



Checklist for Researchers Facing Intimidation and Harassment

Please refer to our comprehensive [resource](#) for ways to mitigate risk, manage abuse, connect with community partners, develop a strategic response strategy, and maintain your mental and physical health. You may find answers to questions not addressed here in our full [resource library](#).

- If there is an immediate physical threat or if you are in danger, call 9-1-1.
- Connect with campus security or police and explain the situation.
- Contact your departmental chair and alert them of the incident. If they have not reviewed our [toolkit for institutions](#), ask them to download it.
- Fill out an official reporting form with the appropriate institutional office, adding all relevant details and attaching screenshots or copies of abusive emails, comments, or posts. It is recommended that you retain copies of all evidence for future response efforts and/or legal action.
- Lock down your email and social media accounts using current best practices for digital security. PEN America offers [step-by-step guidance](#) for major social media platforms and has a variety of additional resources to help you [secure your online presence](#). Your institution's IT/technology department can help with university email concerns. You may also ask them to remove your personal information from all public-facing websites, directories, and syllabi.
- Reach out for support. Occupational abuse is becoming increasingly common and no one deserves to be publicly shamed or harassed because of their work.
 - Connect with a mental health specialist. Your institution may be able to provide you with suggestions and there may be benefits available through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
 - Ask a trusted friend to monitor your emails, social media, and other digital accounts on your behalf. Ask them to preserve messages for potential use as evidence and to let you know about anything that requires your attention.
 - Talk with your family and friends about this situation and ask them for their understanding and support.
- Prioritize your mental and physical well-being by taking time off, spending time in nature, enjoying the company of friends and family, engaging in your favorite activities, and making sure to exercise, eat well, and get plenty of rest.



Other things to know:

- You can reach out to the university's general counsel for legal consultation. Note that most academic institutions will not be able to assist you with proactive civil legal action (such as a defamation case). If you wish to pursue proactive legal action, you will likely need to retain private counsel.
- If you've received an open records request (also known as a Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA, request), connect with your department chair or relevant supervisor right away. Requests are time-sensitive, and you will likely need to connect with your institution's Public Records Office and/or general counsel. You can only produce records that you currently have and there are exemptions to what you must produce, ([listed here](#)). You only need to provide records that have been explicitly requested and limiting the scope of proffered materials may protect others and keep harassment from escalating. If the scope of the request is unclear, encourage your institution's general counsel to ask for clarification while they offer the minimum required information in good faith.
- If the harassment is related to a student or to the classroom, report the incident to the appropriate department, such as the Dean of Students office. You own all copyrights to the course materials that you create, including syllabi, study guides, lectures, and notes. Only you and anyone you grant explicit permission to can reproduce, distribute, upload, or display the course materials you create. If your materials have been uploaded to a third-party website, you can send a copyright takedown notice, as described in [Section 512 of Title 17 of the U.S. Code](#).
- If the harassment pertains to identity issues, report the incident to your institution's Title IX Office or Office of Equity and Inclusion.