

American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
Policies on Sexual Harassment and Professional Conduct
Draft: Approved by the ASECS Executive Board 28 February 2018

ASECS is committed to the free and respectful exchange of ideas in an environment of inclusion, safety, and mutual respect. The Society condemns all forms of discrimination, coercion, and violence. 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 race, class, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, rank, or status.

The Society thus expects all members, caucuses, and affiliate groups to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment for the exchange of knowledge and ideas that affirms the diversity of our membership and of their intellectual commitments. The values of equity, access, nondiscrimination, and mutual respect should inform all conduct, whether in a seminar room, a plenary presentation, or at a social gathering. Our standards call for sensitivity to differences of power among our membership and to safeguarding the personal autonomy and contributions of individuals in more junior positions in the field.

ASECS condemns all forms of harassment.

Sexual harassment is defined as behavior that demeans, humiliates, or threatens an individual on the basis of their sex, gender, or sexual orientation. It can take the form of a “come on” or a “put down.” Sexual harassment can include crude behavior (such as offensive statements, jokes, or gestures); dismissive or insulting modes or address (such as referring to a woman as “sweetie”); unwelcome sexual attention (such as unwanted touching); coercion (such as a promised exchange of favors); personal remarks related to physical appearance or legally protected characteristics; intimidation, following, or stalking; unwanted photography or recording; and sustained disruption of talks or events.

Harassment also takes nonsexual forms when an individual is targeted because of gender or gender expression, race, class, or religion. It singles out some members of the community as acceptable targets and as unworthy of respect. ASECS emphasizes the importance of adopting a fully intersectional understanding of sex-based and other harassment.

Harassment not only sabotages the individual; it also compromises the free exchange of ideas and damages the ASECS community by discouraging participation in the Society.

What to do if you have been harassed or witnessed harassment at the Annual Meeting or Related Events

ASECS seeks to provide support to members who have experienced sexual or other forms of harassment at the annual meeting or related events. If you have experienced or witnessed any unwelcome behaviors, please contact the Executive Director or an Officer of the Society. These officially designated contacts can serve as confidants and informal advisors; they can provide support and identify resources for further assistance; and they can confer with you confidentially about possible next steps. Reporting an incident of harassment does not obligate the reporter to pursue any further action. ASECS's goal above all is to support vulnerable members of the community and to strategize to end the harassment in question.

As a voluntary professional organization, ASECS is limited in the legal measures it can take to respond to charges of sexual or other harassment. Within these constraints, ASECS is committed to meeting its professional and ethical responsibilities and to doing all that it can to respond to reports of harassment among its membership, to maintain confidentiality as far as possible, and to protect complainants against retaliation. In accordance with our articulated values and to the extent allowable by law, ASECS will consider such penalties for violating these policies as:

- 1) informal warning of the harasser;
- 2) formal warning;
- 3) termination of ASECS conference participation, as well as of any ongoing ASECS responsibilities and appointments held by the harasser;
- 4) prohibition from assuming any governance role or other appointment within ASECS, including committee service and proposing or chairing Annual Meeting sessions.

ASECS reserves the right to take other actions that it deems appropriate and reasonable under the circumstances.

This statement does not create any legally enforceable protections or obligations on the part of ASECS, nor does it form a basis for civil liability.