



Demonstrations Policy

Policy Summary

The George Washington University (“university” or “GW”) is committed to the protection of free speech, the freedom of assembly, and the right of lawful expression at the university. Members of the GW community may demonstrate in support of, or in opposition to, an issue of interest to them, provided that such activities do not endanger the safety or security of the university community, threaten any person, infringe upon the rights of other members of the community, damage, tamper, or deface property, or otherwise disrupt the functions or operations of the university. Accordingly, GW maintains the right to define the time, place, manner, and objects utilized during demonstrations occurring on any university-owned or leased property and during events or activities hosted by the university, whether on-campus, off-campus, or virtually.

While this policy is specific to demonstrations occurring on university-owned or leased property and during GW-hosted events and activities, the university recognizes and supports community members’ right to demonstrate outside of university premises. However, the conduct at these off-campus demonstrations may still be subject to relevant university policies such as the [Code of Student Conduct](#) which applies to behavior that occurs off university premises, considering the seriousness of the reported behavior misconduct and proximity to the university.

Who is Governed by this Policy

- This policy applies to all university faculty, postdocs, staff, students (student organizations and groups), and other individuals and entities including, but not limited to affiliates and visitors (collectively, “GW Community Members”).

Policy

GW is committed to allowing lawful and orderly demonstrations on university-owned or leased property and during events or activities hosted by the university, whether on-campus, off-campus, or virtually. For the purposes of this policy, a demonstration refers to an explicit use of space by an individual or group for the purpose of outwardly expressing views, disagreement, or support regarding a political or social subject. Forms of demonstrations include, but are not limited to, marches, parades, protests (including silent protests), picketing, leaflet distribution, vigils, or sit-ins. Viewpoint expression in the format of a poster (to include banners, flags, sandwich boards, leaflets, and chalking or their digital equivalent) is

Demonstrations may not be exercised in a manner that endangers the safety or security of the university community, threatens any person, infringes upon the rights of other members of the community to include the rights of individuals engaging in a counter-demonstration, damage, tamper, or deface property, or disrupt the functions or operations of the university. This includes the ability of others to attend or conduct class or research, attend or conduct exams, hold meetings or events, conduct standard business, or hear another speaker. Demonstrations may not obstruct access to university facilities or spaces, or interrupt or force cancelation of functions or operations of the university.

To promote the health and safety of the university community and maintain normal university operations, the university maintains the right to define the time, place, manner, and objects utilized during demonstrations that occur on university-owned or leased property and during events or activities hosted by the university, whether on-campus, off-campus, or virtually. For example, the university invokes its time, place, and manner judgment in consideration of the academic calendar (e.g., final examinations) or how an event can be managed safely (e.g., does the event have sufficient exits for the number of expected participants). Any time, place, and manner considerations will be content neutral.

Consistent with the [Equal Opportunity, Nondiscrimination, Anti-Harassment, and Non-Retaliation Policy](#), the university is committed to the equitable application of this policy and related procedures in a manner that does not discriminate based on protected characteristics such as age, color, disability, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital or familial status, national origin (including shared ancestry and ethnic characteristics), pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status, and/or other characteristics protected by applicable law, of the protest participants or the protected characteristics of those on whose behalf the protest activities are undertaken. In addition, university officials will apply this policy in a nondiscriminatory manner in making determinations under this policy, including but not limited to university conduct proceedings and/or arrests in response to violations of city ordinances and/or state or local law.

While the university recognizes that demonstrations can occur on an impromptu or spontaneous basis, such demonstrations by one group will not be permitted in spaces already reserved. Individuals and groups are highly encouraged to contact the Division of Safety and Operations or the Division for Student Affairs as applicable in advance of a demonstration to discuss time, place, and manner restrictions. Doing so in advance of a demonstration also allows consideration of this policy, other applicable university policies and codes, and applicable law. Please refer to the [GW Community Guidance and Procedures for Demonstrations](#). Approval of a request to reserve space for a demonstration does not constitute approval by the university of the content or purpose of the demonstration.

The following conditions apply to all demonstrations¹:

- Demonstrators shall not use force or the threat of force, injure or cause the risk of injury, or any other means of intimidation.
- Demonstrators shall not establish encampments on any university-owned or leased property, i.e., occupations of outdoor locations by one or more individuals with temporary living accommodations, no matter how temporary, typically involving structures such as tents.
- Demonstrators shall not utilize torches, open flames, barricades, or any other weapon as defined by the [Firearms and Weapons Policy](#) during a demonstration.
- Demonstrators shall not make amplified sound outdoors that exceeds 80 decibels in the nearest building or otherwise disrupts the functions or operations of the university to include reports of excessive noise heard inside or outside a building causing a community disturbance. Amplified sound indoors is prohibited.
- Demonstrators shall comply with the direction of designated university officials or external fire, safety, and emergency personnel acting in the performance of their job duties.
- Demonstrators shall not report or activate false alarms or emergencies (e.g., activate a false fire alarm).
- The university may verify a demonstrator's identity in order to address safety and noncompliance concerns.
- Demonstrators may engage in peaceful, non-disruptive protest activities that comply with this policy such as: attending events in support of or in opposition to an issue or cause, holding signs in front of themselves that do not block anyone's view; participating in an organized march; engaging in speech that does not violate universities policies including but not limited to policies involving threat, and discriminatory harassment.

Enforcement

Failure to comply with this policy, or to cease and desist after being warned that the demonstrator’s conduct is a violation, may result in disciplinary or corrective action. Such actions, consistent with the Code of Student Conduct, the Employee Handbook, and the Faculty Code, may include removal from the university community, being barred from university-owned or leased property, and/or being arrested by law enforcement officials. Further, student organizations and groups found to be in violation of this policy may also lose access to certain privileges such as the right to use university-owned or leased property or resources, participation in university events, and/or may lose their status as a registered student organization.

¹ Please note that many of the behavioral expectations in this section are applicable to all GW Community Members regardless of the forum and stipulated in other university policies. They have been collated in this policy for ease of reference and establishment of clear expectations for demonstrations.

Procedures

[GW Community Guidance and Procedures for Demonstrations](#)

Related Information

[Code of Ethical Conduct](#)

[Code of Student Conduct](#)

[Employee Handbook](#)

[Faculty Code](#)

[Free Expression at GW](#)

[Barring People from Campus Policy](#)

[Equal Opportunity, Nondiscrimination, Anti-Harassment, and Non-Retaliation Policy](#)

[Firearms and Weapons Policy](#)

[Poster Policy](#)

[Threats and Acts of Violence Policy](#)

Contacts

Below is the contact information for the offices responsible for coordinating the university’s application of this policy and related procedures.

Contact	Phone Number	Email Address
Division for Student Affairs	202-994-6555	students@gwu.edu
Office of Emergency Management	202-994-4936	oem@gwu.edu
GW Police Department	202-994-6111 (Emergency) 202-994-6110 (Non-Emergency)	gwpd@gwu.edu

Origination Date: November 7, 1967

Last Material Change: May 21, 2025

Last GW Community Comment Period: March 6, 2025 - April 18, 2025; see a thematic summary of feedback [here](#).

Next Scheduled Review: Academic Year 2027-2028

To provide feedback on this policy, please contact the Responsible Office(s) listed above or the Office of Ethics, Compliance, and Risk. More information describing university policies is outlined in the [University Policy Principles](#).

Noncompliance with this policy can be reported through this website.

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[Call the Office](#)

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