SWMS Code of Conduct

The Society for Women in Marine Science brings together marine scientists of all career stages to discuss the diverse experiences of women in marine science, celebrate the research done by women in the field, and promote the visibility of women in the marine science community.

This Code of Conduct aims to support a community where all people feel open and safe to participate, introduce new ideas, and inspire others, regardless of their social or personal attributes (including but not limited to gender, national orientation, religion, etc.) as described throughout this document. It aims to establish a set of ground rules to ensure decency and prevent problematic, oppressive, and harassing behavior.

We gain strength from diversity and actively seek participation from those who enhance it. These guidelines exist to enable SWMS members to interact and collaborate. This document outlines both expected and prohibited behavior, reporting procedures, as well as the consequences of breaking this Code of Conduct.

Expected Behavior

Every SWMS member, and everyone participating in or engaging with a SWMS activity, has the right to be free from discrimination, unlawful harassment, sexual misconduct, bullying, and violence. We affirm our commitment to the following behaviors.

Be Respectful

Value each other's ideas, styles, and viewpoints. We may not always agree, but disagreement is no excuse for poor manners. Be open to different possibilities and to being wrong. Be respectful in all interactions and communications, especially when debating the merits of different options. Be aware of one's impact and how it may be affecting people. Be clear, constructive, and positive. Bear in mind that tone can be hard to decipher online. See more information in our [Guidelines](#) for Community Meetings.

Take responsibility for one's impact of actions and mistakes—if someone believes they have been harmed through words or actions, listen carefully, apologize sincerely if appropriate, and help correct the behavior going forward.

Provide Professional Feedback & Commit to Self-Improvement

Feedback is a natural and important part of work in the SWMS collaborations space. Good feedback is kind, respectful, clear, and constructive, and focused on goals and values rather than personal preferences. Be honest, empathetic, and compassionate.

In this community, we each own our mistakes and commit to clear and persistent efforts to grow and improve. Listen with an open mind and try to avoid becoming defensive. The best way to respect someone is to acknowledge one's own mistake, apologize, seek to understand where one's wrong, and move on—with a renewed commitment to do better.

Recognize the Colonial History of Science and Research

Research has a history of colonization: science is driven by "discovery," and information gathered by (typically white men) academically-trained scientists and other researchers has historically been considered the most accurate, reliable, and important information[1]. Colonization has, at times, inhibited the inclusion and transmission of knowledge by indigenous cultures, and colonizing researchers have and continue to conduct both ethical misconduct and extractive research. SWMS members and participants should strive to recognize the colonial history in their research, and to ensure that patterns of extraction, compensation, and recognition are not one-sided.

Behavior That Will Not be Tolerated

The following behaviors, whether in person, online, or via any other form, are considered violations of SWMS' Code of Conduct:

- **Sexual Harassment** includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, and offensive comments related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical appearance, race/ethnicity and body size.
- **Sexual Misconduct** includes rape, sexual assault, inappropriate touching, sexual battery, sexual exploitation, coercion, and other forms of non-consensual sexual activity.
- **Stalking** is repeatedly following, harassing, threatening, or intimidating behavior including by telephone, mail, electronic communication, or social media.

- **Bullying** is repeated use of a written, verbal or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof directed at another individual that, 1) causes physical or emotional harm to another person or their property, 2) places an individual in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or of damage to their property, 3) creates a hostile environment for other persons, 4) materially or substantially disrupts a SWMS event or environment.
- **Patterns of inappropriate social contact**, such as requesting/assuming inappropriate levels of intimacy with others.
- **Intimate Partner Violence** includes emotional, verbal, and economic abuse with or without the presence of physical abuse.
- **Retaliation** is adverse employment, academic or other actions against anyone reporting a violation of this policy.
- **Title IX Violation** is the collective term used for incidents involving discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, and/or retaliation.
- **Power-based personal violence** occurs when an individual asserts power, control, or intimidation in order to harm another. This includes relationship/partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking.
- **Deliberately mis-characterizing a person's gender identity**, including through the use of a name or pronoun that the person has rejected.
- **Gratuitous or off-topic sexual images or behavior** in all SWMS virtual and physical spaces.
- **Verbal or written or emotional abuse, intimidation, or threats** - whether in-person, online (e.g., cyberbullying) or remotely. This includes but is not limited to: harmful or negative comments related to ability, race, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, religion, age, marital status, parental status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic background, educational background, military service or veteran status, or specific community that they represent.

Reporting Process

To report disturbing and/or inappropriate behavior that is experienced directly or witnessed happening to someone else at a SWMS event, during a SWMS activity, or via any of the SWMS networking channels, use this form, which will be directed to the SWMS Steering Committee.

A report can also be filed via email to the SWMS Steering Committee (swms-steering-committee@googlegroups.com - this email goes to the SWMS Steering Committee only), or the Board of Directors if it concerns a member of the Steering Committee. A report can be filed at ANY TIME if any form of misconduct, including harassment, bullying, and/or other behaviors or comments that violate SWMS's Code of Conduct are experienced or witnessed.

Confidentiality

The SWMS Steering Committee will keep reports as confidential as possible. However, in some cases, Committee members may have a legal obligation to report violations to their home institution or to law enforcement. Specifically:

- If a Code of Conduct violation is made by a member of the academic institution at which a Steering Committee member is faculty or staff, that committee member may need to share information with their home institution under Title IX.

When we discuss incidents with people who are reported, we will anonymize details as much as possible to protect reporter privacy. In some cases, even if the details are anonymized, the reported person may be able to guess who made the report. If someone has concerns about retaliation or one's personal safety, please note that in the submitted report. We still encourage anyone to report, so that we can support our community while keeping SWMS members safe. In some cases, we can compile several anonymized reports into a pattern of behavior, and take action on that pattern.

What Happens After a Report Is Filed

After a member of the Steering Committee receives a report, they will consult with the remaining Committee within two business days to determine an appropriate response. The Steering Committee makes decisions by consensus.

During the Committee meeting, members will:
- Review report documentation to determine what happened
- Consult documentation of past incidents for patterns of behavior
- Discuss appropriate response(s) to the incident
- Assign a Committee member to make those response(s)
- Determine the follow-up actions for any impacted people and/or the reporter
- Assign a person to follow-up with the impacted people

After the meeting, a Committee member may communicate with the reported person to:
- Explain what happened and the impact of their behavior
- Offer concrete examples of how to improve their behavior
- Explain consequences of their behavior, or future consequences if the behavior is repeated

Violations of this Code of Conduct

In the event of egregious or repeated violations of this Code of Conduct, the Steering Committee and the Board of Directors have discretion to revoke an individual's SWMS membership, to bar them from holding leadership positions within SWMS, and/or withhold their attendance at SWMS events.

Please note, SWMS is only able to bar current SWMS members, not non-members, who violate the Code of Conduct. Therefore, if the Code of Conduct is violated by a non-member of SWMS, we encourage the victim or witness to file a report with the perpetrator's society (e.g., AGU, TOS, ASLO).

Appealing a Decision

Any party named in an allegation (either accuser or accused) can file an appeal within 60 days of the final report and notification of findings. The appeal must be sent to the SWMS President and/or Steering Committee and must include justification for the appeal and new evidence or a narrative that explains why previous evidence should be reconsidered.

If a complaint is reported about someone on the SWMS Steering Committee then the reporter should submit their claim directly to the Board of Directors with no option for appeal.

False Reporting

Any participants who abuse the reporting process will be considered to be in violation of these guidelines and subject to the same consequences. False reporting, especially to retaliate or exclude, will not be accepted or tolerated.

License and Attribution

This set of guidelines are adapted from the IARPC and OCB Code of Conducts. Additional information is adapted from the 500 Women Scientists' Guide to Organizing Inclusive Meetings and the ADVANCEGeo Partnership.

Notes

[1]Smith, Linda T. 1999. Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. London: Zed Books.