



BOSTON COLLEGE

Hazing Policy

Office of the Dean of Students

Any form of hazing is prohibited by University policy and Massachusetts law, which is hereby incorporated into this policy. Any violation of the Massachusetts hazing law, including, without limitation, any failure to report or address hazing by an individual or group, is a violation of this policy, as is any act of hazing as described below. Anyone becoming aware of any hazing involving Boston College students must also promptly report it to the Dean of Students.

Hazing refers to any activity or abuse of power by a member of an organization and/or group used against an individual or group of individuals as a condition to affiliate with, hold membership, or join (or to maintain full status in a group) that humiliates, degrades, or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the subject's willingness to participate.

Hazing is a complex social problem that is shaped by power dynamics operating in a group and/or organization and within a particular cultural context. Hazing activities may be physically abusive, hazardous, and/or sexually violating. The specific behaviors or activities within these categories vary widely among participants, groups, and settings. Examples of hazing practices include personal servitude; sleep deprivation; restrictions on personal hygiene; yelling, swearing, or insults; being forced to wear embarrassing or humiliating attire in public; consumption of vile substances or smearing of such on one's skin; brandings; physical beatings; binge drinking and drinking games; sexual simulation and sexual assault.

For activities to be considered hazing, forced or mandated participation is not required; hazing may also involve implied coercion. Behavior may constitute hazing if an individual reasonably feels that he or she will not be considered a fully participating member of the group or that he or she would be ostracized for not participating in the behavior (for example, alcohol use).

Neither the intent of the initiator(s) nor the willingness of the participant(s) will serve as factors in determining responsibility but may be considered in the application of sanctions.

Examples of Hazing

The following is a non-exclusive list of examples of behavior that may constitute hazing, divided into three categories: subtle, harassment, and violent.

A. SUBTLE HAZING

Behaviors that emphasize a power imbalance between individuals and other members of the group or team are termed "subtle hazing" because these types of hazing behaviors are often accepted as "harmless" or meaningless. Subtle hazing typically involves activities or attitudes that breach reasonable standards of mutual respect and place individuals on the receiving end of ridicule, embarrassment, and/or humiliation tactics. Individuals may feel the need to endure subtle hazing to feel like part of the group or team. Examples include:

- Deception
- Implied requirement to participate in illegal or dangerous activities
- Silent periods with implied threats for violation
- Deprivation of privileges granted to other members
- Requiring individuals to perform duties not assigned to other members
- Socially isolating individuals
- Line-ups and drills/tests on meaningless information
- Requiring individuals to refer to other members with titles (e.g. "Mr.," "Miss") while they are identified with demeaning terms
- Expecting certain items to always be in one's possession

B. HARASSMENT HAZING

Harassment hazing involves behaviors that cause emotional anguish or physical discomfort on the part of the affected individual in order for the individual to feel like part of the group. Harassment hazing confuses, frustrates, and causes undue stress for the individual. Examples include:

- Verbal abuse
- Threats or implied threats
- Asking individuals to wear embarrassing or humiliating attire
- Stunt or skit nights with degrading, crude, or humiliating acts
- Expecting individuals to perform personal service to other members such as carrying books, errands, cooking, cleaning, etc.
- Sleep deprivation
- Sexual simulations
- Expecting individuals to be deprived of maintaining a normal schedule of bodily cleanliness
- Being expected to harass others

C. VIOLENT HAZING

Violent hazing includes behaviors that have the potential to cause physical, emotional, and/or psychological harm. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Forced or coerced (explicit or implied) alcohol or other drug consumption
- Beating, paddling, or other forms of assault
- Branding
- Forced or coerced ingestion of vile substances or concoctions
- Burning
- Water intoxication
- Expecting abuse or mistreatment of animals
- Public nudity
- Illegal activity
- Bondage
- Abductions/kidnapping
- Exposure to cold or heat without appropriate protection

Massachusetts State Law on Hazing

MGL, Chapter 269, Sections 17 - 19

SECTION 17. DEFINITION; PENALTY:

Whoever is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, as defined herein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one year, or both such fine and imprisonment.

The term “hazing” as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to any prosecution under this action.

SECTION 18. REPORTING HAZING OFFENSES; PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO REPORT VIOLATION:

Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

SECTION 19. ISSUANCE TO TEAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS; REPORT

Each institution of secondary education and each public and private institution of post secondary education shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an unaffiliated student group, student team or student organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen; provided, however, that an institution's compliance with this section's requirements that an institution issue copies of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations shall not constitute evidence of the institution's recognition or endorsement of said unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen and eighteen, that each of its members, plebes, pledges, or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post secondary education shall file, at least annually, a report with the board of higher education and in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education, certifying that such institution has complied with its responsibility to inform student groups, teams or organizations and to notify each full time student enrolled by it of the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen and also certifying that said institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regard to the organizers and participants of hazing, and that such policy has been set forth with appropriate emphasis in the student handbook or similar means of communicating the institution's policies to its students. The board of higher education and, in the case of secondary institutions, the board of education shall promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports, and shall forthwith report to the attorney general any such institution which fails to make such report.