Martha consults and trains nationally on Title IX and student conduct and has previously served as a technical trainer for Department of Justice VAWA campus grantees. Martha is a former President of the Association for Student Conduct Administration, has been a faculty member for ASCA's Gehring Academy, and was part of the core team that developed ASCA's Sexual Misconduct Institute. A student conduct professional for over 20 years, Martha is also a former dean of students and has extensive experience in residence life, behavior intervention, emergency services, orientation, leadership, and working with student organizations.

# ABOUT US

## Vision

We exist to create safe and equitable work and educational environments.

## Mission

To bring systemic change to how school districts and institutions of higher education address their Clery Act & Title IX obligations.

## Core Values

- Responsive Partnership
- Innovation
- Accountability
- Transformation
- Integrity

# AGENDA

● Title IX Requirements for Hearings

● Process Participants

● Pre-Hearing Tasks

● The Hearing

● After The Hearing

● Practical Application

# TITLE IX REQUIREMENTS FOR HEARINGS



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## Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

20 U.S.C. § 1681 (1972).



# SEXUAL HARASSMENT: SECTION 106.30

Sexual harassment means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- (1) An **employee** of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
- (2) Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so **severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive** that it **effectively denies** a person equal access to the recipient's education program or activity; or
- (3) "**Sexual assault**" as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), "**dating violence**" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), "**domestic violence**" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), or "**stalking**" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30).

# AND... ONLY COVERED, IF:

## Place of Conduct

- On campus **OR**
- Campus Program, Activity, Building, **AND**
- In the United States

## Required Identity

- Complainant participating/attempting to participate in Program or Activity, **AND**
- Control over Respondent

# PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS FOR INVESTIGATIONS

Notice to BOTH parties

Equal Opportunity to Present Evidence

An advisor of choice

Written notification of meetings, etc., and sufficient time to prepare

Opportunity to review all directly related evidence, and 10 days to submit a written response to the evidence prior to completion of the report

Report summarizing relevant evidence and 10-day review of report prior to hearing

# PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS FOR HEARINGS

Must be live, but can be conducted remotely

May not compel participation

Standard of proof used may be preponderance of the evidence or clear and convincing; standard must be the same for student and employee matters

Cross examination must be permitted and must be conducted by advisor of choice or provided by the institution

Decision maker determines relevancy of questions and evidence offered

Written decision must be issued that includes finding and sanction

# THE REQUIREMENT OF IMPARTIALITY



# SECTION 106.45(b)(1)(iii)

The grievance process must require that any individual designated by the recipient as Title IX Coordinator, investigator, or facilitator of informal resolution not to have a conflict of interest or bias:

- For or against complaints or respondents generally, or
- An individual complainant or respondent



## SECTION 106.45(b)(1)(iii)

“Title IX Coordinator, investigator, decision maker, or facilitator of informal resolution must receive training on...how to serve **impartially**, including **avoiding prejudice** of the facts at issue, **conflict of interest**, and **bias**. This training material **may not rely on sex stereotypes** and **must promote impartial investigations and adjudications** of formal complaints of sexual harassment.”

# HEARING TECHNOLOGY: REQUIREMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS



If hearings cannot be in person, or if someone chooses to participate remotely, must have a remote participation platform available.

All hearings must be recorded.

Participants must be able to communicate with decision makers and advisors during the hearing

# PURPOSE OF THE HEARING

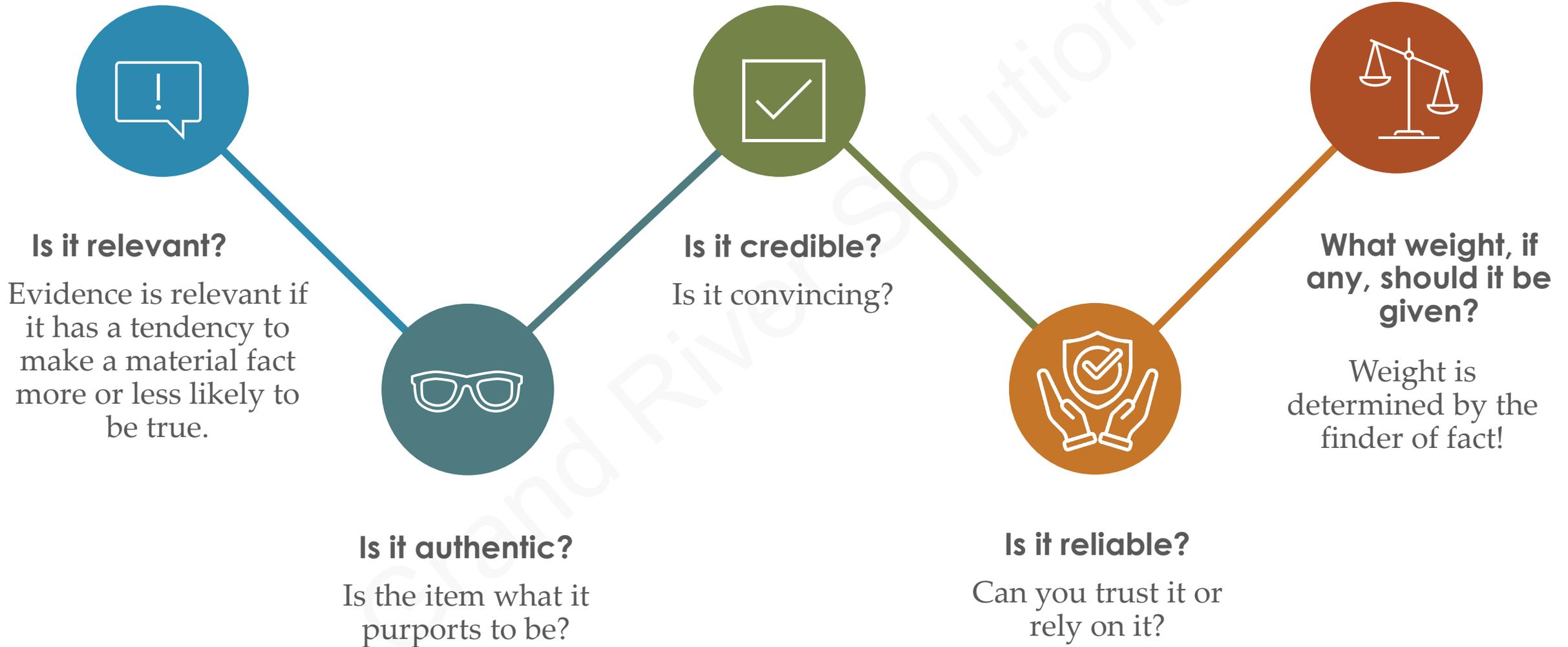
1. Review and Assess Evidence

2. Make Findings of Fact

3. Determine Responsibility/ Findings of Responsibility

4. Determine Sanction and Remedy

# EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE



TRAUMA-INFORMED  
PRACTICES PROVIDE  
TOOLS & TECHNIQUES  
FOR ENGAGING WITH  
THE COMPLAINANT,  
RESPONDENT, AND  
WITNESSES.



Format/Structure of the  
Hearing



Format of Questions



Approach to  
Clarification

# PROCESS PARTICIPANTS

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# THE PARTICIPANTS

## The Parties

### Complainant/Reporting Party

An individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute Sexual Harassment or OSM. A Reporting Party may include, but not be limited to, any member of the University Community and individuals not affiliated with the University.

### Respondent/Responding Party

An individual alleged to have engaged in conduct that could constitute Sexual Harassment or Other Sexual Misconduct.

# THE PARTICIPANTS

## Advisors

There are two types of Advisors



Advisor: throughout the whole process, can also serve as a Hearing Advisor



Hearing Advisor: hearing only, for purposes of conducting cross examination

# THE PARTICIPANTS

## Advisors

- Can be anyone, including a lawyer, a parent, a friend, or a witness
- No particular training or experience required (institutionally appointed advisors should be trained)
- Can accompany their advisees at all meetings, interviews, and the hearing
- Advisors should help the parties prepare for each meeting and are expected to advise ethically, with integrity, and in good faith
- May not speak on behalf of their advisee or otherwise participate, except that the advisor will conduct cross examination at the hearing.
- Advisors are expected to advise their advisees without disrupting proceedings



# THE PARTICIPANTS

## Advisors: Prohibited Behavior

An Advisor who oversteps their role as defined by the policy should be warned once. If the Advisor continues to disrupt or otherwise fails to respect the limits of the Advisor role, the meeting may be ended, or other appropriate measures implemented. Subsequently, the Title IX Coordinator has the ability determine how to address the Advisor's non-compliance and future role.



# THE PARTICIPANTS

## The Hearing Facilitator/Coordinator

- Manages the recording, witness logistics, party logistics, curation of documents, separation of the parties, and other administrative elements of the hearing process
- Non-Voting
- Optional, not required



# THE PARTICIPANTS

## Decision Maker or Makers

### Decision Maker

One-person.

### Decision Maker Panel

A panel.

Requires a hearing chair.

# THE PARTICIPANTS

## The Decision-Makers

- **A panel**
- Questions the parties and witnesses at the hearing
- Determines responsibility
- Determines sanction, where appropriate



# THE PARTICIPANTS

## The Hearing Chair

- Is a decision-maker
- Answers all procedural questions
- Makes rulings regarding relevancy of evidence, questions posed during cross examination
- Maintains decorum
- Prepares the written deliberation statement
- Assists in preparing the Notice of Outcome



# THE PARTICIPANTS

## The Investigator

- Can present a summary of the final investigation report, including items that are contested and those that are not;
- Can submit to questioning by the Decisionmaker(s) and the parties (through their Advisors).
- Can be present during the entire hearing process, but not during deliberations.
- Questions about their opinions on credibility, recommended findings, or determinations should not be entertained. If such information is introduced, the Chair should direct that it be disregarded.



# PRE-HEARING TASKS: HEARING PANEL & CHAIR

What should be done in advance of the hearing

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# PRE-HEARING MEETINGS

- Review the Logistics for the Hearing
- Set expectations
  - Format
  - Roles of the parties
  - Participation
- Decorum
- Impact of not following rules
- Cross Examination/Questioning  
Format & Expectations
- Answer any procedural or process questions from the parties

# EACH PANELIST/HEARING PANEL AS A WHOLE



Review evidence and report

Review applicable policy and procedures

Preliminary analysis of the evidence

Determine areas for further exploration

Develop questions of your own

# HEARING PANEL CHAIR OR DECISION MAKER

Compile questions on behalf of the Panel

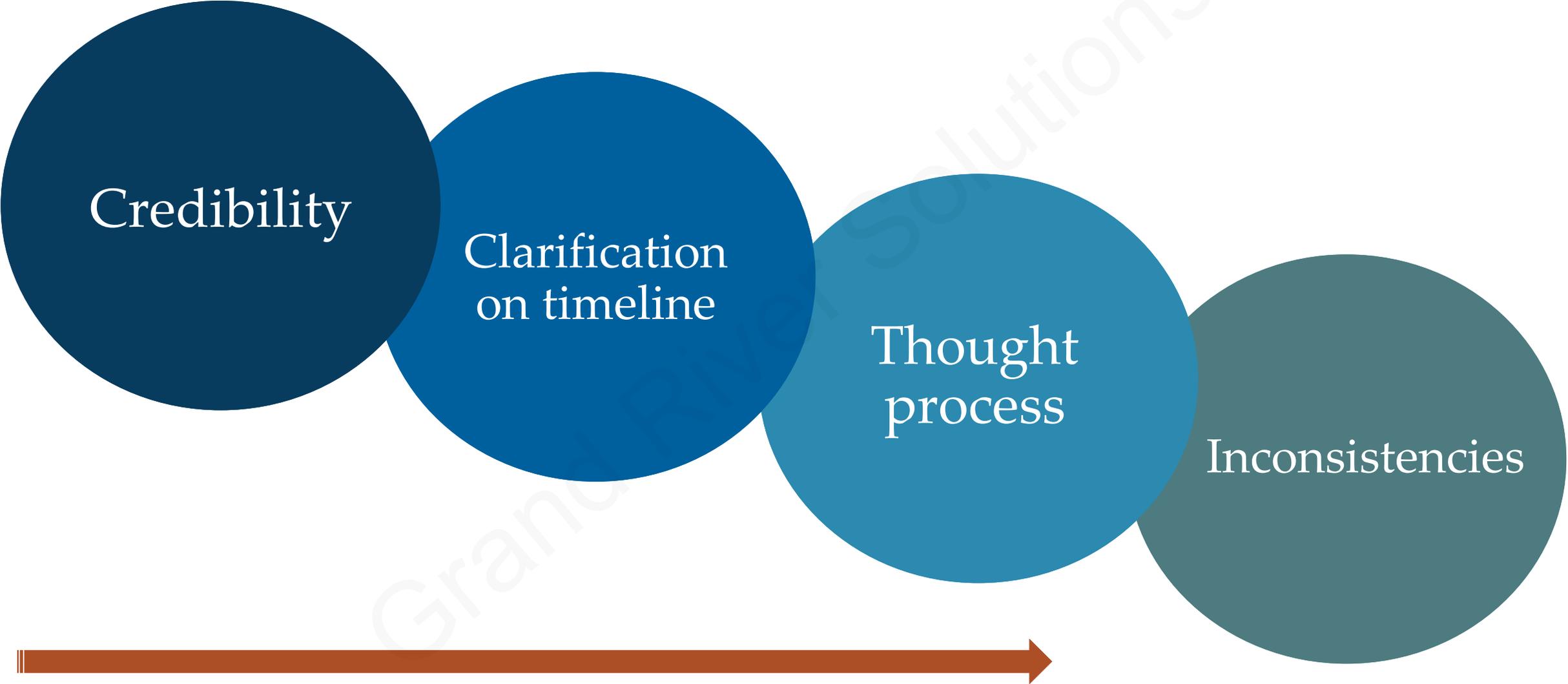
May convene a pre-hearing meeting

Review questions submitted by the parties

Anticipate challenges or issues

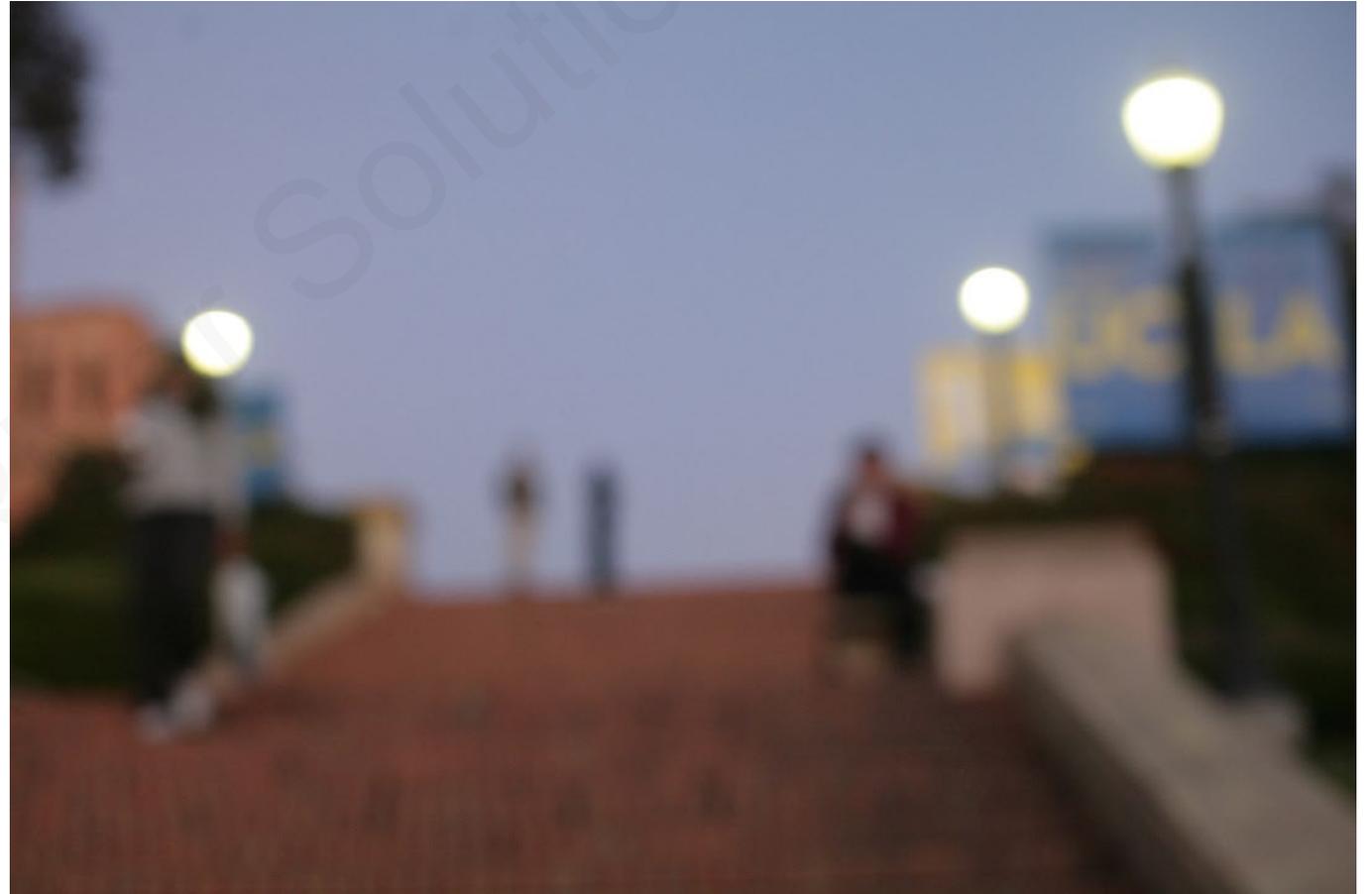
Become familiar with the script

# COMMON AREAS OF EXPLORATION



# COMMON AREAS OF WHERE CLARITY OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS NEEDED

- Credibility
- Reliability
- Timeliness
- Inconsistencies
- Details about the alleged misconduct
- Facts related to the elements of the alleged policy violation
- Relevancy of certain items of evidence
- Factual basis for opinions



# THE HEARING

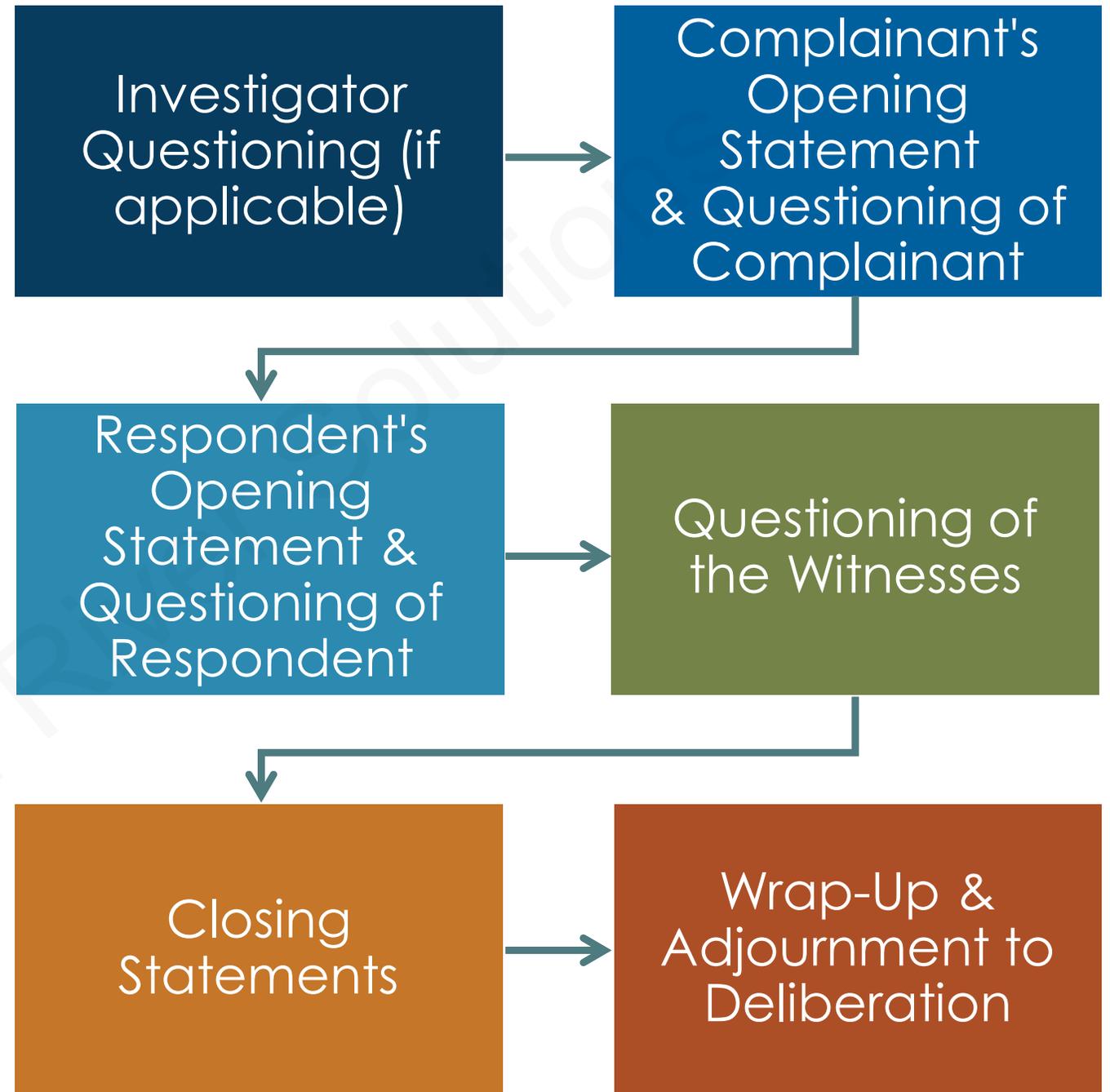
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# ORDER OF EVENTS

Introductions and instructions are first given by the Chair, and then...



# OPENING INTRODUCTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS BY THE CHAIR

- The University has a script for this portion of the proceedings, and it should be used.
- Introduction of the participants.
- Overview of the procedures.
- Overall goal: manage expectations.
- Be prepared to answer questions.



# OPENING STATEMENTS

*Optional: Not required by the regulations; institution may choose to allow.*

- Prior to questioning beginning during the hearing, each party may be given the opportunity to make an opening statement.
- Intended to be a brief summary of the points the party would like to highlight.
- Directed to the Decision Maker and only the Decision Maker.
- Both parties should give opening statement before either is questioned.
- Typically, the complainant goes first.

# QUESTIONING OF THE WITNESSES

01

The Chair will determine the order of questioning of witnesses

02

The Hearing Panel will question first

03

Advisor cross-examination will occur next (suggested: Complainant's advisor followed by Respondent's advisor)

04

Follow up by the Hearing Panel

# CLOSING STATEMENTS

Prior to the conclusion of the hearing, each party will have the opportunity to make a closing statement.

- Intended to be a brief summary of the points the party would like to highlight.
- Directed to the Decision Maker and only the Decision Maker
- Not time to introduce new information or evidence.



# GENERAL QUESTIONING GUIDELINES

# FORMAT OF QUESTIONING

The Hearing Panel or the advisor will remain seated during questioning

Questions will be posed orally

Questions must be relevant

# WHEN QUESTIONING....

- Be efficient
- Be prepared to go down a road that you hadn't considered or anticipated exploring.
- Explore areas where additional information or clarity is needed.
- Take your time. Be thoughtful. Take breaks if you need it.
- Listen to the answers.



# FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS TO ALWAYS CONSIDER ASKING

Were you interviewed?

Did you see the interview notes?

Did the notes reflect your recollection at the time?

As you sit here today, has anything changed?

Did you review your notes before coming to this hearing?

Did you speak with any one about your testimony today prior to this hearing?

# WHAT CONSTITUTES A RELEVANT QUESTION?

- The Department declined to define “relevant”, indicating that term “should be interpreted using [its] plain and ordinary meaning.”
- See, e.g., Federal Rule of Evidence 401 Test for Relevant Evidence:
- “Evidence is relevant if:
  - (a) it has any tendency to make a fact more or less probable than it would be without the evidence; and
  - (b) the fact is of consequence in determining the action.”

# WHEN ARE QUESTIONS RELEVANT?

- Logical connection between the evidence and facts at issue
- Assists in coming to the conclusion – it is “of consequence”
- Tends to make a fact more or less probable than it would be without that evidence



# IRRELEVANT AND IMPERMISSIBLE QUESTIONS



Information protected by an un-waived legal privilege

Medical treatment and care

Unduly repetitious or duplicative questions

Information that otherwise irrelevant

Complainant's prior sexual history, with limited exceptions.

# COMMON AREAS OF WHERE CLARITY OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS NEEDED

- Credibility
- Reliability
- Timeliness
- Inconsistencies
- Details about the alleged misconduct
- Facts related to the elements of the alleged policy violation
- Relevancy of certain items of evidence
- Factual basis for opinions



# CREDIBILITY VERSUS RELIABILITY

- **Reliability**

- I can trust the consistency of the person's account of their truth.
- It is probably true and I can rely on it.

- **Credibility**

- I trust their account based on their tone and reliability.
- They are honest and believable.
- It might not be true, but it is worthy of belief.
- It is convincingly true.
- The witness is sincere and speaking their real truth.

# QUESTIONING TO ASSESS RELIABILITY

- Inherent plausibility
- Logic
- Corroboration
- Other indication of reliability



# QUESTIONING TO ASSESS CREDIBILITY

No formula exists, but  
consider asking  
questions about the  
following:

Opportunity to view

Ability to recall

Motive to fabricate

Plausibility

Consistency

Character, background, experience, and training

Coaching

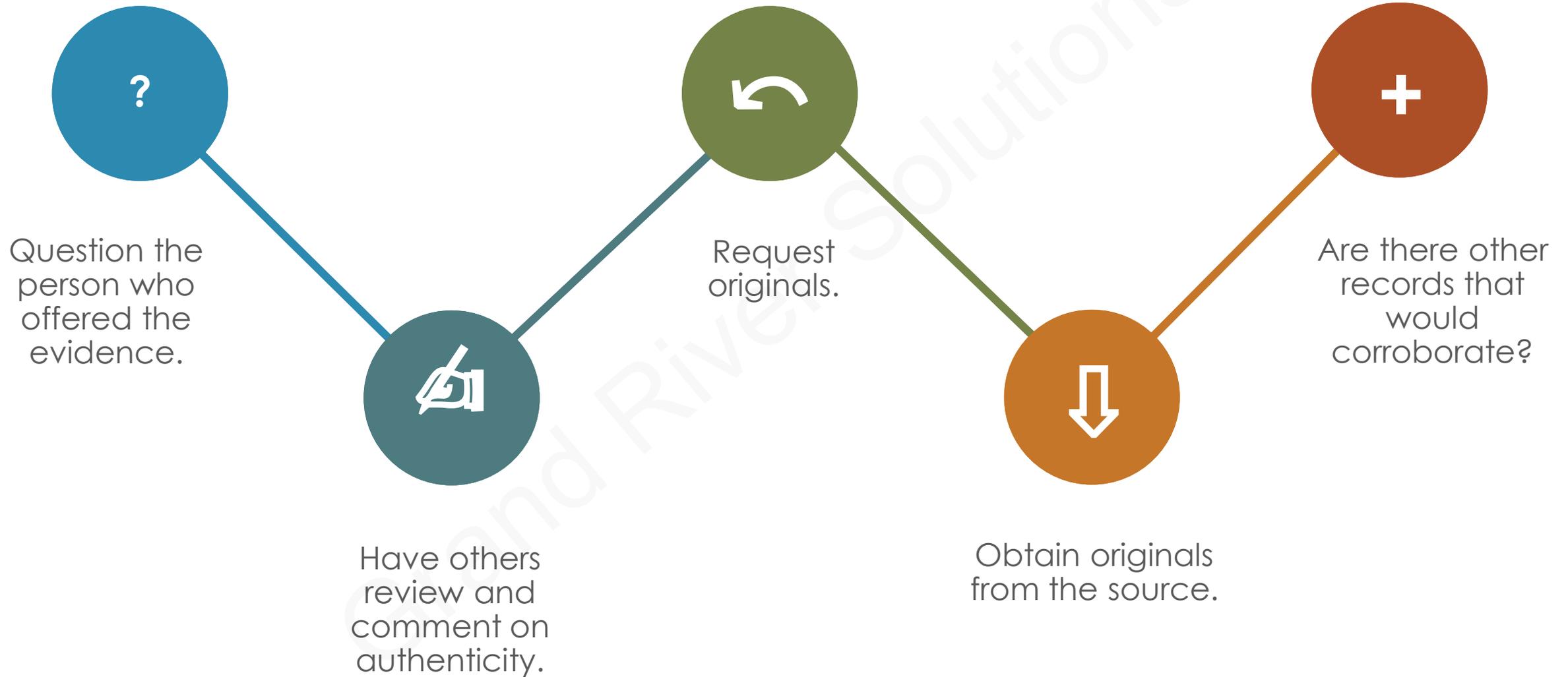
# OPINION EVIDENCE

When might it be relevant?

How do you establish a foundation for opinion evidence so that the reliability of the opinion can be assessed?



# IS IT AUTHENTIC?



# THE “HARD” QUESTIONS

Details about the sexual  
conduct

Seemingly inconsistent  
behaviors

Inconsistent  
evidence/information

What they were wearing

Alcohol or drug  
consumption

Probing into reports of lack  
of memory

# HOW TO ASK THE HARD QUESTIONS

- **Lay a foundation for the questions**
  - Explain why you are asking it
  - Share the evidence that you are asking about, or that you are seeking a response to
- **Be deliberate and mindful in your questions**
  - “Can you tell me what you were thinking when...”
  - “Help me understand what you were feeling when...”
  - “Are you able to tell me more about...”



# SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PANELS

If a panel, decide in advance who will take the lead on questioning

Go topic by topic

Ask other panelists if they have questions before moving on

Do not speak over each other

Pay attention to the questions of other panelists

Ok to take breaks to consult with each other, to reflect, to consult with the TIXC or counsel

# SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR QUESTIONING THE INVESTIGATOR

- The Investigator's participation in the hearing is as a fact witness;
- Questions directed towards the Investigator shall be limited to facts collected by the Investigator pertinent to the Investigation;
- Neither the Advisors nor the Decision-maker(s) should ask the Investigator(s) their opinions on credibility, recommended findings, or determinations;
- The Investigators, Advisors, and parties will refrain from discussion of or questions about these assessments. If such information is introduced, the Chair will direct that it be disregarded.

# THE DECISION MAKER'S ROLE IN ADVISOR QUESTIONING



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# CROSS EXAMINATION

## WHO DOES IT?

1

Must be conducted by the advisor

2

If party does not appear or does not participate, advisor can appear and cross

3

If party does not have an advisor, institution must provide one

# THE ROLE OF THE DECISION MAKER DURING QUESTIONING BY THE ADVISORS

- After the Advisor poses a question, the proceeding will pause to allow the Chair to consider it.
- Chair will determine whether the question will be permitted, disallowed, or rephrased. The Chair may explore arguments regarding relevance with the Advisors.
- The Chair will limit or disallow questions on the basis that they are irrelevant, unduly repetitious (and thus irrelevant), or abusive.
- The Chair will state their decision on the question for the record and advise the Party/Witness to whom the question was directed, accordingly. The Chair will explain any decision to exclude a question as not relevant, or to reframe it for relevance.
- The Chair has final say on all questions and determinations of relevance. The parties and their advisors are not permitted to make objections during the hearing. If they feel that ruling is incorrect, the proper forum to raise that objection is on appeal.

# WHEN ASSESSING RELEVANCE, THE DECISION MAKER CAN:

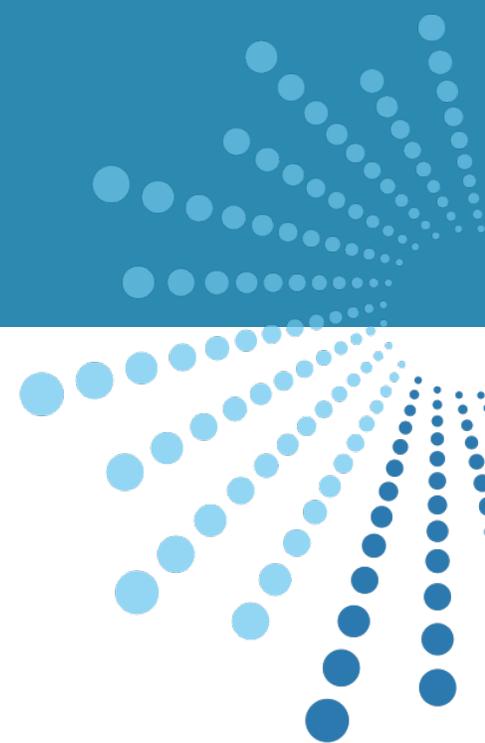
- Ask the person who posed the question why their question is relevant
- Take a break
- Ask their own questions of the party/witness
- Review the hearing record



# AFTER THE HEARING

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# Deliberations

# PREPONDERANCE OF THE EVIDENCE

- Standard of proof by which determinations of responsibility are made
- **"More likely than not"**
- It does not mean that an allegation must be found to be 100% true or accurate
- **A finding of responsibility =**
  - There was sufficient reliable, credible evidence to support a finding, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the policy was violated
- **A finding of not responsible =**
  - There was not sufficient reliable, credible evidence to support a finding, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the policy was violated

# WEIGHING THE EVIDENCE & MAKING A DETERMINATION

1. Evaluate the relevant evidence collected to determine what weight, if any, you will afford that item of evidence in your final determination;
2. Apply the standard of proof and the evidence to each element of the alleged policy violation;
3. Make a determination as to whether or not there has been a policy violation.



# FINDINGS OF FACT

- **A "finding of fact"**

- The decision whether events, actions, or conduct occurred, **or** a piece of evidence is what it purports to be
- Based on available evidence and information
- Determined by a preponderance of evidence standard
- Determined by the fact finder(s)

- **For example...**

- Complainant reports that they and Respondent ate ice cream prior to the incident
- Respondent says that they did not eat ice cream
- Witness 1 produces a timestamped photo of Respondent eating ice cream

- **Next steps?**

# POLICY ANALYSIS

- Break down the policy into elements
- Organize the facts by the element to which they relate



# ALLEGATION: FONDLING

**Fondling** is the:

- touching of the private body parts of another person
- for the purpose of sexual gratification,
- Forcibly and/or without the consent of the Complainant,
  - including instances where the Complainant is incapable of giving consent because of their age or **because of their temporary or permanent mental or physical incapacity.**

# ANALYSIS GRID

Touching of the private body parts of another person

**Undisputed:**

Complainant and Respondent agree that there was contact between Respondent's hand and Complainant's vagina.

For the purpose of sexual gratification

Respondent acknowledges and admits this element in their statement with investigators.

*"We were hooking up. Complainant started kissing me and was really into it. It went from there. Complainant guided my hand down her pants..."*

Without consent due to lack of capacity

**Complainant:** drank more than 12 drinks, vomited, no recall

**Respondent:** C was aware and participating

**Witness 1:** observed C vomit

**Witness 2:** C was playing beer pong and could barely stand

**Witness 3:** C was drunk but seemed fine

**Witness 4:** carried C to the basement couch and left her there to sleep it off.

# ANALYSIS GRID

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**Without consent due to lack of capacity**

**Complainant:** drank more than 12 drinks, vomited, no recall  
**Respondent:** C was aware and participated  
**Witness 1:** observed C vomit  
**Witness 2:** C was playing pool and could barely stand  
**Witness 3:** C was drunk but seemed fine  
**Witness 4:** carried C to the basement couch and left her there to sleep it off.



# DID YOU ALSO ANALYZE (IF APPLICABLE)...?

On campus?

Program or Activity?

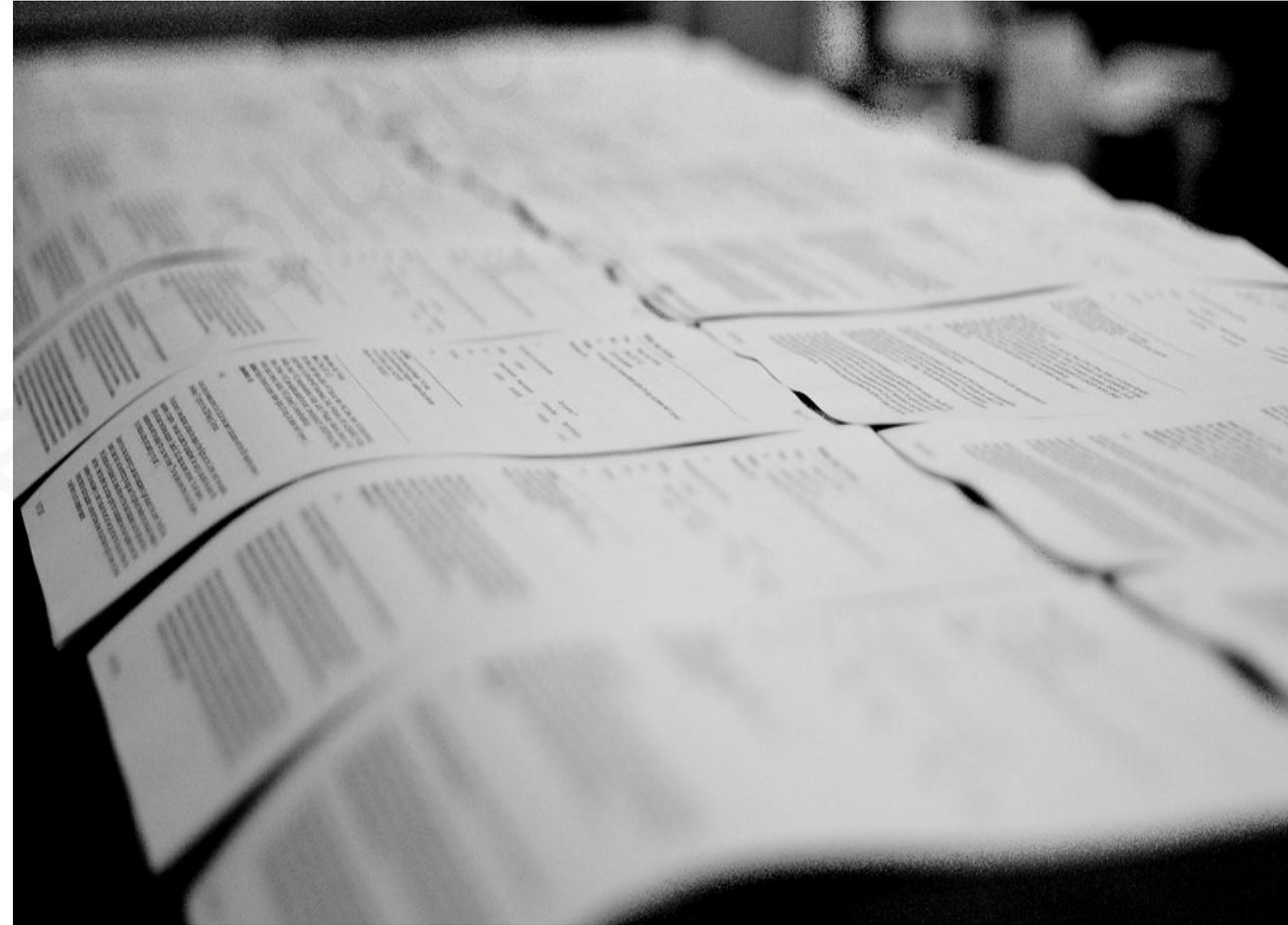
In a building owned/controlled by a recognized student organization?

Substantial control over respondent and context?

Complainant was attempting to access program/activity?

# FINAL REPORT

- The allegations
- Description of all procedural steps
- Findings of fact
- Conclusion of application of facts to the policy
- Rationale for each allegation
- Sanctions and remedies
- Procedure for appeal



# THE FINAL DETERMINATION SHOULD STAND ON ITS OWN



**S** Simple and Easy to Comprehend

**T** Transparent/Clear

**A** Accurate

**N** Neutral/Unbiased

**D** Draw Attention to Significant Evidence and Issues

# ADVISOR'S ROLE POST-HEARING

- May meet with their advisee to review decision and respond to procedural questions.
- Institutionally-appointed advisors typically do not advise nor assist the party in developing an appeal.
- Advisor of choice may assist in advising party whether or not to appeal and in the drafting of an appeal.



# PRACTICAL APPLICATION

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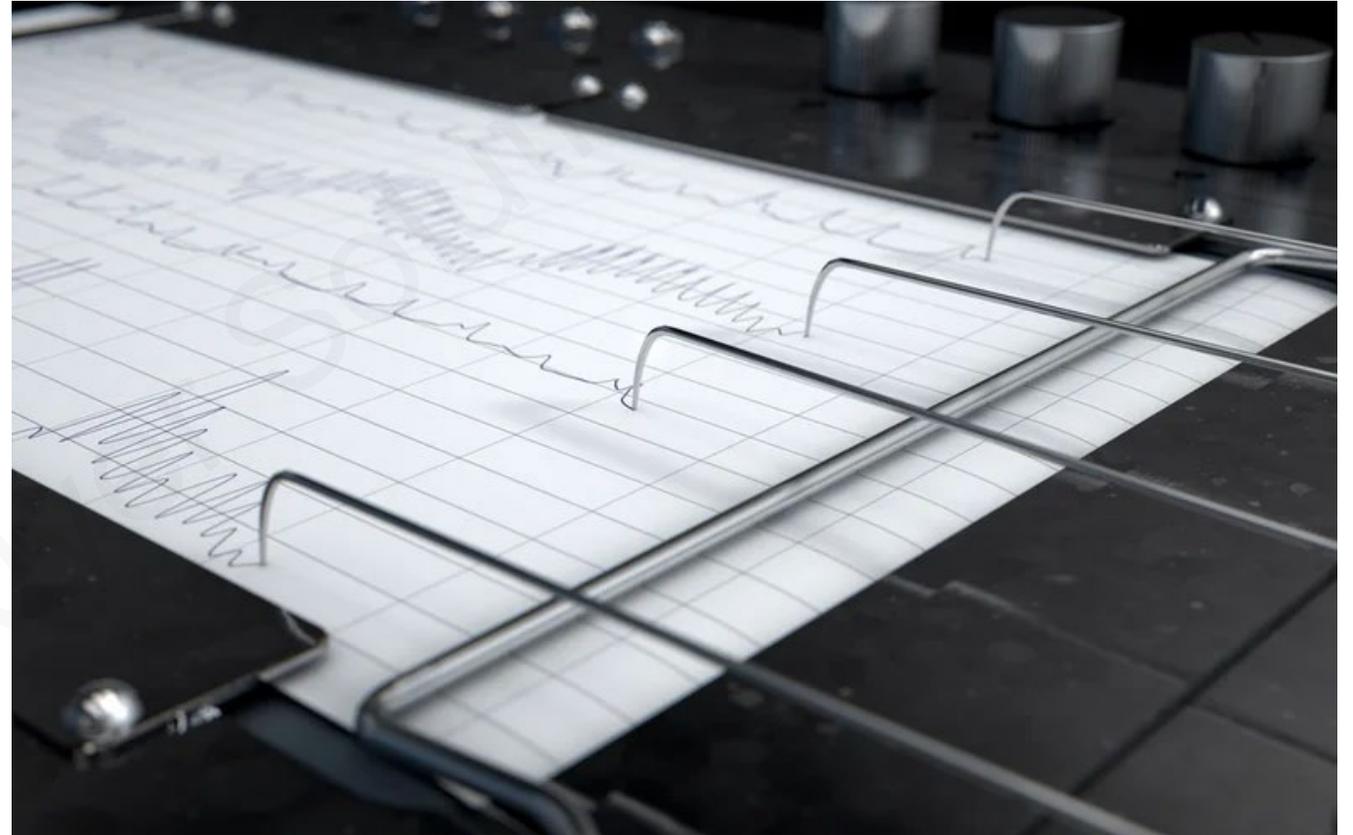
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# SCENARIO 2A

Respondent provides a polygraph report to investigators wherein it is concluded that Respondent is not being deceptive when denying the allegations.

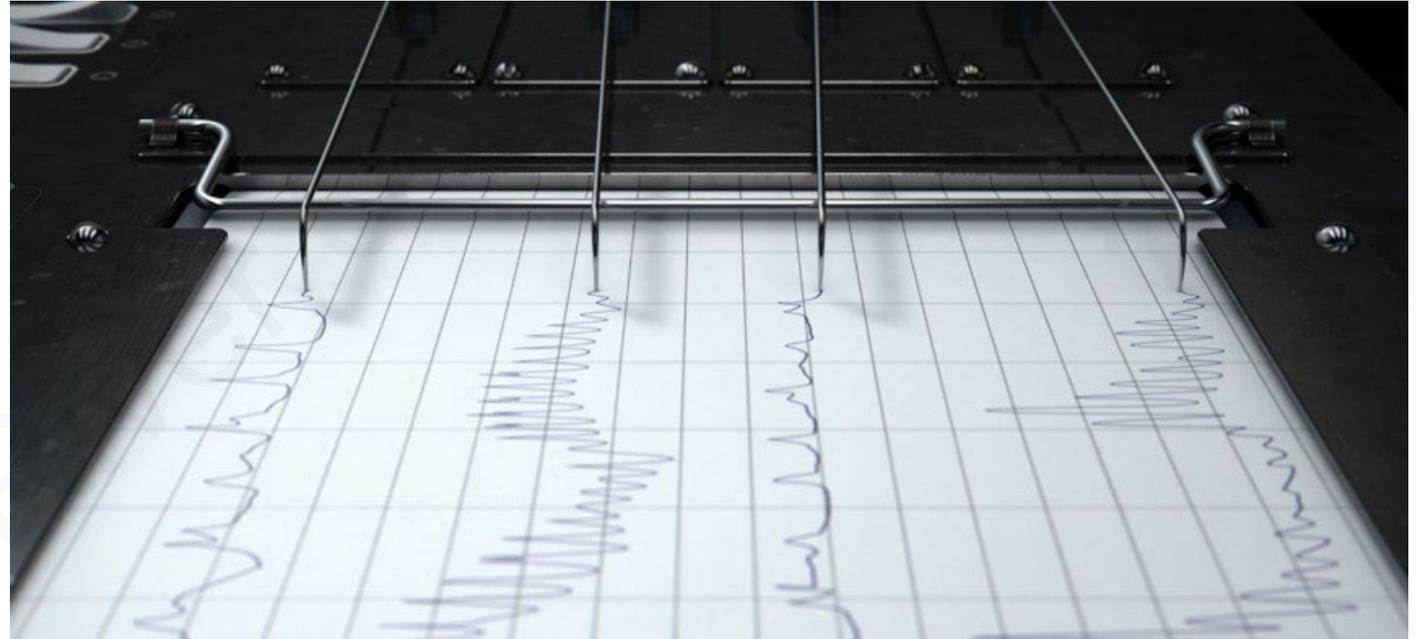
- **The Investigator determines the report is irrelevant. Must the Investigator share the report with the decision maker?**



# SCENARIO 2B

Respondent provides a polygraph report to Investigators wherein it is concluded that Respondent is not being deceptive when denying the allegations. The polygrapher appears and answers all relevant questions on cross.

- **Must the Hearing Panel find Respondent not responsible because of the findings in the report?**



# CASE STUDY

“The Formal Complaint charges Respondent with sexual assault for engaging in sexual contact with Complainant when she was incapacitated by alcohol. Specifically, Complainant alleges that she was at a party with friends when they met Respondent. Complainant reported that prior to the party she pre-gamed with Witness 1 and they split a bottle of prosecco. Complainant stated that while at the party, Respondent and Witness 2 approached her and her friend, Witness 3, and asked if they would be their partners in a round of beer pong. Complainant reported that she paired up with Respondent and they played several rounds. She further alleged that that Respondent was the one who filled their cups. Complainant stated that she “got drunk fast” and her last memory was of Respondent handing her a celebratory shot because they had won the tournament. Her next memory was waking up on a couch in a bedroom that was unfamiliar to her, naked from the waist down. Respondent was on the floor next to her, asleep. He was under a blanket but was also naked.”

# WITNESS 1

Witness 1 was interviewed by the investigator and reported that she and Complainant are roommates, but they are not close. Witness 1 is an athlete and tends to hang out with her teammates. She stated that for this reason, they rarely hang-out, but that the night of the alleged incident they did because they were planning on going to the same party. Witness 1 stated that they split a bottle of prosecco, but that Complainant drank most of it because Witness 1 had an early practice the next morning and didn't want to get "too messed up." Witness 1 said that they went to the party together, but then went their separate ways. Witness 1 stated that towards the end of the night, she saw Complainant and described her as "a disaster." She also reported that Respondent was "practically carrying her" and she approached them and offered to take Complainant home. According to Witness 1, Complainant said she was fine, but her words were slurred, and she could barely stand. Witness 1 told Respondent to take care of her and he said, "I'm just going to put her to bed." She didn't see either party again that night.

At the hearing, Witness 1 gave testimony that was substantially the same as what she told the investigator."

# WITNESS 2

Witness 2 told the investigators that he is Respondent's best friend and teammate. Witness 2 stated that when looking for partners for the beer pong tournament, Respondent saw Complainant and Witness 3 and suggested that they approach them because Complainant "was hot" and Witness 3 "looked drunk enough to be a good time." Witness 2 said that Complainant was fine and didn't appear to be that drunk. He also stated that she made most of the winning shots after several rounds of the game so she couldn't have been too messed up. When asked who was filling the cups, he said that he wasn't sure who did it each round, but he definitely saw Complainant fill them on two occasions. After the tournament was over, he helped Witness 3 get home and so didn't see Complainant and Respondent again that night. He also mentioned that he and Witness 3 are now dating.

At the hearing, Witness 2 testified that Complainant was fine. He also stated that Respondent never filled Complainant's cup and that Complainant was all over Respondent the entire night.

# WITNESS 3

Witness 3 was Complainant's best friend at the time of the incident. They are no longer close and Witness 3 is now dating Witness 2.

Immediately following the alleged incident, Witness 3 told the investigators that Complainant was already drunk when she got to the party. She stated that Respondent and Witness 2 asked them to play beer pong and they agreed. She stated that the parties seemed to hit it off immediately. She stated that they won the tournament and so played at least five rounds and that by the end of the game Complainant was the "drunkest she had ever seen her." Witness 3 stated that Complainant was slurring her words, couldn't stand on her own, and was really loud, which is not like her. Witness 3 stated that that she was pretty drunk too, but not as bad as Complainant. Witness 3 stated that she left the party with Witness 2.

At the hearing, Witness 3 stated that she may have exaggerated her description of Complainant when she spoke to the investigators. She told the decision makers that although Complainant drank a lot, she wasn't that out of it, because she had a high tolerance and drank a lot all the time.

# THANK YOU!

## CONNECT WITH US

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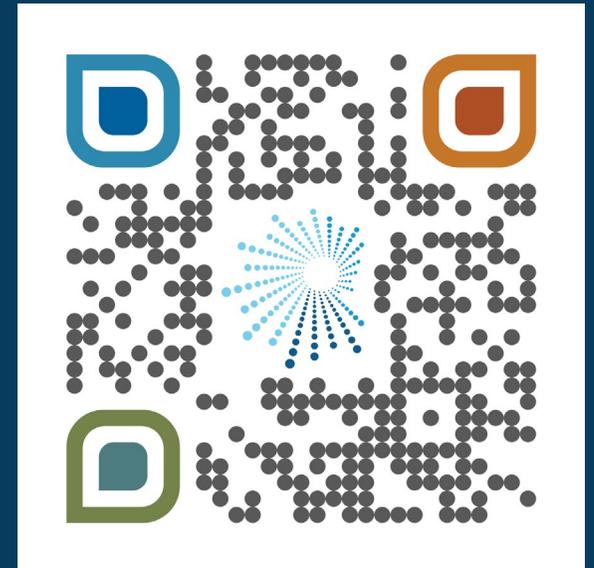


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