

AGI Statement on Harassment in the Geosciences

Harassment in the Geosciences

Introduction and Scope

Geoscientists guide humanity in the use and stewardship of Earth's resources, drive the scientific pursuit of new knowledge about the planet, and provide education in all of the earth sciences. Professionals and students in the geosciences represent all walks of life with a full array of personal attributes and cultures.

The American Geosciences Institute (AGI) expects those in the profession to adhere to the highest ethical standards in all professional activities. This includes the active promotion of working and learning environments free of all forms of harassment, aggression or coercion based on any personal attributes, cultures, or differences in status. This also includes a firm rejection of those who would harass other geoscientists of any rank or status in a manner that may jeopardize their personal safety or comfort or otherwise potentially impede their professional progress or growth. The guidelines address shared aspects of this topic across the geoscience community; the professional codes of conduct for individual societies may expand beyond these guidelines.

This statement applies to geoscientists at all career stages, including students through senior professionals. The statement is designed to allow and encourage comprehensive application within scope and span of member society rules, in the particular situations encountered by geoscientists within their ranks. This document provides a coherent statement of values and conduct from and within the broader AGI community, and joins the voices of many other major STEM societies internationally in promoting healthy, supportive working and learning environments in our scientific endeavors.

Recognition and Settings

Harassment based on personal attributes includes the range of unacceptable behaviors, including sexual harassment, in all its forms through all unprofessional behavior based on ethnicity, religion, culture, sexual orientation, disability status, or any other personal dimension of diversity. Harassment may consist of isolated or continuing patterns of behavior, including micro-aggressions or abuse of power structures. Actions or behaviors that create or maintain a hostile work environment, are used to manipulate colleagues, peers, or superiors, or take advantage of power structures, may be considered harassment.

This statement refers to harassment in all professional, educational, and informal geoscience settings. This includes related environments linked to the geoscience enterprise but not limited to the activities of member societies and affiliated entities.

Specific examples include, but are not limited to:

- Any professional workplace, including laboratories, classrooms, and other meeting spaces
- Conferences, meetings, and sponsored activities associated with those meetings
- Professional fieldwork settings, including off-duty time at remote work sites
- Educational environments, including formal and informal teaching spaces, and residences during sponsored trips

In these environments, activities shall be conducted in a professional atmosphere in which all participants are treated with courtesy and respect and work consciously to promote an environment free from inappropriate behavior and harassment by or toward all participants, including scientists and non-scientists, students, guests, exhibitors, vendors, staff, and contractors.

Harassment can be expressed in a range of different ways including, but not limited to:

- Verbal communication (in person or remotely)
- Written communication
- Physical behaviors – these may include physical contact, body language, or aggressive and intimidating physical attitudes
- The creation or display of images or recordings

Recommendations to Member Societies

Intervention and Enforcement

Each AGI-affiliated scientific society that sponsors scientific meetings, meeting related events, or research in field research stations or worksites, is encouraged to establish and publicize its codes of conduct for Meetings, Events, and Field Research to all participants in advance of such events. These codes of conduct should be disseminated to all participants, including scientists and non-scientists, students, guests, exhibitors, vendors, staff, and contractors. Expected behavior and harassment concerns and consequences of violations should be clearly published.

It is recommended that participants be asked to convey explicitly that they are aware of and will comply with the code-of-conduct before being allowed to participate in the event.

The code-of-conduct should also include a clear process for reporting, investigating, and reaching agreement on resolutions of accusations of violations. Such policies, when established, must be backed-up by clearly articulated provisions for disciplinary action and appeals. In cases where misconduct is clearly found, societies should retain the right to sanction participants with actions that could potentially include publication restrictions, meeting attendance restrictions, revoking of contracts, and other appropriate action—up to and including suspending membership in the respective organization. Organizations considering sanctions are advised to include legal reviews of their processes and findings.

Societies are encouraged to sponsor workshops and other educational events to raise awareness of actions that individuals and organizations can take to assist with both intervention and prevention of harassment. Participation in these events can engage members of other societies when appropriate. Societies are also encouraged to share best practices and procedures to the extent allowable.

Best Practices in Reporting

There are a number of established best practices available for procedures and processes involved in reporting incidents of harassment. These guidelines provide a basic outline of recommendations to member societies for items to include in reporting procedures and processes:

- While not required to do so, someone who has suffered harassment has the right to inform the perpetrator that the behavior is unwelcome and request that it stop immediately.
- Any individual who observes an instance of harassment is encouraged to intervene.
- Use of third party moderators or witnesses is encouraged. These can include a trusted person, colleague, trade union representatives or equivalents.
- Witnesses are encouraged to talk with the victim and encourage the individual to pursue the matter using appropriate reporting lines.
- Officers and officials of member societies should be contacted and engaged, with the complaint treated seriously and investigated promptly.
- Confidentiality should be honored as long as the rights of others are not compromised.

Best reporting practices include the keeping of accurate records of incidents. These records should include:

- Information about the location and timing of the events
- Descriptions of the events, and any witnesses observing the behaviors.
- Written statements, electronic messages, voicemail, social media posts, and any physical evidence as appropriate

Statement accepted by the AGI Executive Committee on 9 April 2018

Produced by the AGI Ad Hoc Committee on Harassment in the Geosciences

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