

Anti-Harassment Policy for the International Society for Applied Ethology

Preface

The ISAE Code of Conduct states that “Members must abide by the Society’s Ethical Guidelines, Anti- Harassment Policy and other policies (as outlined in the Constitution and Procedural Guidelines), as well as legal requirements. Failure to comply with the Code of Conduct may result in termination of membership of the ISAE and the forfeiture of any membership fees previously paid.” Further, the Procedural Guidelines contain the following statement: “The Society recognises the importance of supporting and promoting diversity in its membership and the wider community, in gender, age, ethnicity, geographical representation and other factors. This should be applied in nomination and selection of officers, representatives, lecturers and recipients of funds, awards, and honours” (Procedural Guidelines, page 7). Consistent with the ISAE Code of Conduct and Procedural Guidelines, the ISAE Council has agreed the following Anti-Harassment Policy.

Statement of Policy

It is the policy of the ISAE that all participants in Society activities will enjoy an environment free from all forms of discrimination, harassment and retaliation. As a professional society, the ISAE is committed to providing an atmosphere that encourages the free expression and exchange of scientific ideas. In pursuit of this, the ISAE is dedicated to the philosophy of equality of opportunity and treatment for all members, regardless of gender, gender identity or expression, race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religion or religious belief, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, veteran status, or any other reason not related to scientific merit. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories. Harassment, sexual or otherwise, is a form of misconduct that undermines the integrity of the Society. Violators of this policy will be subject to sanctions.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Behaviour and language that are welcome/acceptable to one person may be unwelcome/offensive to another. Consequently, individuals must use discretion to ensure that their words and actions communicate respect for others. This is especially important for those in positions of authority, as individuals with lower rank or status may be reluctant to express their objections or discomfort regarding unwelcome behaviour. Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature. It refers to behaviour that is not welcome, is personally offensive, debilitates morale, and therefore, interferes with personal effectiveness. The following are examples of behaviour that, when unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment: sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions; verbal comments or physical actions of a sexual nature, including, but not limited to, touching, kissing or displays of nudity; sexually degrading words used to describe an individual; display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; sexually explicit jokes.

Definition of Other Harassment

Harassment on the basis of sexual or any other protected characteristic is also prohibited. Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A single incident can amount to harassment.

Harassment also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behavior in the past. It includes, but is not limited to the following: epithets, slurs, or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts; denigrating jokes and display or circulation of written, graphic or digital material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all people involved in Society activities, including (but not limited to) scientists, students, guests, staff, contractors, and exhibitors participating in scientific business, as well as sessions, tours and social events of any ISAE meeting or other ISAE activity.

Reporting an Incident

Any individual covered by this policy who believes that they have been subjected to harassment should contact the ISAE President or another Society Officer, including Congress Allies, as appropriate. They will be provided information that allows them to make an informed decision about whether to move forward with an investigation or pursue informal means of addressing their concerns. Informal resolution is a process which allows parties to explore a mutually agreeable outcome without invoking a formal investigation. Where appropriate, relevant parties may be asked to participate in an informal process which may be confidential. Participation in an informal process may be ended at any time by either party.

If a formal complaint is pursued, the complainant will be asked for written evidence (as outlined below) but not required or expected to discuss the concern with the alleged offender. All complaints will be treated seriously and be investigated promptly. Except when necessary to protect the health, safety or welfare of a complainant or witness, the complainant statements will be disclosed to the alleged offender and included in the final investigation report. Beyond this, confidentiality will be honoured to the extent possible (i.e., information shared by a complainant with ISAE investigators will not otherwise be shared without express permission of the complainant).

When submitting a written complaint, the complaint should contain the following information (to the extent known by the individual making the complaint):

1. Name(s) of complainant(s) and contact information;
2. Name of person alleged to have committed the harassment, his or her position, and contact information;
3. Names of any witnesses or other persons with relevant information regarding the incident and their contact information;
4. Details of what happened including the date, frequency, and location; and
5. Supporting documentation, if any, that the complainant has and a list of documentation the alleged harasser or witnesses may have.

Investigators will consider direct observations or reasonable inferences from facts. Investigators will not consider statements of opinion as to either complainant or offender's general reputation for any character trait.

The Investigation

1. The Council will name two impartial investigators, usually current or previous Society Officers or Council members. Any potential investigator who believes they have a conflict of interest, namely an interest that has the potential to compromise or bias their judgment or objectivity, must not serve as an investigator. Where the complaint concerns: i) sexual harassment by a member of ISAE Council (voting and non-voting members, including regional secretaries) ii) sexual harassment by any other parties who may be directing or have oversight over sexual harassment investigations, (iii) any claims made against the ISAE's leadership team or a conflict of interest is identified, a party external to ISAE qualified to conduct an impartial investigation will be retained to conduct the investigation.
2. In most cases, the complainant will be interviewed first, and the written complaint reviewed. If the complainant has not already filed a formal complaint, they should be asked to do so. During the first interview the complainant will be apprised of the steps of the investigative process including the informing of the alleged offender and the issuance of a final report.
3. If witnesses were identified by the complainant, their written statements will be reviewed, and the witnesses will be contacted to be interviewed by the investigators.
4. After information has been gathered from the complainant and witnesses, the investigative team will review all statements and write up a formal complaint based on this evidence. If discrepancies were identified among statements (e.g., witness statements not corroborating the complainant's information), investigators will conduct additional interviews with the complainant and witnesses to clarify.
5. The details of the formal complaint will be explained to the alleged offender through a communication by the investigators. If a formal complaint was not filed, the investigators may decide to take this action in the interest of the investigation, even if a complainant objects.
6. The initial communication with the alleged offender will contain the following information: the identity of the complainant, the specific section of the ISAE policy that the alleged offender is alleged to have violated, the precise conduct allegedly constituting the potential violation, and the date and location of the conduct constituting the policy violation.
7. The alleged offender will be given a reasonable opportunity to respond to the evidence of the complainant and to bring their own evidence. If the alleged offender does not respond to the initial communication, a second attempt will be made. If the alleged offender does not respond to the second attempt, then the investigation will continue to move forward.
8. If the alleged offender responds to the complaint and their evidence is in dispute of that provided by the complainant and/or witnesses, further investigatory steps will be taken to come to resolution.
9. When the investigation is complete, the investigators must report the findings to the President of the Society or another designated Society Officer, as appropriate, and to the complainant and offender.
10. Cases of harassment will be reported to the Scottish Charity Regulator OSCR, following their procedure for reporting notifiable events (<https://www.oscr.org.uk/managing-a-charity/notifiable-events>).

Retaliation is Prohibited

The ISAE will not tolerate any form of retaliation against persons who file a complaint or assist in the investigation. Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be subject to sanctions. An ISAE member who experiences retaliation is encouraged to file a retaliation complaint, which will be added to the original complaint or trigger a separate investigation if the original investigation is closed or did not involve the person(s) named in the retaliation complaint.

Non Disclosure Agreements are Prohibited

The ISAE does not allow any non-disclosure agreements (NDA) surrounding harassment claims. This includes prohibiting NDAs related to relation claims that are part of the investigation.

Sanctions

Individuals determined to be engaging in behaviour prohibited by this policy or in retaliation to a harassment complaint as well as those making allegations of harassment in bad faith will be subject to sanctions. Such actions range from a verbal warning to ejection from the meeting or activity in question, without refund of registration fees, and the reporting of their behaviour to their employer or to other authorities as appropriate. Repeat offenders or offenders of serious cases may be subject to further sanctions, such as being banned from participating in future ISAE meetings or other activities. Termination of ISAE membership is also possible based on the Code of Conduct.

Appeal and Questions

In the event that an individual is dissatisfied with the results of the investigation, they may appeal in writing to the President of the ISAE or another Society Officer stating the full grounds of the appeal within one week of the date on which the results were provided or sent. Information will then be provided on the next steps in the appeal process. Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the President of the ISAE or to another Society Officer.

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