European Astronomical Society

Guidelines for Good Practice

Drafted by the EAS Ethics Working Group

Sara Lucatello (Chair), João Alves, Bililign Dullo, Johanna Jarvis, Claudia Lagos, Johan Knapen, Francesca Primas, Rodolfo Smiljanic, and Darach Watson

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Updated by members of the EAS Inclusion Working Group

Sarah White, Jake Noel-Storr (Co-Chair), Holly Andrews, Sara Anjos (Co-Chair), Katarzyna Maek, Antoaneta Antonova, and Amelia Ortiz-Gil

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1 Conduct towards others

Professional activities and interactions should be carried out with the utmost respect and consideration for other scientists at any stage of their career (i.e., students and junior scientists, peers, supervisors and senior colleagues), and any other individuals or groups encountered in work-related situations (e.g., administrative and technical support personnel, outreach and media professionals, members of the public). Specific recommendations in this context are as follows.

- Work interactions with colleagues and others (including as part of large, international collaborations) should be conducted observing ethical practices and principles. Other colleagues should be motivated to act in ethical ways in their professional interactions. Written and spoken language should express respect, equal treatment and consideration.

- Efforts should be made to educate oneself and be aware of any possible unconscious biases and prejudices[1], and of different habits/thresholds for inappropriateness and offensiveness in different cultures.

- It is a special responsibility to educate and train students, junior colleagues and mentees on ethical practices of our profession, on the promotion of inclusiveness and on the existence of unconscious bias, including by our own actions and examples.

- Supervisors and supervised scientists should aim for a professional and respectful relationship, acknowledging their own roles and responsibilities with one another and their common research effort.

- The best possible teaching and mentoring should be offered to students and researchers in their education, training and career advancement, regardless of whether they plan on leaving academia.

- Conflicts of interest should be managed according to the rules provided by the institution/organization managing the activity at hand. In any case, full disclosure of the conflict of interest is the minimum action to be taken. Individuals in close personal relationships (romantic involvements, family ties, etc.) should disclose this and recuse themselves from supervising positions and any possible decision influencing the situation (acting as referees, writing recommendation letters, nominating for prizes, etc).

- Inappropriate, aggressive or offensive behaviour, bullying and harassment by an individual or a group against another should not be tolerated. Every effort should be made to make it stop immediately and prevent it from reoccurring. Measures to deal with it are regulated at the institutional or national level, and they should be widely advertised among the community they apply to. Every individual should acquaint themselves with the rules and by-laws pertaining to their institution, professional association or country, including the course of action to take when encountering inappropriate behaviour.

- Institutions should disseminate among their employees these and/or similar guidelines, including national, local, and institutional regulations and the European Charter for Researchers [2].

2 Organization of and professional conduct at conferences and meetings

Conferences, workshops and meetings have a fundamental role in the dissemination of scientific knowledge, in establishing and strengthening collaborations, and in offering networking opportunities. It is therefore paramount to implement policies that showcase the best science while minimizing the effect of biases of any sorts. Organizers and participants should strive to promote a climate of inclusiveness and respect. The following four subsections deal with specific recommendations.

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[1]For example, see https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html and https://hbr.org/2021/09/unconscious-bias-training-that-works

[2]https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter

2.1 Organization of meetings, choice of programme, and venue

All conference organizers, and especially those of the EAS Annual Meeting, are advised to follow the recommendations below:

- The scientific success of the meeting is to be among the top considerations when selecting speakers. In order to minimize conscious and unconscious bias, scientific organizing committees are recommended to prepare an extended list of potential speakers that can later be analysed in terms of gender/national/personal biases. If needed, the organizers should consider actively seeking contributions from under-represented parts of the astronomical community in an attempt to reach a balance that at least represents the diversity in the field of research.

- Accessibility, inclusion and sustainability should be taken into consideration when selecting the location, venue and schedule for a meeting. Wherever appropriate and feasible, in-person meetings should normally offer hybrid access. For in-person meetings, venue selection should take into account accessibility and the existence of appropriate infrastructure to address the needs of potential disabled participants. Virtual and hybrid conferences should make use of cross-captioning, whenever possible.

- Meeting organizers are encouraged to collect data on gender on Chairs, organization and scientific committee, invited talks and speakers, and overall conference attendance, and to publicly disseminate those numbers during/after the conference.

- Helping with childcare solutions is encouraged, in particular for in-person conferences, but should be considered also for virtual or hybrid conferences. Options may include providing a list of local childcare providers, offering childcare grants, a childcare programme organized on site, and/or a room in the conference venue from which parents with children can follow the talks in a more relaxed environment. Social media platforms with a dedicated hashtag (like Twitter), or collaboration tools (like Slack), would also help people outside the main conference hall to follow the essential parts of the discussions.

- Clear guidelines for presenters should be provided, including the time available for talks and questions, poster sizes (or formats) appropriate for the venue, as well as information on the projected image size to allow speakers to prepare optimal slides. For hybrid or virtual conferences, it is necessary to communicate well in advance the different tools/platforms that will be used, and encourage presenters to test their screen-sharing ability, video, and audio prior to their session. Organisers should encourage presenters to use colour palettes and fonts that are suitable for colour-blind and dyslexic participants. Clear, detailed and timely communication to all participants on the scientific and social plans is recommended.

- In the interest of scientific discussion, the sharing or publicizing of screenshots of a limited number of slides through, for example, social media should be permitted unless the speaker specifically *opts out*. This desire to opt out could be indicated alongside abstract submission, at the start of their presentation, or by using and pointing out a "do not Tweet" symbol (for example) on the appropriate slide. The speaker's wishes should be respected by all, and recorded by the meeting organizers for future reference (in case a complaint later arises).

- As part of registration, participants should be reminded that it is assumed that they consent to appearing in photos where they are not the main focus of the image. In case a participant does not consent to such photographs, there should be a field in the registration form to indicate so. Organisers should provide a manner to provide this information (e.g. differently colored badge or lanyard etc).

- Meeting organizers are advised to adopt a Code of Conduct for the meetings and to widely advertise it before the meeting (ideally requiring the participant's commitment to abide to it at the time of the registration). The section below *"Conduct of participants"* could be adapted to suit the needs of a specific meeting.

2.2 Conduct of Chairs

The following practices for Chairing are recommended to improve the climate and the participation of minorities, young scientists, and under-represented participants in the discussions throughout the conference.

- In the introductory remarks of each session, young scientists should be explicitly encouraged to participate and, during Q&A sessions, be given priority in asking questions (over Slack, for example, their 'student' or 'early career' status could be indicated to others via the display name that they set within their profile).

- Chairs and participants should introduce themselves with pronouns *where they feel comfortable doing so* (and/or indicating them via their display name on Slack, for example). This normalises the practice for everyone, and allows gender non-conforming people to avoid being misgendered.

- Chairs should check with the meeting organizers (and speakers) whether the speakers in their session have opted out of slides/recordings being shared freely, and then pass on this information to attendees at the beginning of the session. Attendees should also be reminded that photographs may be taken during the meeting, and to let the organizers know if they do not consent to this (in case they did not already indicate this as part of registration).

- Chairs should make sure that speakers keep to the schedule and do not run over.

- Chairs are encouraged to be conscious of their biases and avoid preferentially selecting some people and/or paying attention to only some parts of the room or certain members of the audience.

- Questioners should be reminded to identify themselves by name.

- If possible, Q&A sessions should not be interrupted before at least four questions have been asked, as to minimize the effect of bias in selecting questions. To this end, sessions organizers should schedule enough time for questions.

- If the questions are posed in an aggressive manner and/or the questioner and/or speaker gets aggressive, the Chair should be prepared to interrupt.

- During in-person meetings speakers should use a microphone whenever possible.

2.3 Conduct of participants

The EAS Annual Meeting and all astronomy conferences/meetings should be places in which researchers are encouraged to have a free discussion, and a free exchange of ideas and scientific results. All attendees are expected to behave professionally and treat each other with respect for the duration of the meeting and in all activities related to it. Ideas and results must be respectfully discussed, based solely on their scientific merits. Participants are advised to be mindful and respectful of cultural differences between the participants. Many countries with very different cultural backgrounds are part of EAS, and it is every participants duty to make sure everybody feels welcome in our society.

Attendees' right to privacy should be respected. Consent should be sought before publishing photographs where colleagues are the main subject in scientific publications, on social media, or on conference websites. While consent can be generally assumed when people are portrayed in a public and professional environment, behaving in a professional fashion, and are not the main focus of the image, the wishes of each attendee should be respected if explicitly indicated (through e.g. differently colored badge or lanyard, see Sec. 2.1).

The EAS firmly rejects all kind of abusive behaviour. Conference organizers are advised to work towards providing a welcoming, safe environment that encourages the free expression and exchange of scientific ideas of all participants. Every attendee is expected to make their individual contribution towards a respectful and inclusive meeting climate. Any discriminatory behaviour against colleagues on any basis, such as gender, gender identity, race, ethnic background, national origin, religion, political affiliation, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or any other reason will not be tolerated during the conference and in any event related to it.

2.4 Dealing with bullying, harassment or aggression at meetings

Conferences are recommended to have a Code of Conduct that is aligned with the ethical principles described in this document. Furthermore, the organizing committee is recommended to appoint one or more people (who have been through appropriate training, if possible) to act as contact points for reporting instances of bullying, harassment or aggression. It is then the committee's responsibility to provide clear and accessible information on who the contact points are for reporting this kind of behaviour.

The contact points should be aware of the Code of Conduct of the meeting, and of the avenues to follow to report incidents. They should also be prepared to advise attendees on how to deal with hostile situations and incidents. In case they are contacted about such an event, and with the approval of the reporting person, they should be willing to approach the offending person(s) to discuss how their behaviour is causing distress to other participants and remind them of the Code of Conduct applicable to all participants. If more serious measures are needed, the contact points should inform the reporting person(s) of the procedure to follow in these cases, pursuant to the rules and regulations of the meeting.

Should a participant witness events of bullying, harassment or aggression, the recommendation is to approach the victim to show support, ask how they are doing, and possibly suggest that they talk to one or more of the contact points. The decision to approach the contact points should ultimately be left to the victim. However, a bystander is within their right to anonymously report what they have witnessed (without naming those involved) if they have also been affected by the incident (e.g. made to feel that the environment is unwelcoming). In this case, a bystander's report must be accompanied by actionable feedback, so that appropriate measures can be taken to prevent a similar situation arising again.

3 Fair recruiting

Recruitment and selection guidelines are meant to ensure that the most suitable person for the job, at the right time, and on the basis of their relevant competences (scientific, technical and soft skills) is chosen. It is thus important that the procedure is open, fair and consistent, throughout the recruitment process. Vacancy notices should aim at reaching as wide a pool of potential applicants as practicable, describing clearly the role profiles and their technical and behavioural competences. Ideally, to counter systemic biases and unequal opportunities, the candidates short-listed for interview should be as diverse as the pool from which they are selected. Furthermore, the hiring entity is responsible for ensuring that staff appointed are qualified to carry out the specified duties and that interviews are carried out by suitably competent staff members.

In order to attract and retain a diverse pool of candidates and hires, it is highly advisable to develop clear guidelines and offer support schemes for dual-career arrangements (referring to an applicant and their partner) that are compatible with inclusiveness/diversity. Institutions and universities should also consider providing flexible working hours or appropriate part-time contracts to allow for members of the community with e.g. caring commitments to still remain active members of the community.

More specifically, in order to ensure fairness and transparency, we recommend the following good practices, applicable throughout the process.

Search, recruiting and hiring committees

- Committees should include members with different perspectives and expertise, and with a demonstrated commitment to diversity where practicable. They should include women and under-represented minorities whenever possible.

- Hiring criteria should be directly related to the requirements of the position, clearly understood, and accepted by all members of the committee.

- The application process should include a confidential opportunity for an applicant to declare a conflict-of-interest with respect to a referee.

- Whenever possible, committees should consider postponing or re-advertising openings with too few qualified applicants.

- It is good practice for the committee to discuss and agree on the structure, running order and questions/broad areas of questioning for each member ahead of interviews.

Selection criteria

- Selection criteria and procedures for screening and interviewing candidates should be explicitly established and recorded before advertising the position. This is to ensure that all applicants receive an equal opportunity.

- The appointing institution and the committee should be notified of all possible conflicts-of-interest of each committee member with respect to each applicant.

- The committee should take into consideration career breaks (due to special life circumstances, e.g. child or elderly care, debilitating illnesses, etc.).

- The ability of the candidate to add intellectual diversity to a given department/institute should typically be taken into consideration when selecting candidates.

Reviewing applications and the final decision

- The committee should discuss the potential impact that evaluation bias could play to produce an unfair and inequitable recruiting process and commit to implement practices that will mitigate it.

- During the main discussion, only the candidates ability to perform the essential functions of the job should be considered and assumptions based on personal perceptions avoided.

- The final discussion of the candidates should remain focused on the search criteria and evidence about the qualifications of the candidates for the position.

4   Widening the access to our profession

The EAS values the geographical, socio-economic, ethnic, gender and sexual-orientation diversity in the astronomical community and the way such diversity enhances the potential of astronomy. Thus, widening the access to our profession to people from backgrounds that have traditionally been less- or poorly-represented in our profession is an essential effort the community needs to make. This effort will allow our profession to develop in its full potential. We expect this effort to create social equality and to allow for an inclusive environment that expands the culture of the profession, and promotes creativity and productivity driven by the diverse workforce.

The following recommendations are motivated in part by the European Charter for Researchers[3] and by the "Nashville Recommendations[4]", to which the interested reader is referred for more details.

- We recommend that all European nations strive to 'level the playing field' in education. That is, making an effort to eliminate educational systems where only the most privileged students receive the best, high-quality education while those from under-privileged backgrounds have limited opportunities.

- National astronomical societies, universities, higher education organizations and research institutions are encouraged to organize programmes and events to engage the general public and attract prospective students with diverse backgrounds and talents. Outreach programmes aimed at boosting the confidence level of under-privileged and under-represented potential students are also advisable.

- Universities, higher-education organizations and research institutions are encouraged to support programmes that foster partnerships with organizations that work with students from disadvantaged backgrounds, women and minorities.

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[3]https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/am509774cee_en_e4.pdf
[4]https://aas.org/posts/news/2016/01/inclusive-astronomy-january-2016-aas-meeting

- Universities, higher-education organizations and research institutions should consider developing mentoring programmes by recruiting and training mentors with diverse backgrounds and competencies to best-match mentees from any group(s), including women and minorities. This enables the mentees to reach their goals effectively and build a network. Efforts related to these program should be recognised and valued at the same level of scientific work.

- It is important that Universities and higher-education institutions strive to remove or minimize financial barriers to undergraduate and graduate study programmes for candidates from an under-privileged socio-economic background.

- Educational resources, research products and facilities should be fully accessible to people with disabilities.

- European employers, government programmes and/or funding agencies should encourage mobility within and outside Europe and recognize the positive impact of mobility in enhancing scientific knowledge and professional developments. In the interest of inclusiveness, they should also help to streamline contract extensions to accommodate e.g. parental leave.

- We recommend European countries simplify unfairly complicated visa processes for non-European citizens, especially those from developing countries.

- We recommend that National societies, Universities, higher-education and research institutions include minorities directly in policy-making and ensure fair representation in leadership roles for all groups.

- Universities, research institutions and higher-education organizations should make an effort to regularly organize initiatives aimed at improving climate and inclusiveness (e.g. impostor syndrome and unconscious bias workshops, sensitivity training, bystander intervention training, discussions on topics such as demographics in astronomy, or inappropriate and unwelcome behaviour).

- We recommend that Universities make regular assessments of their actions taken in widening access by regularly collecting and analyzing data (that includes consideration of intersectionality) to continuously improve upon these activities and assist policy developments and implementations. Widening access ultimately generates a diverse pool of talent.

5 Recommendations for fair employment practices

The European Union has taken the lead over the past years in defining and recommending employment conditions for researchers, in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers:

> "While the Charter describes the working relationship between researcher and institution, by setting out the roles, rights and responsibilities of researchers, the Charter and Code ensures that the selection process for hiring and promoting researchers is fair, merit-based and transparent."

The specific recommendations in this context:

- That employers and funding agencies in our field implement the recommendations in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, and that all researchers familiarize themselves with these documents.

- That non-European countries take inspiration from these documents, and implement comparable employment rights for researchers working within their purviews.

- That all researchers, including PhD students, be employed under employment contracts that ensure full benefits, including healthcare, pension, maternity/paternity leave, and unemployment and disability benefits.

- That in non-English-speaking countries there is a person from HR/administration who can make available translations of all documents, or can explain all of the administrative rules regarding the employment contract.

- That national policies, employers, and funding agencies recognize the existence and importance of trans-national mobility, and that they ensure that researchers and their families enjoy the same rights as local employees, including access to and portability of the full set of social security provisions.

- That both researchers and their supervisors are aware of their status as employees and possibly employers, and that their working relationship is governed by their corresponding rights and obligations.

6 Ethics in publishing

Publications are one of the main products of our professional activity and they are regulated by the specific ethics policies of the journals. Here we provide, however, a more general set of recommendations for good practice.

- Language: authors should limit themselves strictly to scientific discussion using professional, respectful language. This includes not only scientific publications per se but also social media and email (in particular where these reach large groups of colleagues), referee reports, and other confidential or public reports. Editors should be vigilant when handling manuscripts, referee reports, and other communications.

- Open access: All published work, including data and software, should ultimately be publicly available for free. Control of copyright should rest either with the authors, with reputable learned societies, or be in the public domain. The EAS Council recommendations on open access should be followed[5].

- Publication of data and software: Data and software used in publications should be published in a reliable public repository at the same time as the article in which they are used. Software should preferably be licensed under a free-software license[6], so that other astronomers "have the freedom to run, copy, distribute, change and improve the software"[7]. This is both an ethical and a practical issue: publicly available software that does not have an explicit licence is copyright-protected under the Berne Convention Implementation Act of 1988 and other astronomers are legally forbidden from copying the software, modifying it, distributing it, or distributing a corrected or improved version.

- Journals: Publication of scientific research conducted with public funding should not be used to extract excessive private profits. While private journals can play an important role in scientific publication, support for new private journals should be carefully considered in terms of the weakening of society journals and what the primary motivation is for setting up a new private journal.

- Plagiarism: Plagiarism is claiming the words or ideas of another as one's own, i.e., without referencing their source. Plagiarism is misconduct.

- Originality/multiple submissions of the same work: Research publications should be original and should not contain reproduced material unless explicitly noted.

- Authorship: The primary means of assigning credit for work done is via authorship of publications. This means that authorship is crucial for peer recognition and career advancement. Authorship must therefore be assigned in a fair manner, commensurate with contribution, and signal clearly the role played by each contributor to the work. Assigning authorship inappropriately is misconduct.

- Attribution of work: Appropriate recognition of prior work is essential both for the reader to understand the full origin and background of the research and for peer recognition of researchers. Proper attribution typically takes the form of a full and correct citation of relevant research and should be followed rigorously in the scientific literature.

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[5]http://eas.unige.ch/documents/OAPublicationRecommendations.pdf
[6]https://www.gnu.org/licenses/licenses.html
[7]https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html.en

- Peer review: Review of manuscripts prior to publication is essential to the reputation and reliability of the scientific literature. Referees have a special responsibility to act in a fair, considered, and well-justified manner when reviewing papers for publication. Editors must actively ensure that the reviewing process is fair and appropriate.

- Conflict of interest: Research evaluators (e.g., referees or editors) with a conflict of interest should recuse themselves from the evaluation. Where this is not possible or desirable, the conflict of interest should at least be clearly indicated to affected parties. Researchers with a conflict of interest have a primary obligation to ensure that the conflict does not affect their impartial judgment with respect to their research, and must declare publicly the nature of the conflict of interest.

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[8]https://policies.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/policy/Diversity_in_the_Workplace_Procedures.pdf