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AMERICAN  
SOCIETY FOR  
18<sup>TH</sup>. CENTURY  
STUDIES

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## Policy on Harassment

*(Adopted by unanimous vote of the ASECS Executive Board on 28 June 2020)*

### I. Statement of Principles

ASECS is committed to the free exchange of ideas in an environment of inclusion, safety, and mutual respect. All scholarly and professional exchanges across the Society shall be carried out in a manner that conveys respect, preserves dignity, and nurtures the intellectual development both of individual members and of the field. To this end, the Society condemns all forms of discrimination, coercion, violence, and harassment, including sexual harassment.

ASECS members and all participants in our events are expected to act in accordance with the highest standards of scholarly and professional conduct and to treat every member with respect regardless of perceived race, class, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, rank, or status. While the Society does not seek to codify manners or squelch robust, even contentious, scholarly debate, it expects all members, caucuses, and affiliate groups to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment that affirms the diversity of our membership and of their intellectual pursuits. The values of equity, access, nondiscrimination, and mutual respect shall inform all conduct, whether in a seminar room or at a social gathering, in a plenary presentation or a conference session, in publications or electronic communications. The Society recognizes that harassment can emerge in situations appearing benign to the perpetrator and therefore encourages all members to consider whether their behaviors create conditions of inequity for other members. Members shall be sensitive to differences of power among our membership and to safeguarding the autonomy and contributions of individuals in less secure and more junior positions.

### II. Definition of Harassment

Harassment is behavior (speech or actions) that demeans, humiliates, or threatens an individual on the basis of their perceived race, class, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, rank, or status. Harassment encompasses racial or ethnic slurs; unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; and other verbal comments or unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature, including situations in which the request or conduct involves any implied or expressed promise of reward for complying; or the request or conduct involves any implied or expressed threat of reprisal or denial of opportunity for refusing to comply; or conduct that results in what reasonably may be perceived as a hostile or intimidating environment. Such examples are illustrative, not exhaustive. Behavior constitutes harassment if it is *severe*—for example, unwanted physical contact—or *pervasive*—for example, persistent.

### III. Scope of this policy

This policy applies immediately upon adoption by the Society and pertains to all venues where officially sponsored ASECS conferences, meetings, and other activities such as social events occur, whether in person, by telephone, or through electronic communication. All members and participants at ASECS activities must abide by the policy. Those who register for the Annual

Meeting, whether they are members of ASECS or of ISECS affiliates, exhibitors, staff, or guests—will be required to affirm that they have read and agreed to this policy as part of the registration process.

#### **IV. Appointment of an External Ombuds**

The Society is establishing two separate ways of addressing harassment: the appointment of an Ombuds and the establishment of a Committee on Harassment.

Immediately upon the approval of this policy by the ASECS Executive Board, the Executive Board will begin a process to appoint a trained, experienced Ombuds who is not a member of the Society. This person will attend the Annual Meeting, during which time they will be available to consult privately with Society members who seek advice or wish to begin a process to report cases of harassment that have occurred during Society gatherings and activities. The Ombuds will also be available at other times during the year to consult with Society members on issues of harassment as defined by this policy. The Ombuds's consultations with ASECS members will be kept strictly confidential. In addition, the Ombuds will provide appropriate training in the resolution of harassment matters to the members of the Society's Committee on Harassment, as defined below.

Within two months after the conclusion of the Society's Annual Meeting each year, the Ombuds will provide an anonymized report to the Executive Director, who will then report to the Executive Board on the activities of the Ombuds during the previous year and the costs to the Society of the Ombuds's activities. The Executive Director will make a recommendation to the Board as to whether the Society's relation with the Ombuds should be continued during the following year or whether a new external Ombuds should be sought. Should the position of external Ombuds fall vacant, a member of the Committee on Harassment will serve as interim Ombuds. At no time, however, will the Society allow the position of external Ombuds to fall vacant for more than two months. An interim Ombuds from the Committee on Harassment should not also serve on the committee adjudicating a complaint referred by the interim Ombuds.

#### **V. Formation of the ASECS Committee on Harassment**

The Executive Board will nominate a three-person committee composed of members of the Society in good standing, one of whom will have served on a previous Executive Board. The Executive Board shall appoint one committee member as chair. The Society's Executive Director will be the only member of the current Executive Board appointed to the committee and will serve ex officio in a non-voting advisory capacity. The Board will also appoint two alternates to the committee who are members of the Society in good standing, and who are not members of the Executive Board. Alternates will be asked to participate in the committee if one or more of the committee members has a conflict of interest.

Members and alternate members of the Committee on Harassment will be chosen from nominees proposed by the Steering Committee, the Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA), and the membership at large. In appointing the committee, the Board shall respect diversity in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, seniority in the Society, and academic interests. Committee members and alternates will serve three-year terms. The initial appointees to the committee, excluding the Executive Director, will serve for periods of one, two, or three years to be determined by the Board, so as to insure a committee composition each year of experienced committee members and alternates, and newcomers. The committee members may serve for only one consecutive three-year term but may be reappointed for one additional term after a hiatus of three years. Alternates are permitted to serve one three-year term as an alternate and one consecutive three-year term as a regular committee member.

The three committee members, the two alternates, the Executive Director, and the President of the Society will receive professional training in matters pertaining to harassment and sexual misconduct and conflict resolution from the Society's external Ombuds. This training may take place in person at the Annual Meeting or via videoconferencing at another time convenient for the Ombuds and the committee members and alternates. The training shall be renewed on an annual basis.

## **VI. Procedures of the Committee on Harassment**

The Harassment Committee is charged with receiving complaints from any participant in an ASECS-sponsored activity who has experienced a violation of the harassment policy. Committee members will be on site at the Annual Meeting. Any member of the committee can describe the reporting procedures and can outline the various resources available to protect members from harassment. Mindful that any complaint of harassment might cause serious reputational damage to the accused, the committee will also protect the due process rights of the accused. However, neither the committee nor any other ASECS official can provide legal advice to individuals who submit complaints under this policy. The contact information for committee members will be made available on the ASECS website and in registration materials. Any committee member who has a conflict of interest in relation to either the complainant or the accused will recuse themselves, and their place will be taken by a committee alternate. The Committee Chair and Executive Director will keep the President of the Society informed of committee proceedings as they unfold.

The Committee on Harassment will provide the Executive Board of ASECS an annual report of aggregated data about incidents and outcomes. The Executive Director will maintain the confidential record of the committee's activities in perpetuity and will grant members of the committee and the elected officers of the Society access as needed to resolve disputes.

## **VII. Intake and Investigation of Complaints by the Committee**

1. Complaints of alleged violations of the Anti-Harassment Policy may be made to any member of the committee.
2. One or more members of the committee will conduct an initial interview with the complainant. To encourage reporting of incidents, the names of the complainant and accused shall be kept confidential to the extent possible. However, neither the complainant nor the accused can be guaranteed confidentiality.
3. If an investigation is warranted, committee members must obtain the consent of the complainant before continuing an investigation. If the complainant does not consent the case is closed.
4. After the initial reporting, a committee member will provide information on options available to the complainant. The complaint may be resolved through committee mediation that might, for example, result in an apology by the accused.
5. If warranted, an investigation may include the whole committee's interviewing the complainant and the accused (either separately or together) as well as relevant witnesses; it may also include reviewing relevant information such as emails, text messages, tweets, etc. The committee will then render its decision on the complaint.
6. Throughout the process the investigators and committee members will respect the due process protections of the complainant and the accused.

### **VIII. The Adjudication of Complaints by the Committee**

After deliberation, the committee will report its finding to the President of the Society. If it is concluded that no harassment has occurred, no action will be taken.

If the committee concludes that harassment has occurred, then the President, in the name of the Society, will apply sanctions.

Sanctions may include:

1. A written reprimand and warning.
2. A ban on participating in the next Annual Meeting of the Society.
3. For the most serious infractions, loss of all membership privileges and eligibility to be published in the Society's journals.

Such sanctions will be determined by the Committee on Harassment.

### **IX. Non-Retaliation**

ASECS prohibits retaliation against individuals who report harassment, who cooperate in the investigation of such misconduct, or who serve on the Committee on Harassment. This prohibition protects complainants, the accused, and other persons who have provided or may provide information to the committee. Penalties may be imposed upon members who are found to have retaliated.