



Society of General Physiologists

SGP Inappropriate Behavior Policy

The Society of General Physiologists (SGP) is committed to providing an environment that encourages the free expression and exchange of scientific ideas. As a global, professional Society, the SGP is committed to the philosophy of equal opportunity and respectful treatment for all, regardless of national or ethnic origin, religion or religious belief, gender, gender identity or expression, race, color, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, veteran status, or any other reason not related to scientific merit. All SGP meetings and SGP-sponsored activities strive to promote an environment that is free of inappropriate behavior and harassment by or toward all attendees of Society meetings and Society-sponsored activities, including scientists, students, guests, exhibitors, staff, vendors, and other suppliers.

This global policy applies to all locations and situations where SGP business is conducted and to all SGP-sponsored activities and events.

Reported occurrences of inappropriate behavior will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. Following an investigation, SGP will immediately take any necessary and appropriate action. SGP will not permit or condone any acts of retaliation against anyone who files harassment complaints or cooperates in the investigation of same.

Definition of Harassment

The term "harassment" includes but is not limited to epithets, unwelcome slurs, jokes, or verbal, graphic or physical conduct relating to an individual's race, color, religious creed, sex, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, age, gender or sexual orientation that denigrate or show hostility or aversion toward an individual or group, or makes individuals in such a group uncomfortable for those reasons.

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 or with higher degree of professional stature or influence than the person with whom they are interacting, since individuals with lower rank or status may be reluctant to express their objections or discomfort



regarding unwelcome behavior. It does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially-acceptable nature. It refers to behavior that is not welcome, is personally offensive, debilitates morale or induces discomfort. 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.

Incident reporting

Anyone who believes they have been subjected to or have otherwise experienced behavior at an SGP event that violates our Inappropriate Behavior Policy, is encouraged to promptly [report the incident](#) so that steps may be taken to address the situation.

Anyone who feels harassed, as defined above, is encouraged (but not required) to immediately inform the alleged harasser that the behavior is unwelcome. In many instances, the offender is unaware that their conduct is offensive, and when so advised can easily and willingly correct the conduct so that it does not reoccur.

If informal discussion with the alleged harasser is unsuccessful in remedying the problem or if this approach is otherwise not feasible, the offended person should contact the SGP Compliance Committee. [Members of the Compliance Committee](#) are identified on the SGP website. All complaints will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. SGP officers and council members may also approach the individual informally on the spot, at their discretion, without a formal complaint being submitted, if the officer/council member observes behavior that obviously is not in accord with SGP policy, as outlined in this document.

SGP will conduct an investigation of any complaint of harassment or sexual harassment, which may require limited disclosure of pertinent information to certain parties, including the alleged offender. Whereas all reasonable attempts will be made to insure confidentiality, if so requested, absolute confidentiality cannot be promised nor can it be assured.

If the matter concerns a trainee, who may feel uncomfortable contacting SGP directly, such a complaint or concern may be conveyed by the PI of the trainee, who then will be take responsibility for the complaint, although the nature of such a complaint will still be requested in writing from the individual concerned.

Reports of harassment should be made without fear of reprisal; thus, retaliation against anyone who reports a possible act of harassment will not be tolerated. If, after a report has been made



of an SGP-related incident, the person making the complaint suspects that retaliations are being made or threatened, then these incidents should also be reported to the SGP Compliance Committee, and these actions will be considered along with the original act of harassment.

It should be noted that the policy of SGP as defined in this document does not supersede policies of the venue of SGP events, such as the Marine Biological Laboratory, which has its own policies that all registrants are obligated to adhere to. It should also be noted that at such venues, there are often individuals present, apart from SGP, such as students or other scientists, and so the policy outlined here applies to those individuals as well. Any complaints received by staff at such venues should be immediately conveyed to SGP officers or council members.

Investigative Procedure

Once a complaint of harassment is received, SGP will begin a prompt and thorough investigation.

- An impartial investigation by a pre-selected standing Compliance Committee, consisting of one officer and two council members, of which one member will rotate off, and another selected every year. There shall also be an alternate member of the committee selected, should the matter involve a member of the committee, if a committee member is of evidentiary value, or has a conflict of interest (COI), as defined under NIH IRG rules. This committee will be that approved by Council.
- The committee will review the written complaint. If no written complaint exists, one will be requested.
- The committee will speak to the alleged offender in person or by telephone and present the complaint. Whereas notes should be taken, any such telephone interview shall not be recorded without the express consent of the complainant.
- Unless the entire committee feels without doubt that the complaint is without merit, the alleged offender will be informed of the complaint, and given the opportunity to address the complaint, with sufficient time to respond to the evidence and bring his/her own evidence.
- If the facts are in dispute, the investigative team may need to interview anyone named as direct witnesses.
- The Compliance Committee may seek the advice of SGP Council.
- Once the investigation is complete, the committee will report their findings and make recommendations to SGP Council. Should the matter involve a council member, or should the council member have a COI, as defined above, that member will be automatically recused from the deliberations of Council.



- It should be noted that the ability of SGP to investigate or address anonymous reports may be limited or otherwise affected by the need to balance concerns over privacy and fairness to all concerned.
- SGP Council be the final arbiter of all decisions in such matters.

Disciplinary Actions

Individuals found by the process described above as having engaged 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 may 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. Reports requesting anonymity will be respected, although SGP reserves the right to notify appropriate law enforcement should the allegations be serious enough to warrant such notice.

Following completion of SGP's inquiry, any action to be taken by SGP against the person alleged to have acted inappropriately will be determined by SGP Council at its sole discretion, and it may include a request for private or public apologies, discharge from the conference or seminar, and/or restrictions on his/her future attendance at SGP-sponsored events. Repeat offenders may be subject to further disciplinary action, such as being banned from participating in future SGP meetings or SGP-sponsored activities. In the event that the individual is dissatisfied with the results of the investigation, he or she may appeal to the President, or to the President-Elect or Ex-President of the Society, in the case that the President has a COI in the matter, who will then revisit the matter with the Compliance Committee, as formed above. Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the SGP Executive Secretary or other member of the Council.

SGP Management Responsibility

Every Council member, employee, and meeting organizer is responsible for ensuring that SGP provides an environment free of harassment and inappropriate behavior and that complaints are handled promptly and effectively. The SGP Society Office and Officers must inform the Society membership and all vendors and suppliers about this policy, promptly investigate allegations of harassment, take appropriate disciplinary action, and take steps to assure retaliation is prohibited.