



ASECS Harassment, Ethics, and Professional Conduct Complaint Procedures

See the [Policy Page](#) for the Policy on Ethics and Professional Conduct and the Whistleblower Protection Policy

I: Statement of Principles

The American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies is committed to the free exchange of ideas in all its activities in an environment of inclusion, safety, and mutual respect. All members and participants involved in ASECS-sponsored activities, including employees, contractors, vendors, volunteers and guests, are expected to engage in respectful behavior and to preserve the highest standards of scholarly and professional conduct. The Society provides the following process for addressing all forms of discrimination, harassment, coercion, bullying, and unprofessional or abusive behavior against members or other participants.

If conflict arises within the Society and its activities, ASECS provides its members and non-member participants in ASECS activities, with options for informal and formal conflict resolution.

The responsible parties and points of contact for complaints of violations of Ethics and Professional Conduct are: the Executive Director, the President, and any member of the Anti-Harassment Committee. The Anti-Harassment Committee, composed of a chair and two other members in good standing, is responsible for investigation and adjudication, in the case of formal complaints. The Executive Director will keep the President of the Society informed of all formal investigations as they unfold.

Any participant in an ASECS activity who believes themselves, or another participant, to have experienced physical assault or to be in imminent danger of physical harm is urged to contact local police or law enforcement immediately.

II. Definitions: What is a Violation of the Policy on Ethics and Professional Conduct?

Violations of the Policy on Ethics and Professional Conduct include words or actions that demean, humiliate, undermine, alarm, intimidate, threaten, or harm an individual based on their perceived race, class, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship, religion, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, ability, rank, or status. It includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome physical contact, sexual advances, or solicitation of emotional intimacy; physically interfering with another's movements; stalking; racial or ethnic slurs or other demeaning or derogatory speech; offers of professional favors in exchange for sexual favors; displaying or sharing offensive images or jokes; inappropriate comments about a person's appearance or physical characteristics; or recording or photographing without the person's permission.

Violation of the Policy on Ethics and Professional Conduct also include words or actions that are pervasive and seek to harm, coerce, threaten, undermine, or intimidate someone. It includes, but is not limited to, yelling at someone; acting physically aggressive; threatening professional harm; maligning a person's scholarly or professional reputation; spreading false information or rumors; disrupting a panel or presentation; or repeatedly interrupting someone. Bullying also includes verbally threatening or harassing behavior conducted through communication channels including, but not limited to, email, web conferencing, social media, and voice or text messaging.

III. Policies

Non-Retaliation. ASECS holds a policy of Non-Retaliation for individuals who report a violation of the policy of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Retaliation against reporters and adjudicators is itself a form of harassment. ASECS also prohibits retaliation against individuals who cooperate in the investigation, serve on the Anti-Harassment Committee, or serve as officers in the Society. Retaliation may include, but is not limited to, verbal abuse, physical threats, and exclusion from professional activities. Retaliation will be considered a violation of the policy on Ethics and Professional Conduct and would be processed as such.

Confidentiality. Mindful of the sensitive nature of complaints that fall under this policy, the committee will seek to protect the due process rights of all parties involved. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent permitted by law and as required to the solution of the conflict. At intake, the individual(s) involved may request guidance from the Executive Director, any member of the Committee, or legal counsel. In no case should an individual member of the Committee be expected to resolve an issue involving

possible unlawful activity or other instances of severe policy violations without assistance.

IV. Procedures for Conflict Resolution:

Informal resolution

If conflicts arise within the Society, informal resolution between individuals will be attempted first.

Formal resolution

If informal resolution is not possible, this document outlines the process for hearing formal complaints.

A) INTAKE

1. An individual may submit a written complaint to the Executive Director, the President, or any member of the Anti-Harassment Committee. The Anti-Harassment Committee is responsible for investigation and adjudication. The individual responsible for intake will not be involved in the investigation or adjudication process.
2. Exceptions to this path may occur as provided in instances when legal counsel is advisable. Exceptions to this process also include complaints involving staff, which are addressed by policies covering employment; and complaints involving members of the Board of Directors, which are addressed by policies covering governance.
3. At intake, the complainant should be made aware of informal or formal resolution options. Individual(s) involved in intake will inform the complainant of investigation and adjudication procedures, and will refrain from further involvement in the investigation or adjudication except as witnesses.
4. The individual(s) involved at intake will submit the case to the Anti-Harassment Committee. The Anti-Harassment Committee is responsible for investigation and adjudication of violations of the policy.

B) INVESTIGATION AND ADJUDICATION

1. Committees must obtain written consent from the complainant before pursuing a formal investigation except when members of the Committee are under legal obligation to report an incident to the Board of Directors or other authorities.
2. The Committee Chair will ascertain that no Committee member has a conflict of interest that would warrant a recusal. If necessary, the President will appoint designated alternates.

3. A conflict of interest will automatically require recusal when any party to the complaint is a Committee member's university colleague or previous colleague; dissertation committee member, past or present teacher, student, advisor or advisee; partner in a professional activity (e.g., co-author, co-editor, co-organizer of a program); family member; or an individual with whom the Committee member has had a romantic or sexual relationship present or past. Committee members may also voluntarily recuse themselves from an investigation for any reason.
4. The Executive Director will notify all parties—complainant, witnesses, and respondent—that a formal process has been initiated. The Executive Director may consult with legal counsel at any stage within this process.
5. The Committee will offer the complainant the opportunity of an interview with the investigation members of the Committee as the first step in the formal process. The Committee will attempt to interview all other parties to the incident. All interviews will be conducted individually; an interviewee may request the presence of a second party.
6. The Committee may also request and review further relevant information such as emails, text messages, social media posts, notes, or other communications. The Committee may also request additional interviews at any stage in the process. Any parties involved in the investigation in any way should be aware that any emails, text messages, social media posts, notes, or other communications regarding the case can become part of the formal record and should refrain from such activities.
7. If any party requests the presence of legal counsel at an interview with the Committee, the Executive Director must be notified in advance and ASECS legal counsel must be consulted for guidance.
8. Throughout the process the Committee members and Executive Director will respect the due process protections of the law, complainant, the accused, and any witnesses.
9. The Committee will make every effort to resolve the complaint within three months of its initiation. If the Committee requires additional time, it must explain its reasons to the Executive Director and request an extension.

C) RESOLUTION AND POTENTIAL SANCTIONS

1. After concluding its deliberations, the Committee will submit a written report of its findings to the Executive Director of the Society. If the Committee has concluded that no ethics violation, harassment, or bullying has occurred, no action will be taken, and the President will inform all parties of this decision.
2. If the Committee concludes that an ethics violation, harassment or bullying has occurred, it will also recommend the level of sanctions to be applied. The

President will then communicate the Committee's decision to all parties to the complaint. Sanctions may include:

- a. A written reprimand and warning to cease and desist, which will include a prohibition of any contact with the complainant(s).
- b. A ban on participation in annual meetings of the Society for a specified period.
- c. Removal from a current position within the Society, including but not limited to employment, membership on the Executive Board, editorship of a Society publication, chairship of a caucus, etc.
- d. Suspension for a specific period of the right to take part in all ASECS activities including publication, editing, committee service, vendor activities, Board membership, meeting attendance, and online communications.
- e. For the most serious infractions, permanent loss of all membership privileges and a permanent ban on participation in the Annual Meeting, publication in the Society's journals, or involvement in any ASECS activities either in person or online.

V. Appeal Process

1. Should any party to the complaint believe that the adjudication was mistaken or flawed, they may request a review of the decision from the ASECS Executive Board. The request must be submitted in writing within 30 days of the notification of the initial judgment.
2. Grounds for appeal must be specified and must include either new evidence, demonstration of a flawed procedure, or proof of bias.

Approved by the Board of Directors Oct. 10, 2025