

What is the Research and Training Conditions Task Force?

Great question! When the bargaining team negotiated our contract in 2019, they were able to include a provision for the creation of a task force that would “make recommendations to the Provost about the process by which GRs of the bargaining unit can raise concerns regarding unreasonable conditions or expectations.” The task force consists of 3 faculty and 3 representatives of the union, and they have been working since last November to agree on what this process should look like.

What are “unreasonable conditions or expectations”? What sorts of things will their recommendation encompass?

The task force is trying to hammer out a process to deal with issues in **research training**. This is a pretty broad category, deliberately so. They wouldn't have power over everything — Title IX issues are still dealt with by Title IX, for example — but any issues that come up in the course of your PhD project and relationship with your mentor would be dealt with here. Are you working 80 hours in the lab every week? Are you being asked to do unsafe work without adequate training or protection? Are the parameters of your project being changed without your input? These are the kinds of issues that we're talking about. (Note: some of these are also contract violations — and there would be nothing stopping you from raising a complaint with this committee and also simultaneously filing a grievance.)

What have they agreed on so far?

The task force has been working on two aspects of this issue: **charge** (who is going to hear these issues) and **process** (how will these issues be dealt with). At this point, they've agreed to recommend a committee of 3 faculty (appointed by the provost) 3 graduate researchers (appointed by GRU) and one staff member. The committee will meet monthly and hear any issues that have come up in that month (if nothing has come up, they can neglect to meet, but there will be a standing meeting to make scheduling easier). 5/7 approval will be required for most things, and the committee will perform a self-evaluation every year to assess whether the structure and process of the committee is working.

Bringing an issue to the committee will involve a form, which you should be able to get from your program director. You will be able to bring an advisor/support person with you to the committee meeting (such as a steward). The meetings will be recorded, but closed to the public. The committee will write up an official recommendation of how to resolve the issue, and an appeals process will be possible through the provost. If either party is found to be not compliant with the recommendation, the provost will institute some repercussions (the details of which are still being worked out).

Okay, but will this recommendation have any teeth? Who's going to run this or enforce it?

That's where you come in! The task force's recommendation is just that: a recommendation. Once the task force sends the complete document to the Provost, the provost can adopt it, modify it, and then adopt it, or completely ignore it. We have the best chance of having the task force's recommendations being adopted if the Provost's

office knows that GRs care about it and are paying attention, so keep an eye out for ways to get engaged and spread the word!