

## American Society of Mammalogists Code of Conduct

(Revised March 2023)

The ASM aims to operate in the best interest of the Society and its membership through its policies and procedures. Professional conduct is expected of all ASM members, of any individual representing the ASM, and of all participants in ASM-sponsored activities. We define professional conduct broadly to include respectful and ethical treatment of others. The ASM is dedicated to ensuring the opportunity for active, equal participation in all ASM functions or sponsored activities by all members and participants, regardless of disability, sexual orientation, age, physical appearance, gender, race, national origin, or ethnicity. Discrimination and harassment are prohibited by the ASM; no individual should feel harassed, threatened, or unsafe at any ASM-sponsored activity. The full text of ASM's Statement on Inclusion is available [here](#). Concerns or allegations of misconduct or harassment should be directed to the Office of the Ombudsperson (Erika Barthelmess [barthelmess@stlawu.edu](mailto:barthelmess@stlawu.edu), Jessica E. Light [jligh2@tamu.edu](mailto:jligh2@tamu.edu), Marjorie Matocq [mmatocq@unr.edu](mailto:mmatocq@unr.edu)), or Morty Ortega ([morty.ortega@uconn.edu](mailto:morty.ortega@uconn.edu)) or reported online [here](#). Course of action for alleged misconduct may be found [here](#). We note that ASM policies for professional conduct will evolve over time. The most recent version of these policies will be posted on the [ASM Ombudspersons website](#) and notifications of updates to the policy will be emailed to all ASM members. All ASM members and participants in ASM-sponsored activities are expected to follow the most recent version of ASM Professional Conduct policies.

### Definitions:

#### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature; such behavior debilitates morale and interferes with effective discourse, and therefore will not be tolerated. When unwelcome, behaviors that may constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to: 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; and unnecessary or inappropriate touching. Behavior that is acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another, so one must use discretion to ensure that words and actions communicate respect for others. This is especially important for those in positions of seniority, as those in more junior positions may be reluctant to express their objections or discomfort regarding unwelcome behavior.

#### Harassment

Harassment of any participant (attendee, speaker, volunteer, exhibitor, staff member, service provider, organizer, or meeting guest) will not be tolerated. Unacceptable behavior includes (but is not limited to) unwanted verbal attention, unwanted touching, intimidation, stalking, shaming, or bullying (to intimidate, humiliate, frighten, or threaten someone with abusive words or actions). Harassment presented in a joking manner is still harassment and constitutes unacceptable behavior. Retaliation for reporting harassment is also unacceptable, as is reporting an incident in bad faith.

### General Guidelines

1. Unprofessional conduct by any ASM member or meeting attendant will not be tolerated and is subject to [disciplinary action](#). Unacceptable behavior includes, but is not limited to, unwanted verbal attention, unwanted touching, intimidation, stalking, shaming or bullying in person or through social media outlets (see additional definitions above), or other disruptive behavior including sustained disruption of talks, events, or meetings. If you experience such behavior, depending on the context and if you feel comfortable, you should let the offender know and tell him/her to stop and/or seek help from bystanders. Participants asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately. Concerns may also be presented to the Ombudspersons in person (contact information above) or reported online [here](#). Note that persistent offensive or unwelcome behavior may constitute harassment and that harassment presented in a joking manner is still harassment and both would be subject to [disciplinary action](#).
2. Scientific presentations are expected to adhere to ASM standards of professional conduct and should not include inappropriate and/or graphic images or language that include (but are not limited to) pornography, demeaning or degrading images or language, or depictions of violence.
3. Established professionals and all ASM leaders should recognize that they hold positions of power, formal or informal, over students and aspiring professionals. These individuals are expected to lead by example regarding our high standards of professional and personal conduct.

4. All ASM members are potential bystanders to unprofessional or unwelcome behavior. Bystander intervention can prevent, divert, or mitigate harassment. Do not look the other way. See the [Resources page](#) for additional information about bystander intervention and training.

**A pdf version of the Code of Conduct is [here](#).**

## **Reporting Incidents of Potential Misconduct**

The President appoints one or more Society members to the Office of Ombudsperson. The Ombudsperson(s) are charged with reviewing and adjudicating allegations of misconduct occurring within the context of Society events or Society sponsored activities, in an effort to seek the truth as a neutral designee. Incidents occurring 'off-site' (e.g., bars, hotels, etc.) between members or meeting participants are considered to be part of the broader Society gathering and as such are subject to the ASM Code of Conduct and ASM disciplinary action; a valid complaint can be made even if the incident does not happen at the conference center or meeting venue. Incidents involving non-ASM participants generally fall outside the purview of the ASM Code of Conduct and ASM disciplinary action, but may result in restrictions to participation in ASM activities or events pending investigation.

Concerns and complaints of misconduct can be presented to an Ombudsperson, to any ASM officer, or reported online [here](#). Before action can be taken by the Office of the Ombudsperson, allegations must be presented in writing to an Ombudsperson or reported online by the victim or an observer of alleged misconduct occurring within the context of Society events or Society sponsored activities. Individuals may submit anonymous reports to the Ombudsperson(s) online. Note that while we will keep track of anonymous reports, we cannot take action on a single anonymous report without further corroboration. All reports will be taken seriously and will be investigated. Retaliation for reporting of harassment is unacceptable, as is reporting an incident in bad faith; both may be treated as harassment and subject to investigation by the Ombudsperson(s).

## **Review of Incidents**

After receiving a misconduct report, the Ombudsperson(s) will review all materials and obtain additional information, if warranted. Depending on the misconduct, the Ombudsperson(s) may advise reporting to local law enforcement. For other cases, the Ombudsperson(s) may discuss the incident with the accuser(s) (assuming they are not anonymous) and the alleged offender(s). Further investigatory steps may include – but are not limited to – interviewing persons named as witnesses as well as reviewing documents and other evidence supporting the complaint and/or justifying the alleged offensive behavior. Throughout this process, confidentiality will be honored to the extent possible and as necessary so as to respect the accuser(s) and to avoid impeding the ongoing operation of the Society, unless disclosure is legally required.

After review of all materials, if the Office of Ombudsperson determine that misconduct occurred and should be subject to disciplinary action, the Ombudsperson(s) shall communicate the charge(s) of misconduct to the alleged offender(s) and inform the alleged offender(s) as to the availability for review of summaries of incidents and evidence supporting the charge(s). The alleged offender(s) will have an opportunity to respond to the allegations. These steps will be completed prior to the Ombudspersons deciding on an appropriate course of disciplinary action.

## **Decisions and Disciplinary Action**

After review of the complaint and of evidence and interviews of witnesses, and after hearing the positions of the accuser(s) and the alleged offender(s), the Ombudspersons will determine whether misconduct occurred. Ombudspersons may confer with select ASM officers if deemed necessary (while honoring confidentiality to the extent possible). If the Ombudspersons determine that no misconduct occurred, that disciplinary action is not required, or if they cannot agree that misconduct occurred (even with input from ASM officers), the accuser(s) and alleged offender(s) will be informed of this decision and no further action will be taken. Decisions will be made as quickly as possible; timelines will vary with each case.

If the Ombudsperson(s) determine that misconduct has occurred, they will recommend disciplinary measures using the criteria described below. Disciplinary measures will be commensurate with the offense(s). As noted below, egregious and illegal actions may justify an immediate lifetime ban from all future meetings and revocation of membership, past awards and honors, and future recognition (to include automatic disqualification for any future awards, honorary membership, etc.). In less egregious activities, disciplinary actions may include notification of improper behavior, recommendations to take relevant training or counseling, or suspension from ASM-sponsored events for some period of time. For other actions, the Office of the Ombudspersons will employ a three-step process to recommend appropriate disciplinary measures:

1. At the first instance of misconduct, the offender(s) will be notified of unacceptable behavior, reminded of the ASM Statement of Inclusion and expectations regarding Professional Conduct, and encouraged to consider relevant training or counseling.
2. If misconduct is repeated at a subsequent Society event or Society sponsored activity, the Ombudspersons will recommend a suspension of participation from all Society events for a specified period of time, after which the offender may resume participation. During this suspension, individuals may not receive any ASM

awards or honors or serve in leadership positions. After the period of suspension, the banned individual may request permission from the Society President and Office of the Ombudspersons to return to ASM meetings and be eligible to receive awards. This request must include a letter addressed to the ASM President asking to return to meetings, participate in Society governance, and be eligible for awards; this letter should include a statement affirming that no additional ethical, personal, or professional misconduct has occurred during the time period of the ban. Additional requirements may be imposed as determined by the Society President in consultation with the Office of the Ombudsperson.

3. If misconduct is repeated a third time, subsequent disciplinary action may include a lifetime ban from all future meetings and revocation of membership, awards, and honors, and disqualification for any future awards and honors.

**The Office of the Ombudsperson reserves the right to bypass the first and/or second step listed above and move directly to a subsequent step if warranted by the offense and/or past history of the accused.**

The Society President will review the recommendation of the Ombudsperson(s), including all supporting documentation. If there is disagreement regarding the recommendations, the Society President and the Ombudsperson(s) will work together to revise the recommendations. Once a recommendation has been determined, the Society President will notify the accuser(s) and the offender(s) of the disciplinary measures. If the disciplinary measures include revocation of awards, honors, or membership, the decision must be ratified by a three-fourths vote of the Board of Directors (based on the number of submitted votes).

The disciplinary measures may be appealed to an ad hoc committee comprised of the five most recent ASM Presidents within 60 days following notification of the decision by the Society President. Thereafter, this ad hoc committee shall review the evidence and the evaluation of the Ombudsperson(s), and may confer with current Officers of the Society to determine whether to affirm, alter, or reverse the disciplinary measures. The ad hoc committee's decision shall be final and not subject to appeal.

### **Misconduct Occurring Outside of ASM and ASM Meetings**

All ASM members are expected to adhere to high standards of ethical conduct in their professional and personal lives. Professional or personal misconduct occurring outside of the activities of ASM may be considered when evaluating nominees for awards, honorary membership, and other forms of recognition by the society. These instances of misconduct may also be subjected to disciplinary action. The Society reserves the right to temporarily limit access to ASM-sponsored events in light of verifiable evidence of misconduct that raises concerns about the safety of events or attendees. Temporary suspensions may be applied while a case is being investigated.

### **Procedures Involving Officers, Directors, and Ombudspersons**

Officers, Directors, or Ombudspersons shall recuse themselves from cases in which they have potential conflicts of interest. In the event that the Society President is accused of misconduct or has a conflict of interest, the Presidential duties described above will be allocated to the President-elect. If the President-elect has a conflict of interest, duties shall shift to the Vice President. If the Vice President has a conflict of interest, duties will shift to the remaining Officers. Measures for removal from elected office are described in the Bylaws should disciplinary action be required for any officer of the Society.

### **Statement on Liability**

ASM shall not be responsible for any defamatory, offensive, or illegal conduct of participants of ASM-sponsored activities, and shall not be held liable for personal injury, property damage, theft, or damage of any kind suffered by the participants at or in connection with ASM-sponsored activities. By registering for and attending ASM-sponsored activities such as the annual meeting, participants acknowledge that they have read this Disclaimer, and expressly releases the ASM and its board members, directors, officers, employees, or agents from any and all liability in connection with such ASM-sponsored activities as provided herein.

**A pdf version of the Code of Conduct is [here](#).**