

Hazing Prevention Policy

The Caltech Code of Conduct and the Honor Code hold our community to the highest standards of integrity and respect. As a form of intimidation, humiliation, or harassment, hazing has no place in the Caltech community and is strictly prohibited by federal and state law.

Definition of Hazing at Caltech

For the purposes of this Policy, hazing is defined as an intentional, knowing, or reckless act, activity, or method committed in the course of an initiation into, an affiliation with, or the maintenance of membership in, a student organization, that causes or creates a risk of physical or psychological injury, above the reasonable risk encountered in the course of participating in educational, co-curricular, or other activities (e.g., the physical preparation necessary to participate on an athletic team).

Hazing may be committed by an individual or a group, through either active and/or passive participation. It encompasses activities that subject others to demeaning, humiliating, harassing, or violent treatment as a condition of belonging to a group. These activities may take place during a pre-initiation or initiation process, or as a means of affiliating or maintaining membership in a formal or informal student organization, club, body, center, team, or living community. Hazing can occur regardless of the location or the consent of the participants.

The definition of student organization applies broadly to groups affiliated formally and informally within the Caltech community. It includes—but is not limited to—undergraduate student houses and residences, student clubs and groups, and recreation and athletic teams.

Behaviors fall within the definition of hazing when participation in or exposure to humiliating, demeaning, distressing, or violent activities serve as an implicit or explicit condition of membership in an organization. Hazing activities can take a variety of forms, ranging from intimidation, to harassment, to violence. Below is a non-exhaustive list of examples in each category.

Intimidation hazing: activities and behaviors that emphasize a power differential between new members and the group that may cause humiliation, ridicule or embarrassment. Examples include:

- Social isolation
- Deception
- Assignment of duties not assigned to other members
- Withholding privileges on the basis of class year, standing, or other designation
- Line-ups, drills, and required memorization

Harassment hazing: activities and behaviors that can cause mental anguish or distress or demonstrates disregard for another person's dignity or well-being. Examples include:

- Sleep deprivation
- Verbal abuse
- Throwing substances or objects at targeted groups or individuals

- Servitude
- Requirement to wear situationally inappropriate attire
- Skit nights or other activities that include deception or exposure to degrading or humiliating acts
- Extreme calisthenics or other contests that may be extreme, aggressive, or demeaning

Violent hazing: behaviors that are likely to cause physical, emotional, or psychological harm.

Examples include:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Engaging in or simulating sexual acts
- Forced or coerced consumption of any substances (including but not limited to alcohol, illegal drugs, food, water, and vile or undesirable substances)
- Kidnapping
- Blindfolding
- Participation in illegal activities or activities in violation of Caltech policies

This framework describes examples of potential hazing activity, but it is not exhaustive, nor does it identify all the types of groups that may be involved in hazing activities. The circumstances and context in which a particular activity occurs determine whether it constitutes hazing, according to the framework above.

It is important to understand that hazing can take place even if the participants explicitly consent to and voluntarily take part in the activity, and regardless of whether any physical or mental harm results. The power imbalances implicit in access to group membership and belonging mean that determining true consent becomes impossible. For that reason, activities that welcome new members should focus on creating supportive, inclusive bonds that allow for multiple modes of participation.

Reporting

Caltech community members are encouraged to report concerns about suspected hazing activities as follows:

- [Online reporting form](#)
- Undergraduate Deans' Office: Maura McDinger, Director of Conduct and Community Standards, at mcdinger@caltech.edu
- Office of Student and Family Engagement: Vanessa Tejada, Director of Residence Life, at vtejada@caltech.edu
- Campus Security: (626) 395-5000 (emergency) or (626) 395-4701 (non-emergency), security.caltech.edu
- Pasadena Police Department
 - Call 911 for emergencies only
 - (626) 744-4501 (general information)
 - (626) 744-4241 (non-emergency requests)
 - You can report a crime or access records at cityofpasadena.net/police

All reports will be handled with discretion to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

Hazing Investigation Process

All reports of possible hazing policy violations involving undergraduates will be managed by the Undergraduate Deans' Office through the Dean's Investigation resolution process, outlined in the [Honor Code Handbook](#).

This process will include:

1. Preliminary assessment: Initial review of report and interviews with the reporter, named witnesses, and others to evaluate the substance and severity of the allegation.
2. Formal investigation: If warranted, an investigation will be led by the Undergraduate Deans' Office in collaboration with Campus Security.
3. Interim measures: If necessary, interim measures may be put in place during the investigation period to ensure the safety and well-being of the students.
4. Resolution with the Dean: The investigators will provide the preliminary report to the Undergraduate Dean and all respondents. The respondent will have the opportunity to review and respond to the report. The Dean will meet with the respondent to make a final determination of responsibility and sanctions.
5. Reporting to law enforcement: In cases involving potential criminal conduct, the Institute will refer the matter to local law enforcement while continuing its internal investigation.

Consequences of a Violation

Participation in hazing, either as an individual or as part of any student group, may result in serious individual and organizational consequences including, but not limited to: disciplinary action up to and including suspension; expulsion; permanent loss of organizational recognition; and loss of eligibility to remain a member of any house, club, team, or other Caltech affiliated student group or organization.

Hazing Prevention and Awareness Programs

Caltech is dedicated to proactive hazing education and prevention through multiple means of intervention:

- All incoming students, student athletes, and returning student leaders take part in a nationally recognized, evidence-based training module that introduces students to the definition of hazing, types and warning signs of hazing, and how to create healthy group cultures.
- The Director of Conduct and Community Standards leads a follow-up presentation during Orientation that reinforces the importance of hazing prevention and instructs

students in how to recognize, prevent, and report hazing. This session also provides guidance in joining and fostering healthy group cultures.

- Throughout the academic year, student leaders receive ongoing training that addresses how to develop positive group cultures.
- Students and staff receive bystander intervention training that addresses how to identify and disrupt problematic behavior.
- Institute staff and faculty receive training that reviews the definition and types of hazing, the duty to report as a responsible employee and CSA, and mechanisms for reporting.

Relevant Laws and Regulations

[California Stop Campus Hazing Act](#)

[California Penal Code 245.6](#)

[Federal Stop Campus Hazing Act](#)