

# **Helminthological Society of Washington Discrimination Policy**

## **Statement of Policy**

The Helminthological Society of Washington (HSOW) is committed to providing an environment for meeting participants that is conducive to the free and robust exchange of scientific ideas, and free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. The HSOW will not tolerate actions, statements, or contacts that discourage the free expression and exchange of scientific ideas. This includes unequal treatment or harassment of any person based on their age, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, sexual orientation, race, color, national or ethnic origin, religious identifications, beliefs or practices, disabilities, veteran status, or any other reasons or expressions that are unrelated to their scientific merit. Harassment, sexual or otherwise, shall be considered a form of misconduct and violators will be subject to disciplinary actions, including expulsion from a society function or from the society itself.

## **Definition of Sexual Harassment:**

Sexual harassment refers to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature. It refers to behavior that is not welcome, is personally offensive, debilitates morale, and therefore, interferes with a collegial atmosphere. 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. What is perceived as acceptable to one person may be unwelcome by another. Those who have positions of authority or higher rank should be aware that others may be reluctant to outwardly express objections or discomfort regarding unwelcome behavior or language.

## **Other Types of Harassment:**

Remarks and behaviors based on other protected characteristics are also unacceptable to the Society. These include stereotyping, slurs, derogatory jokes or statements, and any hostile or intimidating acts. Within the context of this policy and professional practices, critical examination of beliefs and viewpoints does not, by itself, constitute hostile conduct or harassment.

## **Policy Scope:**

This policy applies to all attendees and participants at HSOW meetings and functions, including social functions, tours, or off-site activities during the course of meetings and functions, and includes all members, guests, staff, contractors, and exhibitors.

## **Reporting an Incident:**

If any individual covered by this policy believes that they have experienced or witnessed harassment or bullying they should report the event to HSOW's President or Vice-President; if both of those persons are implicated in the complaint, report or inquiry, it should be directed to the Corresponding Secretary/Treasurer or the Recording Secretary. The individual(s) lodging a complaint will be asked to provide details of the incident or incidents, names of individuals involved and names of any witnesses. Written complaints are preferred, but it is not mandatory. Complaints may be made on a confidential or anonymous basis, but please note that enough detail is needed to proceed or act on a concern. No complainant will be required to discuss any incident with the alleged offender, and no alleged offender will be required to discuss any incident with a complainant. All individuals (complainant or respondent) may bring an accompanying individual of their choice with them for support at any point when they discuss the matter with the society's representative, or during any course of an ensuing investigation. Regardless, a complainant may speak in confidence with the society's representative without an official report, an investigation or an alleged offender. All received complaints will be treated seriously, and will be addressed promptly if that is the wish of a complainant. Any incidents of sexual assault should be reported to the police immediately. Note that many local and regional governments also consider a variety of behaviors to be reportable crimes regardless of the wishes of the complainant, respondent or of the society.

The complaint will be referred to the Executive Committee (excluding those who might be implicated in the complaint) for initial evaluation. The initial evaluation will address whether there is sufficient information to pursue the claim further, whether the alleged behavior is serious in nature and meets the criteria identified in this policy, and whether it might be resolved through a less formal means.

Because allegations of discrimination, harassment and misconduct are sensitive matters with the potential to negatively impact the reputation of individuals, institutions, and/or our Society, confidentiality and discretion throughout the process is expected from all parties involved and is assured from the HSOW's representative and all involved in the investigation.

## **Investigation:**

Following the official report of an incident, where deemed appropriate and only with the approval and cooperation of the complainant(s), the Executive Committee will promptly and impartially initiate an investigation. Insofar as practicable and consistent with legal process and full and effective investigation, every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality of the complainant(s) and the individual(s) implicated in the complaint. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed (for example, although efforts will be made to reduce the chances, it may be possible to infer something about the person(s) involved based upon the situation under question).

The HSOW Executive Committee may name an impartial investigator, usually an elected officer or Executive Committee member(s), and the respondent will be promptly notified. No one who has a conflict of interest with respect to the complainant or respondent will serve in this role. The investigator is allowed to seek counsel if they are in doubt as to how to proceed, or if necessary, the Executive Committee can hire an independent investigator.

During an investigation, the investigator *generally* will do the following (as necessary) to make a determination as to appropriate action:

- document the nature of the complaint
- interview the complainant
- conduct further interviews as necessary, such as with witnesses or, at an appropriate time, the alleged offender
- document the investigator's findings regarding the complaint
- document recommended follow-up actions and remedies, if warranted
- inform the complainant of investigator's findings.

Upon completion of an investigation, the results will be shared with the full Executive Committee (excluding those who might be implicated in the complaint). If disciplinary action is being considered, those who are implicated in the completed investigation will have an opportunity to appeal to the Executive Committee before a disciplinary action is made. Disciplinary actions by the Executive Committee could range from a conversation with the person, a formal written warning, or for particularly egregious or repeated incidents, barring the person from attending workshops or sessions or even a recommendation to revoke the person's HSOW membership. All disciplinary decisions by the Executive Committee will be final.

Notwithstanding, HSOW reserves the right, upon receipt of a complaint, if in HSOW's sole reasonable discretion, the nature of such complaint requires the immediate removal of an individual in order to ensure that Event may proceed safely and without undue interruption, to remove an individual without undertaking an investigation as described herein.

### **Retaliation:**

The Society will not tolerate any form of retaliation against individuals who report an incident, against those who are subject to a complaint, nor against those who participate in an investigation. Retaliation will be considered a form of discrimination in and of itself, and offenders will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including ejection from the society.

If an individual harasses, retaliates, or knowingly makes a false claim, they will be subject to disciplinary action. These actions might range from a verbal warning to a request to leave the meeting or function without refund of fees and a reporting of the incident to the person's employer. Should repeated complaints, patterns of inappropriate behavior, or other events emerge, the society's by-laws permit the Executive Committee to exclude and eject members through a process that has no appeal.

### **Appeal & Questions:**

Should any person be dissatisfied with the result of an investigation or disciplinary action, they may appeal to the President of the Society, or to the highest-ranking officer without a conflict of interest. Questions concerning the policy should be directed to an HSOW officer or a HSOW Executive Committee member.

### **Records Retention:**

Records are to be retained until final disposition of charges or resolution of any related lawsuit.