

AGI Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct

These guidelines address common ethical topics across the geoscience community; the ethics statements of individual societies may expand beyond these guidelines.

Geoscientists play a critical role in ethical decision making about stewardship of the Earth, the use of its resources, and the interactions between humankind and the planet on which we live. Geoscientists must earn the public's trust and maintain confidence in the work of individual geoscientists and the geosciences as a profession. The American Geosciences Institute (AGI) expects those in the profession to adhere to the highest ethical standards in all professional activities. Geoscientists should engage responsibly in the conduct and reporting of their work, acknowledging the uncertainties and limits of current understanding inherent in studies of natural systems. Geoscientists should respect the work of colleagues and those who use and rely upon the products of their work.

In day-to-day activities geoscientists should:

- Be honest.
- Act responsibly and with integrity, acknowledge limitations to knowledge and understanding, and be accountable for their errors.
- Present professional work and reports without falsification or fabrication of data, misleading statements, or omission of relevant facts.
- Distinguish facts and observations from interpretations.
- Accurately cite authorship, acknowledge the contributions of others, and not plagiarize.
- Disclose and act appropriately on real or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Continue professional development and growth.
- Encourage and assist in the development of a safe, diverse, and inclusive workforce.
- Treat colleagues, students, employees, and the public with respect.
- Keep privileged information confidential, except when doing so constitutes a threat to public health, safety, or welfare.

As members of a professional and scientific community, geoscientists should:

- Promote greater understanding of the geosciences by other technical groups, students, the general public, news media, and policy makers through effective communication and education.
- Conduct their work recognizing the complexities and uncertainties of the Earth system.
- Sample responsibly so that materials and sites are preserved for future study.
- Document and archive data and data products using best practices in data management, and share data promptly for use by the geoscience community.
- Use their technical knowledge and skills to protect public health, safety, and welfare, and enhance the sustainability of society.
- Responsibly inform the public about natural resources, hazards, and other geoscience phenomena with clarity and accuracy.
- Support responsible stewardship through an improved understanding and interpretation of the Earth, and by communicating known and potential impacts of human activities and natural processes.

Documents:

- 2015 AGI Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct (pdf)
- History, context, and intended use of the 2015 Guidelines (pdf)
- 2013 Consensus Statement on Ethics in the Geosciences (pdf)
- 1999 AGI Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct (pdf)

- Member Society Codes of Ethics and Statements on Ethics

Signatories as of May 3, 2018

American Geosciences Institute
 American Association of Petroleum Geologists
 American Geophysical Union
 American Institute of Professional Geologists
 American Meteorological Society
 American Rock Mechanics Association
 Association of American Geographers
 Association of Environmental & Engineering Geologists
 Clay Minerals Society
 Council on Undergraduate Research, Geosciences Division
 The Geochemical Society
 Geological Association of Canada
 Geological Society of America
 The Geological Society of London
 International Association for Promoting Geoethics
 International Association of Hydrogeologists/U.S. National Chapter
 International Medical Geology Association
 National Association of Geoscience Teachers
 National Association of State Boards of Geology (ASBOG)
 National Cave and Karst Research Institute
 National Earth Science Teachers Association
 Paleobotanical Section of the Botanical Society of America
 Paleontological Society
 SEPM (Society for Sedimentary Geology)
 Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration, Inc.
 The Society for Organic Petrology
 Society of Economic Geologists
 Society of Exploration Geophysicists
 Society of Independent Professional Earth Scientists
 Society of Mineral Museum Professionals
 Society of Vertebrate Paleontology

AGI encourages its member societies to develop guidelines or codes of ethical conduct to reflect their specific needs. In some cases, member societies may wish to develop specific codes of conduct that provide detailed information related to the expectations of a particular discipline, while other societies may choose to offer more generalized guidelines or may reference codes or guidelines from yet other societies. A society may desire to address issues related to enforcement of the code with appropriate disciplinary actions. Perceptions of what constitutes ethical conduct vary among cultures and countries; this fact may need to be considered by member societies. While AGI expects its member societies to decide on the level to which they should pursue this suggestion, the Institute is willing to provide guidance to the extent it can.
