



# Political Studies Association

## Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Policy

### Code of Conduct for PSA Members

The Political Studies Association (PSA) Annual Conference and related events bring together research professionals from the United Kingdom and beyond for the purposes of scholarly interchange and professional development. Harassment of participants undermines the principles of equality, diversity and freedom of expression at the foundations of these conferences and events, and constitutes professional misconduct.

The PSA is committed to providing a welcoming professional environment in which all members are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, age or disability. The PSA recognises a *shared responsibility* of all members and attendees to establish and uphold that environment for the benefit of all.

The following Policy outlines expectations for all participants at PSA conferences and events. For the purposes of this document, 'participant' refers to anyone attending PSA events, including PSA members, staff, exhibitors, and all other attendees. The Policy applies to all conference and event venues, including formally scheduled meetings and panels as well as official and unofficial social events.

### Violations of the Code of Conduct

Under the Equality Act 2010, 'harassment' is defined as unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose (intentional) or effect (unintentional) of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.

Unprofessional behaviour that violates the PSA's Code of Conduct may include, but is not limited to:

- Inappropriate actions or comments related to a protected characteristic including but not limited to sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, age or disability;
- Sexual harassment or intimidation (including unwelcome sexual attention, pressure to engage in unwanted sexual activity, physical or virtual stalking, and sexual assault including unwelcome touching or groping);
- Threatening speech or actions (including threats of physical harm and professional reputational damage).

*Nothing in this policy shall be construed as a restriction on the ability of PSA members and participants to constructively critique one another's work, unless this intersects with the above.*

## **Reporting a Violation of the Code of Conduct**

Conference and event participants should report a violation of the Code of Conduct in person or by email ([codeofconduct@psa.ac.uk](mailto:codeofconduct@psa.ac.uk)) to the PSA's Equality & Diversity Chair (currently Meryl Kenny), or to any another member of the PSA's Executive Committee should that be preferred or more appropriate.

In cases where the reported behaviour is ongoing, or there is a question of immediate physical harm or danger, steps will be taken to ensure the safety of participants, regardless of whether a formal complaint is pursued.

*The PSA has two options through which participants can pursue a complaint:*

### ***Stage 1 Reporting: Notice***

If you do not wish to enter into a formal complaint and investigation process, then the PSA can issue a notice. In these cases, the PSA will contact the person who is the subject of the complaint, inform them that a complaint has been made, and remind them of the PSA's anti-harassment policy. The recipient of the notice will have the opportunity to respond to the PSA in writing, but no further formal investigation will be undertaken.

The PSA will make every effort to protect complainants from retaliation. The information of all parties will be treated with strict confidentiality and under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998. If anonymity becomes difficult to maintain in particular cases, the PSA will defer to the preferences of the complainant.

### ***Stage 2: Formal Complaint***

A formal complaint should be made in writing and should include:

- The name of the complainant;
- The name of the respondent;
- The nature of the conduct about which a complaint is made, including, where possible, dates, times and locations;
- If appropriate, names of any participants who may have witnessed the conduct.

An investigation will be conducted in every case where a formal complaint is made. The Equality & Diversity Trustee will discuss the complaint with the PSA Chair for initial review to determine if the complaint falls under the PSA Anti-Harassment Policy. If the Equality & Diversity Trustee is the potential respondent, this responsibility will fall to another Executive Committee member. If the PSA Chair is the potential respondent, the Vice-Chair will make this assessment with the Equality & Diversity Trustee.

Once this determination is made, the PSA Chair will inform the respondent, and make a written statement of the complaint available to both parties. They will then initiate an investigation of the complaint, which will be undertaken by committee. In most instances, this will be the PSA's Equality & Diversity Committee, but the PSA Chair may choose to appoint an ad hoc committee composed of other Executive Committee members. If any member of the investigating committee has a conflict of interest, they will be replaced by either another member of the PSA's Executive Committee.

The investigating committee will ask the respondent to provide a written statement in response to the complaint. The investigating committee may also contact identified witnesses, or consult with others with direct knowledge of the incident in question. All evidence should be given in writing (including email).

The PSA will make every effort to protect complainants from retaliation. The information of all parties will be treated with strict confidentiality and under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998. If anonymity becomes difficult to maintain in particular cases, the PSA will defer to the preferences of the complainant.

When the investigating committee has reached its determination, the PSA Chair, CEO, and chair of the investigating committee shall meet to determine resolution of the matter. Resolution may include:

- Determination that the policy has not been violated and that the complaint should be dismissed;
- Recommendation for informal resolution of the matter to re-establish a professional relationship between parties, including options such as mediation;
- Termination of PSA conference or event participation for the respondent, including current and/or future PSA conferences and events;
- A temporary or permanent restriction on the respondent assuming leadership positions in the PSA, including the Executive Committee;
- A temporary or permanent suspension of the respondent's PSA membership.

The PSA Chair and CEO shall notify all parties in writing of the resolution of the matter.

This policy is not a substitute for the rights of any of the parties to seek legal action.

### ***Guidelines for Appeal***

Either party - either the complainant or respondent - may appeal the outcome of the investigation. The appeal must be made within one month of the decision being made, and should be made in writing to the PSA Chair. The appeal will be reviewed by an Appeals Committee, consisting of the PSA Chair, CEO and the chair of the original investigating committee. An appeal is not a re-hearing of the original complaint and can only be made on grounds of procedural error or where the outcome of the complaint is seen to be unreasonable on the basis of the evidence and information obtained.