



Anti-Harassment Policy for AAS & Division Meetings & Activities

Preface

The AAS Bylaws include an Article on non-discrimination in professional activities:

ARTICLE VI. NON-DISCRIMINATION IN PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Section 6.01 The Society is committed to the philosophy of equality of opportunity and treatment for all members, regardless of gender, gender identity, race, ethnic origin, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, or any other reason not related to scientific merit. The Board of Trustees shall provide for such policies as are appropriate to recognize and maintain this commitment.

Consistent with this non-discrimination Bylaw, the AAS Council at its January 2008 meeting approved the following anti-harassment policy.

Statement of Policy

It is the policy of the American Astronomical Society (AAS) that all participants in Society activities will enjoy an environment free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. As a professional society, the AAS is committed to providing an atmosphere that encourages the free expression and exchange of scientific ideas. In pursuit of that ideal, the AAS is dedicated to the philosophy of equality of opportunity and treatment for all members, regardless of gender, gender identity or expression, race, color, 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, sexual or otherwise, is a form of misconduct that undermines the integrity of Society meetings. Violators of this policy will be subject to discipline.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Behavior 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 since individuals with lower rank or status may be reluctant to express their objections or discomfort regarding unwelcome behavior.

Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature. It refers to behavior that is not welcome, is personally offensive, debilitates morale, and therefore, interferes with work effectiveness. The following are examples of behavior that, when unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment: sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions; verbal comments or physical actions of a sexual nature; sexually degrading words used to describe an individual; a display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; sexually explicit jokes; unnecessary touching.

Definition of Other Harassment

Harassment on the basis of any other protected characteristic is also strictly prohibited. This conduct 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 or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all attendees at Society activities, including scientists, students, guests, staff, contractors, and exhibitors, participating in the scientific sessions, tours, and social events of any AAS or Division meeting or other activity.

Reporting an Incident

Advice for reporting sexual or other forms of harassment is available on the website of the Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy (CSWA). Here is a summary of the more detailed information available on the CSWA website:

Write everything down (times, places, nature of the incident, and comments made). Save emails, notes, etc. Tell someone you trust. It is likely that you will have to write and sign an official letter of complaint, documenting the nature of the harassment and/or discrimination. Be as detailed as possible. Supporting documentation and statements from witnesses should be submitted with your letter.

Any individual covered by this policy who believes that he or she has been subjected to harassment should contact the AAS Executive Officer or other Society Officer. Other Society Officers include the President, Past President or President Elect, Senior Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. He or she is not required or expected to discuss the concern with the alleged offender. All complaints will be treated seriously and be investigated promptly. Confidentiality will be honored to the extent permitted as long as the rights of others are not compromised.

The Investigation

1. The Executive Committee will name an impartial investigator, usually a Society Officer or Council member. Any named investigator who believes they have a conflict of interest should not serve as an investigator.
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, he or she should be asked to do so.
3. The details of the complaint should be explained to the alleged offender by the investigator.
4. The alleged offender should be given a reasonable chance to respond to the evidence of the complainant and to bring his or her own evidence.
5. If the facts are in dispute, further investigatory steps may include interviewing those named as witnesses.
6. If, for any reason, the investigator is in doubt about whether or how to continue, he or she will seek appropriate counsel.
7. When the investigation is complete, the investigator should report the findings to the Executive Officer of the Society or other Society Officer, as appropriate.

Retaliation Is Prohibited

The AAS 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 disciplinary action.

Disciplinary Action

Individuals engaging in behavior prohibited by this policy as well as those making allegations of harassment in bad faith will be subject to disciplinary action. 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 behavior to their employer. Repeat offenders may be subject to further disciplinary action, such as being banned from participating in future Society or Division meetings or other activities. Council is granted the right in its Bylaws to terminate the membership of any member.

Appeal & Questions

In the event that the individual is dissatisfied with the results of the investigation, he or she may appeal to the President of the Society. Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the AAS Executive Officer or other Society Officer.