

# IAU Code of Conduct

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## Overview

The mission of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) is to promote and safeguard astronomy in all its aspects (including research, communication, education and development) through international cooperation. The IAU embraces scientists from all backgrounds who are united in the common goal of promoting and advancing the astronomical sciences. Science is best advanced when there is mutual trust, respect and integrity, and when it is conducted in environments free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination. The IAU Executive Committee has a responsibility to set the norms for the professional behaviour of its members as they pertain to IAU-related activities. This IAU Code of Conduct includes an Ethics Policy and an Anti-Harassment Policy.

It is implicit that all IAU Individual Members and Junior Members have read this Code of Conduct and agree to abide by it. In addition, everyone who registers for an IAU meeting or activity agrees implicitly to abide by the Code of Conduct and accepts the prescribed protocols therein.

## **Part A: Ethics Policy for IAU Meetings and Activities**

All scientists should act ethically in the conduct of their research and teaching, and in relations with members of the public as well as members of the scientific community. This IAU Ethics Policy<sup>1</sup> is a set of guidelines and best practices for professional behaviour, including participation in IAU-sponsored activities (e.g., meetings, publications, IAU governance) and in other astronomical activities (e.g., research, education, publishing, peer review, outreach). A process to file a complaint and guide the resolution of alleged violations, when they occur during IAU-related activities, is included in Appendix A. This document applies to IAU Individual Members and Junior Members as well as to those involved in the operation of its Divisions, Commissions, Working Groups, International Offices, and Centres in professional astronomical activities.

Within the larger astronomical community, everyone bears responsibility for upholding a set of common scientific and ethical standards in professional activities, and for assigning consequences when these standards are breached. The IAU does not have the authority nor the means to accept responsibility for investigating and adjudicating suspected breaches of ethics that are the rightful jurisdiction and responsibility of other community stakeholders. All members should familiarise themselves with their own institutional guidelines, policies and procedures related to the oversight and maintenance of ethical standards for research and conduct, and share this information with their colleagues and students.

### **1. Conduct Towards Others**

Everyone involved in activities of the IAU should treat others with professional respect and equal consideration in both written and spoken communication. They should work to provide an environment that encourages equality of opportunity and the free expression and exchange of scientific ideas. They should promote fair treatment for all their colleagues, regardless of (but not limited to) race, ethnic and national origin, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, or disability.

### **2. Harassment**

Abusive, demeaning, humiliating, or intimidating behaviour or abuses of power are unacceptable. The IAU Anti-Harassment Policy is part of the IAU Code of Conduct and covers all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, verbal abuse and bullying (see Code of Conduct Part B). This IAU Ethics Policy, also part of the Code of Conduct, implicitly includes all the provisions of the IAU Anti-Harassment Policy.

<sup>1</sup> This Policy is structured along the lines of the Code of Conduct and Ethics Statements adopted by a number of other professional astronomical societies, e.g., the American Astronomical Society 2018 Code of Ethics, the European Astronomical Society 2023 Ethics Statement and Guidelines for Good Practice, and the Astronomical Society of Australia 2019 Code of Conduct, and incorporates ideas from Royal Astronomical Society 2021 Code of Conduct and the United Nations Ethics Office 2017 “Putting Ethics to Work” guide.

### 3. Research

Research should be carried out with honesty and integrity. Data and research results should be maintained in a form that allows review and reproduction by others. Researchers involved in funded studies or allocated telescope time should make results available in a timely manner. The fabrication, falsification or selective reporting of data with the intent to mislead or deceive is unethical, as is the appropriation of unpublished proprietary data or research results from others without permission and attribution.

Astronomers occasionally perform research involving human subjects, including educational studies and surveys, which may be subject to regulations. Investigators should contact the relevant authorities at their home institution, who will rule on exemptions or approvals.

### 4. Publication

Authors of IAU publications are expected to adhere to basic standards of professional ethics and conduct that are common across all areas of scholarly publishing. Authors implicitly affirm that their work is original and has not been published in its entirety elsewhere.

Anyone (and only those) who has made contributions to a work intended for publication, including the inception, design, execution or interpretation of the research, should be offered the opportunity to be a co-author. Authors are responsible for providing timely corrections or retractions if errors that could be misleading are found in published works, with the corresponding author bearing primary responsibility. Every co-author has both an obligation and a right to review a manuscript before its submission; it is the responsibility of the corresponding author to ensure this opportunity.

Proper acknowledgement should also be given to individuals who have made minor contributions to a study. Authors have an obligation to include a set of references for the precedents, sources and context of the reported work. Data provided by others must be cited appropriately. Data obtained from public databases should be cited in accordance with the guidelines and recommendations of the source from which they were obtained. Sources of financial support for any project should be acknowledged.

Plagiarism and self-plagiarism are acts of reproducing text, ideas or other material from sources without proper credit, whether it is inserted verbatim or has been modified or paraphrased. This also applies to abstracts published in meeting proceedings, which must include a citation if already part of a published paper. Plagiarism and self-plagiarism are unethical and as such are in violation of IAU's Ethics policies.

While it is reasonable to refute other works based on respectful scientific arguments, it is unethical to include personal attacks or derogatory language.

These obligations apply not only to scholarly journals, but also to other forms of scientific communication, including but not limited to press releases, proposals, websites, social media, posters, talks, popular books and podcasts.

## 5. Peer Review

Peer review is an essential component of many aspects of the scientific process, including evaluating research proposals, reviewing submitted manuscripts, and assessing colleagues for career advancement. Peer review is effective only if members of the scientific community provide thorough, fair, respectful, timely and objective evaluations. Reviewers should strive to be aware of implicit or unconscious bias. Materials provided in confidence for peer review must not be used or disclosed by the reviewers, and discussions among reviewers must be held in the strictest confidence. It is unethical to seek to gain an advantage by means of reviewing the work of others, either through the use of private information or biased reviews.

## 6. Conflicts of Interest

Many activities of scientists and educators, such as serving on review or advisory panels or on scientific organising committees for meetings, have the potential for a conflict of interest. IAU members should educate themselves on the scope of what constitutes a conflict of interest under various circumstances. Any professional relationship or action that could be a conflict or could be perceived as a conflict of interest should be fully disclosed. If a conflict of interest cannot be properly managed, the activity should be avoided or discontinued. Many organisations have conflict of interest policies as well as mechanisms for managing conflicts, for example, through recusal.

See Appendix A for reporting a violation of the Ethics Policy that occurred during an IAU-related activity.

# Part B: Anti-Harassment Policy for IAU Meetings and Activities

The IAU opposes any discrimination, bullying, or harassment.

The IAU is committed to preventing any incident of discrimination, bullying, harassment or retaliation that may occur during the General Assemblies, Symposia, Focus Meetings, whether held in person, virtually, or in hybrid form, and in general in any activity of its scientific bodies or offices in which the IAU has or shares responsibility. This includes any associated events such as social activities, informal gatherings, social media exchanges, or schools/workshops attached to the above-mentioned events.

## 1. Statement of Anti-Harassment Policy

It is the policy of the IAU that all participants in IAU activities will enjoy an environment free from all forms of discrimination, bullying, harassment and retaliation. As a professional Union, the IAU is committed to providing an atmosphere that encourages the free expression and exchange of scientific ideas. In pursuit of that ideal, the IAU is dedicated to the philosophy of equality of opportunity and treatment for all members, regardless of (but not limited to) race,

ethnic and national origin, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, or disability. Harassment, sexual or otherwise, is a form of misconduct that undermines the integrity of IAU meetings. Violators of this policy will be subject to disciplinary actions (see Appendix B).

## **2. Definition of Harassment**

In general, harassment is a conduct that exerts unwelcome pressure or intimidation. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to: epithets, slurs or stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; denigrating jokes and display or circulation of written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual or group.

Sexual harassment refers to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments or actions of a socially acceptable nature. It instead refers to behaviour that is not welcome and is personally offensive.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the wide international nature of the IAU, it is important to realise that behaviour and language that are welcome/acceptable to one person may be unwelcome/offensive to another, and in some cases a frank discussion can resolve a conflict without the need for a formal complaint. At all times, however, individuals must use their best judgment to ensure that their words and actions communicate respect for others. This is especially important for those in positions of authority (including all members of organising committees – LOCs and SOC – in IAU meetings), since individuals with lower rank or status may be reluctant to express their objections or discomfort regarding unwelcome behaviour.

## **3. Scope of Anti-Harassment Policy**

This policy applies to all attendees at IAU activities, including scientists, students, guests, staff, contractors and exhibitors, participating in the scientific sessions, tours and social events, workshops or schools associated with any IAU meeting or other activity. All meeting attendees have a role to play in creating an inviting and harassment-free environment through their own behaviour and the discouragement of harassing behaviour in others.

For reporting a violation of the Anti-harassment Policy that occurred during an IAU-related activity, see Appendix B. Retaliation (negative social or professional actions – or threats of negative actions) taken against a Complainant, anyone who states intentions to make a complaint, anyone who provides relevant information (witnesses), and anyone who participates in an investigation is a violation of this policy and will be subject to disciplinary action. Furthermore, we emphasize that any form of physical or verbal abuse, bullying, or harassment of any individual, including complainants, their allies, alleged or sanctioned offenders, or those who work with or have worked with them, is not allowed.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information and definitions on harassment in legislation from different countries, refer to the document “Violence and harassment in the world of work: A guide on Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206” adopted by the International Labour Organization, which is a specialised agency of the United Nations.

Following a formal complaint, individuals suspected to be in violation of IAU's Ethics and/or Harassment Policies while engaged in IAU activities will be investigated and, if the complaints are upheld, will be subjected to disciplinary actions (Appendices A and B). IAU members are expected to abide by these rulings.

#### **4. Acknowledgement of Acceptance of Anti-Harassment Policy**

All SOC members, LOC members and session chairs will be required to acknowledge having read and agreed to the policy. They must also acknowledge that, as persons in positions of power, they will ensure that the policy is enforced and report all violations that come to their attention to the SOC chair(s). All participants of the IAU meetings/activities will be implicitly bound by the policy.

#### **5. Advertisement of Anti-Harassment Policy at IAU Meetings and Activities**

The organisers of the IAU supported meeting/activity are responsible for broad advertisement of the IAU anti-harassment policy. The IAU policy must be advertised on the conference website. It must also be displayed and explicitly mentioned by the organisers in the opening session of the conference.

It is the responsibility of the organisers to inform all participants about the IAU policy on anti-harassment and to instruct the Sessions' Chairs on the procedure to be followed should a harassment incident occur during the sessions.

The organisers are required to identify two SOC members who commit to being available for the duration of the meeting as "contact individuals" to whom anyone can report any incident. The names of these two SOC members must be made widely known to all participants at the beginning of the meeting.

### **Part C: House Rules for the use of IAU official social media accounts**

The IAU has published its House Rules for the use of its official social media accounts. These rules, which may be found via the following link,

[https://www.facebook.com/InternationalAstronomicalUnion/about\\_details](https://www.facebook.com/InternationalAstronomicalUnion/about_details)

are:

"We have some "house rules" so that you always know how we can help you and what you can expect from us. If you have any questions, we are available through private messages. Write us a message and you will receive a response within five working days. We will answer questions regarding our activities. Unfortunately, we are not able to answer general questions about astronomy and other topics not directly related to our activities.

If you want to send us an image, link or any other material, please send it in a private message. The option to post directly on our timeline is not enabled. We receive many requests, and

unfortunately we are not able to share/advertise/promote all of them. As we want to give everyone equal and fair treatment, we have decided not to promote pages, initiatives or other projects with no direct connection to the IAU.

If you want to add a comment to a post, please engage in a dialogue based on respect and understanding. We want you to have a useful and pleasant experience on our Facebook page, so to ensure that you will enjoy being here, but also to protect you, we will do the best we can to remove from our Facebook page the following types of behaviour:

- Obscene, offensive or inappropriate, whether in the form of text, image, link redirecting to an external page, audio or video, whether sent via private message or publicly posted on the page; -Intimidating and demeaning to another person; discriminatory (related to age, sex, race or any other basis);
- Defamatory and/or having a negative impact on the image of the IAU, its partners or members of our community;
- Ambiguous, giving the impression that it provides information on behalf of the IAU, but without our consent;
- Wrong, which can harm the IAU's reputation and that of its partners; the IAU does not encourage false and/or biased statements;
- Advertising or seeking personal gain or profit;
- Illegal or violations of copyright or other intellectual property rights;
- Libellous, that may harm privacy;
- Illegal, that encourages illegal activities;
- Spamming, containing viruses or other software designed to cause damage to other users or to the official IAU Facebook page;
- Outside the topics for discussion shared on our Facebook page.

We take no responsibility for the content posted by other users on this page and we reserve the right to ban an author for not respecting the house rules, and to delete their messages. All the articles (text, video, image etc) published on the IAU Facebook page belong to the organisation, and if not, the source will be acknowledged. All photos belonging to the IAU are released under a Creative Commons 3.0 Attribution License. Read more about our copyright here. You can share our posts as long as you indicate the source (via @International Astronomical Union) and display the credit mentioned in post. By using or accessing this page, you agree to the rules described in the Facebook Privacy Policy (<https://www.facebook.com/about/privacy>), and to the rules described in this section.”



# Appendices for Reporting Violations during IAU Meetings and Activities

## Appendix A: Reporting a Violation of the Ethics Policy during an IAU Meeting or Activity

Anyone who participates in an IAU-sponsored meeting or activity may make a timely complaint of an alleged violation of the IAU Ethics Policy that occurred during the event. The procedure is outlined below. In the case of harassment at sponsored meetings, the IAU Anti-Harassment Policy procedures will have precedence and Complainants should follow the procedure described in Appendix B.

### a. Filing a Complaint

A complaint of an alleged violation of the Ethics Policy may be filed with the General Secretary with copy to the Assistant General Secretary. The Complainant, who must have witnessed or been directly involved in the incident, is required to include their name and professional address; the name and (where known) professional address of the Respondent (that is, the person accused of the ethical breach); the provisions of the Ethics Policy alleged to have been violated; a full statement of conduct alleged to have violated the Ethics Policy, including the sources of all information on which the allegations are based; copies of any documents supporting the allegations (including statements from witnesses); a statement that other legal or institutional proceedings involving the alleged conduct have not been initiated or, if initiated, the status of such proceedings; and any other information pertinent to the complaint.

Anonymous complaints will not be accepted. By filing a complaint, the Complainant implicitly agrees to share the case file with the non-conflicted and non-implicated members of the IAU Executive Committee (see part b. Procedure) and, if probable cause for action is found, to the Respondent (i.e., the alleged offender). However, Complainants can ask to remain anonymous to any other individuals who may need to be contacted, in which case identifying information will not be shared without the Complainants' permission.

Complainants who make allegations of ethics code breaches in bad faith will be subject to the same types of disciplinary action to which violators of the Ethics Policy are subject.

### b. Procedure

1. The General Secretary will forward the complaint to the Executive Committee, with the exclusion of those who are directly implicated in the complaint, if any.
2. The Executive Committee will appoint a Chair plus two additional members of an ad hoc ethics committee (hereinafter AHEC, typically drawn from the Executive Committee) to oversee the handling of that complaint. Potential conflicts of interest must be declared openly, and no one with a conflict of interest shall participate in the deliberations or decision.
3. In the event that a Complainant alleges conduct that is, or may be, the subject of other

legal or institutional proceedings, the AHEC may defer further action until the conclusion of the other legal or institutional proceedings. The AHEC may use those findings as a basis for considering any IAU actions.

4. Upon the AHEC review of the Complainant's submitted materials, if probable cause for action is found, the AHEC Chair shall provide a copy of the complaint documentation to the Respondent. The Respondent will be asked for a written response to the complaint within 30 days.
5. The AHEC may communicate with the Complainant, the Respondent, any witnesses, and/or consider other sources of information necessary to carry out its functions.
6. The AHEC Chair shall submit a written report to the General Secretary of the committee's findings, supporting evidentiary materials and any recommendations for sanction when a violation of the Ethics Policy is found to have occurred.
7. The General Secretary will notify the Complainant and the Respondent of the findings, determination and any sanctions by written report, and inform the Executive Committee.
8. The Complainant and the Respondent may submit a response in writing within 30 days.
9. After the end of the 30-day period, the General Secretary will take the appropriate actions if a sanction is imposed, except that such notice will be postponed if an appeal is filed.
10. The details of a filed complaint and all proceedings will be kept confidential by the AHEC and the Executive Committee of the IAU.

### **c. Retaliation Is Prohibited**

The IAU will not tolerate any form of retaliation in general, but in particular against persons who file a complaint or assist in the investigation. Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination, will be subject to disciplinary action.

### **d. Disciplinary Actions**

Individuals found to have been engaging in unethical behaviour prohibited by this policy will be subject to disciplinary action by the IAU Executive Committee. Such sanctions range from a verbal warning to ejection from the meeting or activity in question without refund of registration fees and may, at the discretion of the Executive Committee, include the reporting of their behaviour to the national committee and their employer or home institution.

The IAU Executive Committee may decide on further disciplinary action for repeat or serious offenders, such as being banned from participating in future IAU meetings or other IAU related activities for a period of time, or even having the offender's IAU membership revoked in serious cases.

### **e. Appeal**

A Respondent who receives a sanction for a violation of the Ethics Policy may appeal this determination to the IAU President, who will make a determination in consultation with the Executive Committee. Both the Respondent and the Complainant will be notified of the final appeal determination.

## **Appendix B: Reporting an Incident of Harassment during an IAU Meeting or Activity**

In the eventuality of a clear case of harassment during an IAU event, the Chair or organiser(s) should act immediately to stop it. If the situation deteriorates, they should ask the harasser(s) involved to leave the room.

Any individual covered by this policy who believes that they have been subjected to harassment should report the incident(s). If any form of harassment occurs in a less openly visible way (e.g., during social activities or informal gatherings), the affected person and/or witness should immediately report it to one of the Organizers or to one of the designated “responsible individuals” for the meeting/IAU activity (hereinafter the “Reporter”).

In the event that one of the organisers is the alleged offender, the Complainant (the one making the complaint) may contact one of the designated Reporters or directly contact the IAU General Secretary for further guidance.

### **a. Filing a Complaint**

The following is advice for reporting any incident (or suspected incident) pertaining to discrimination or harassment.

Write down all relevant information (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. If possible, supporting documentation and statements from witnesses should be submitted with your letter.

The written report of an incident may be made by the affected individual or by a colleague/friend/associate of the individual (with the permission of the individual who has been subjected to harassment) and submitted to the Reporter. All complaints will be treated seriously and be investigated promptly. The Complainant is not required to discuss the concern with the alleged offender.

The Reporter should make written notes of the incident, attaching any possible evidence and inquiring about any witnesses. The Reporter should then give the alleged offender the opportunity to be heard and respond to the complaint or allegations.

A full report about the incident should then be sent by the Reporter to the IAU General Secretary with copy to the Assistant General Secretary. The report should include the immediate initiatives the Reporter has undertaken following the IAU anti-harassment policy.

The General Secretary will promptly report any case of harassment that occurs during an IAU meeting or activity to the rest of the IAU Executive Committee.

Confidentiality will be honoured, to the extent permitted, as long as the rights of others are not compromised.

## **b. Procedure**

1. The Executive Committee will name an impartial Investigator, usually an IAU Officer or Executive Committee member. Any named investigator who believes they have a conflict of interest should not serve as an Investigator. The Complainant will be informed of the name of the Investigator and allowed to contest the choice should they believe that the Investigator is conflicted. In egregious cases of harassment, the IAU reserves the right to engage an outside professional or agency trained in the handling of harassment cases.
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.
3. The details of the complaint shall be explained to the Respondent (alleged offender) by the Investigator.
4. The Respondent shall be given a reasonable chance to respond to the evidence of the Complainant and to bring their 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 proceed, the Investigator will seek appropriate counsel.
7. When the investigation is complete, the Investigator shall report the findings to the General Secretary of the Union as well as to the invested parties. The General Secretary shall inform the Executive Committee.

## **c. Retaliation Is Prohibited**

The IAU will not tolerate any form of retaliation in general, but in particular 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.

## **d. Disciplinary Action**

Individuals found to have been engaging in behaviour prohibited by this policy in the context of IAU activities as well as those making allegations of harassment in bad faith will be subject to disciplinary action by the IAU Executive Committee. Such actions range from a verbal warning to ejection from the meeting or activity in question without refund of registration fees and may, at the discretion of the Executive Committee, include the reporting of their behaviour to the IAU National Committee and their employer or home institution.

The IAU Executive Committee may decide on further disciplinary action for repeat or serious offenders, such as being banned from participating in future IAU meetings or other activities for a period of time, or even having the offender's IAU membership revoked in serious cases.

## **e. Appeal and Questions**

In the event that the individual is dissatisfied with the results of the investigation, they may appeal to the IAU President, who will make a determination in consultation with the Executive Committee. Both the Respondent and the Complainant will be notified of the final appeal determination.

Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the IAU General Secretary.

### **Appendix C: Form for Filing a Complaint of an alleged Violation**

#### **FORM: Filing a Complaint of an alleged violation of the IAU Code of Conduct**

**1. Complainant (name, email address, and professional address):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Alleged offender (name, email address, and professional address, if known):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Date of Incident:** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Place of Incident:** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Sections of the Ethics or Anti-harassment Policy alleged to have been violated:**

**6. Detailed description of the Incident:**

**7. Sources of all information on which the allegations are based:**

**8. Any other information pertinent to the complaint:**

**9. Attest that other legal or institutional proceedings involving the alleged conduct have not been initiated or, if initiated, the status of such proceedings:**

**10. Attach copies of any documents supporting the allegations (including statements from witnesses)**