



Contents

The following policy is about the Society's ethics policy and includes a code of conduct. A reader can expect the content to discuss inappropriate and unacceptable behavior (with definitions), disciplinary action, and record-keeping.

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1. Overview: 4S' Commitment to a Culture that is Free of Discrimination and Harassment

The Society for Social Studies of Science (4S), representing its members, strives to create and maintain a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all members and participants at any 4S activities and programs including conferences, events, and virtual meeting places in order to provide opportunities for participants to share research, learn, network, and converse with colleagues in environments of mutual respect. 4S is committed to cultivating a culture that is free of discrimination and harassment, and seeks to promote scholarly exchange and professional development without bullying, exploitation, intimidation, and victimization.

4S does not seek to limit scholarly inquiry and debate. The purpose of this policy is to protect scholarly inquiry and debate through a policy and process that discourages personal harassment, prejudice, and aggression.

With this policy, we also hope to encourage proactively inclusive behavior at 4S events. Recognizing the way professional events tend to reproduce structural and implicit forms of exclusion, we ask that 4S event's organizers and participants proactively work to make space for and amplify the voices and contributions of participants who are junior, non-white, non-male, speak first in languages other than English, or are otherwise in marginal or precarious positions. We aim for all people engaging with 4S contractors and volunteers to be treated with dignity, respect, and courtesy; experience no form of unlawful discrimination; and be valued for their skills and abilities.

2. The Policy

4S prohibits discrimination or harassment and other inappropriate conduct as set forth in this policy, including but not limited to discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, age, religion, national origin, citizenship status, marital status, parental status, health condition, criminal record, veteran status, or their intersection. 4S encourages anyone who experiences inappropriate conduct, harassment or discrimination to use one of the complaint options outlined in this policy.



All participants in 4S activities and events—including conferences, events, and virtual meeting places—are expected to abide by this policy. The policy will be overseen and enforced by the Event Ethics Committee to be made up of conference program committee members and members of the 4S Council’s Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee. An Event Ethics Committee must be appointed for every 4S or 4S endorsed event. An ombud (as described more fully later in this policy) is appointed for the complainant or person that has been impacted in some way, but will not act as an advocate. An advocate will be appointed if deemed necessary in the sole discretion of 4S. The Event Ethics Committee will conduct the investigation.

If participants in 4S events experience and or witness inappropriate conduct, discrimination or harassment, they are encouraged to immediately report the conduct (via email, at ethics@4Sonline.org) to the designated Event Ethics Committee. Reports of inappropriate conduct, discrimination or harassment will be considered confidential. Personal identity will only be shared with the Event Ethics Committee, with all members having agreed to strict non-disclosure of sensitive information. Details on the event without personal identifiers will be shared with 4S Council so that they are informed and can be proactive in updating relevant 4S policy as needed. [Please see #9 for further information on complaint procedures]. Advice and support is available for 4S members and non-members experiencing or witnessing inappropriate conduct, harassment or discrimination.

All 4S members and conference attendees (including non-members) are responsible for reporting inappropriate conduct, discrimination or harassment to 4S so these can be dealt with in a timely manner.

4S council members, contractors and conference organizers, have a particular responsibility for setting standards and ensuring appropriate conduct is maintained within 4S. They should set a good example and ensure any concerns raised are acted upon, again in a timely manner.

3. What is Discrimination?

Discriminatory behavior can occur on the basis of perceived group membership, affiliation or association. Discrimination includes unequal treatment of participants on the basis of actual or perceived sex, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual



orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, age, religion, national origin, citizenship status, marital status, parental status, health condition, criminal record, or veteran status, or their intersection. Discrimination also includes actions or comments that have an unequal effect on participants on the basis of actual or perceived sex, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, age, religion, national origin, legal status, criminal record, or veteran status, or their intersection. Discrimination also includes harassment, as defined below, on the basis of actual or perceived sex, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, age, religion, national origin, citizenship status, marital status, parental status, health condition, criminal record, veteran status, or their intersection.

4. What is Harassment?

For purposes of this policy, harassment is any unwanted verbal or physical conduct that is reasonably experienced as threatening, intimidating, abusive, derogatory, demeaning, coercive, and harmful.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexual harassment, such as unwelcome sexual advances or other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature [see following section #5 for more detail].
- Harassment also includes behaviors such as stalking, bullying, hostility or abuse based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.
- Harassment may consist of a single intense and severe act, or of multiple persistent or pervasive acts which are demeaning, abusive, offensive, or create a hostile environment.
- Harassment may also include circulation of written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility toward an individual or group.

5. What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is a form of harassment. Sexual harassment includes severe or pervasive unwelcome solicitation of physical or emotional intimacy or touching, as well

as severe or pervasive commentary or nonverbal conduct that is sexual in nature, regardless of the gender of the complainant. To be sexual harassment, the harassment need not involve sexual desire.

Sexual harassment has many forms:

- Insinuating, proposing, or demanding sexual favors of any kind;
- Invading another person's personal space (e.g., inappropriate touching);
- Stalking, intimidating, coercing or threatening another person to get them to engage in sexual acts;
- Sending or displaying sexually explicit objects or messages;
- Commenting on someone's looks, dress, sexuality or gender in a derogatory or objectifying manner or a manner that makes them uncomfortable;
- Making obscene comments, jokes or gestures that humiliate or offend someone; and/or
- Pursuing or flirting with another person persistently without the other person's willing participation.

The most extreme form of sexual harassment is sexual assault. Any physical or sexual assault witnessed at a 4S activity or program should be immediately reported to facility security personnel or law enforcement. Any victim of alleged physical or sexual assault should be advised to immediately report such assault to law enforcement.

6. What is Inappropriate and Unacceptable Conduct?

Inappropriate conduct may be verbal or written, intentional or unintentional. Comments or actions made outside that impact on 4S, such as on related social events or via social media, will be investigated. If wrongdoing is found, this will be subject to 4S, the society's disciplinary procedures as outlined in this policy.

Unacceptable conduct can take many forms and can range from physical attacks to more subtle conduct such as remarks or jokes. It can also include behavior which deliberately or inadvertently excludes individuals from normal activities in the workplace, such as invitation to and participation at meetings.

Unacceptable conduct includes, but is not limited to, bullying, harassment, and discrimination and retaliation for making a good faith complaint of inappropriate conduct, harassment, or discrimination.

Examples of unacceptable conduct that are covered by this statement include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Unwelcome jokes or personal comments.
- Sexual harassment, which can include (but is not limited to) unwanted sexual comments or comments about someone's body, unwelcome innuendos, wolf whistling, groping, tugging or lifting someone's clothing.
- Stalking (for example, following a person, watching or spying on them or forcing contact with the victim through any means, including social media).
- Not giving due consideration and/or explanation of refusal to reasonable requests such as flexible contract working and leave.
- Physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault.

7. [What is Retaliation?](#)

Retaliation is a term used in US law to describe action by an employer against an employee in retaliation to involvement in bringing, or supporting, a complaint of discrimination or harassment. *There cannot be a retaliation against someone for bringing a good faith complaint (like whistleblowing).*

8. [Online and Social Media](#)

Online behavior is considered equivalent to face-to-face behavior. 4S members and non-members must not engage in any conduct online that would not be acceptable under this policy or that is unlawful. For example, making derogatory remarks, bullying, intimidating or harassing other users, using insults or posting content that is hateful, slanderous, threatening, discriminatory, or pornographic. This includes conduct that impacts on work/volunteering using social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or personal blogs, etc.), which may have been written out of contract working/volunteering hours or using personal equipment.

9. [Complaint Procedure](#)

a. **[Complaint Procedure \(What to do if you experience inappropriate conduct, discrimination, or harassment at any 4S event\)](#)**

If participants in 4S events experience and or witness inappropriate conduct, discrimination or harassment, they are encouraged to immediately report the conduct (via email, at ethics@4sonline.org) to the designated Event Ethics Committee. Reports of inappropriate conduct, discrimination or harassment will be considered confidential. Personal identity will only be shared with the Event Ethics Committee and 4S's Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee, with all members having agreed to strict non-disclosure of sensitive information. Details on the event without personal identifiers will be shared with 4S Council so that they are informed and can be proactive in updating relevant 4S policy as needed.

Complainants have two places to start to receive help regarding any type of inappropriate conduct, discrimination or harassment prohibited by 4S policy. First, the ombuds of 4S are available for informal confidential consultation about a wide range of concerns, including but not limited to retaliation, discrimination, or harassment. Second, the Conduct, Discrimination, or Harassment Complaint Procedure provides a more formal option for reporting and seeking formal resolution of incidents of inappropriate conduct, discrimination, or harassment. Each option is described separately in the next sections. The quickest way to report an incident and to get help addressing it, especially during a 4S meeting, is to contact an ombud. However, participants are free to file a complaint without contacting an ombud. The 4S ombuds may be contacted via email or at the cell phone number provided at each meeting.

A complaint may be filed by contacting the Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee via email or at a cell phone number that will be provided at the meeting. In the event that any member of the Committee has a prior relationship to any party involved in the complaint or is named in the complaint, that person will be recused from participation. In most cases, complaints should be in writing, but a complainant may relate a complaint orally.

The Chair of the Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee will contact the individual whose conduct is at issue in order to hear his or her perspective. The Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee will also conduct an appropriate investigation, which includes interviewing both parties and any witnesses to the incident identified by either party.

The Committee will write a brief report stating its finding and determination, and the factual basis for the decision. The Committee will also allow the respondent and complainant to respond to the report in writing. In reaching conclusions about whether inappropriate conduct, harassment or discrimination has occurred, 4S will not look to statutory or case law because much law and society scholarship indicates that statutory and case law tends to find that only the most egregious of acts constitute harassment and tends to overlook meaningful evidence in assessing discrimination. Instead, the Committee will consider whether the inappropriate, discriminatory or harassing conduct would have negatively affected the experience or experiences at 4S for a reasonable person in the complainant's position, using a substantial evidence standard. The Committee will then, if appropriate, determine sanctions when a participant is found to have engaged in inappropriate conduct, discrimination, or harassment.

If someone approaches a member of the Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee to report but that individual ignores/dismisses/refuses to acknowledge/discuss issues of bullying, discrimination, harassment, or victimization then they may be seen as complicit in any such act (in that they are allowing it to continue). An individual would not be expected to act against the wishes of the person experiencing unacceptable conduct unless they are overriding their request for health and safety reasons (including personal safety).

Under this policy, inappropriate conduct, discrimination, and harassment are defined not by the intent of the perpetrator but rather from the perspective of a reasonable person in the complainant's position, using a substantial evidence standard.

If a member of staff or volunteer is approached and told that their conduct could be construed as inappropriate or harassment, they should be prepared to listen patiently and calmly to the situation. While it may be upsetting, they should allow the other person to express their concerns, and then try to reach common ground to remedy the situation and allow normal professional relations to be resumed.

b. [Complaint Procedure \(What to do if you are accused formally of discrimination, bullying, retaliation,](#)

harassment, or other forms of unacceptable conduct at any 4S event?)

Do not ignore a complaint because you were only joking, or decide the complainant was being too sensitive. Everyone has the right to decide what conduct is acceptable to them and to have their feelings respected by others—you may have offended someone without intending to. If that is the case, the person concerned may be willing to accept an apology from you and an assurance that you will be careful to avoid behaving in a way that might knowingly cause offense in the future.

Provided that you do not repeat the conduct which has caused offense, this is likely to be the end of the matter. It can be, and should be, seen as a useful learning experience about the effect of your behavior on others, and therefore an opportunity for self-realization and improvement.

If you are approached for this reason you can meet with them at once, or agree to meet to discuss the issues in the next couple of days, to give you time to reflect.

When you meet:

- Listen to the points that are made without interrupting or getting defensive;
- Allow the complainant to explain the way they feel;
- Seek clarification on what aspects of your conduct are felt to be unacceptable;
- Discuss how you might work together more effectively;
- Try to remain calm and avoid aggravating what is a difficult situation for you both;
- Apologize, if appropriate.

If a formal complaint is made about your conduct it will be fully investigated and dealt with in accordance with the Complaint Procedure in this policy, which may result in disciplinary action.

You must not retaliate against a person who has made a good faith complaint against you or anyone who has supported them in making the complaint or given evidence in relation to such a complaint. Disciplinary action may be taken against you if the Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee has good reason to think that you may have retaliated against the complainant or someone else related to the complaint.

10. Disciplinary Action

If the Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee determines that reported conduct is a violation of this policy they are authorized to issue a reprimand in person or by email. Possible sanctions can include:

1. Issuing a warning to cease the inappropriate, discriminatory or harassing conduct and retaining a record of that warning in case of future violations;
2. Requiring the respondent to appear before the Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee and 4S President to learn about the consequences of their conduct and about likely consequences of similar conduct in the future;
3. Notifying the respondent's home institution of the violation;
4. Termination of current 4S conference participation and any 4S responsibilities or appointments held;
5. Barring the person from assuming any future governance positions within 4S;
6. Barring the person from participating in future 4S conferences or events; and/or revoking 4S membership.*

The Chair of the Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee will notify both parties of the Committee's decision. Should either party wish to appeal, the Executive Committee of 4S will hear the appeal. Any party who is involved in the dispute or closely related to a party involved in the dispute would be recused. Decisions of the Executive Committee are final.

*If the violation occurs at a 4S event, the person will be barred from further participation in the event if this seems warranted. Notification of a participation-bar will be sent by email. If the person returns to the event after notification of the policy violation and sequent participation-bar, the Committee is authorized to request help from event security.

11. Record Keeping

The 4S Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee will prepare two annual reports. The first report will contain general information about the number and types of complaints received. No names will be included in this report. The report will be provided to 4S Council Members and will be available by request to any 4S member.



The second report will describe each complaint and action taken, with all names included. This report will be held as a confidential record by 4S and may be consulted only by members of the 4S Executive Committee and members of the Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee in the course of their official duties, or as otherwise required by law.

12. [Policy Review](#)

Deliberation in the 4S community about professional ethics and conduct are complicated, dynamic, and continually must address new issues and cases. Further, conduct-focused policies such as the Ethics and Code of Conduct Policy could have unintended effects. Because of this, Council Members will revisit this policy on an annual basis, following each year's annual meeting, revising the policy as deemed appropriate. A record of changes and lessons learned will be recorded and kept with the policy as a way to support the 4S community's capacity to deal well with professional ethics.

