PSA Code of Conduct

1. Behaviour expected under this Code of Conduct

The Political Studies Association (PSA) communities, activities and events, most notably the Annual Conference, brings together national and international research and teaching professionals and students for the purposes of scholarly interchange and professional development. Harassment of participants, and all individuals involved, undermines the principles of equality, diversity, and freedom of expression on which these conferences, events, communities and wider activities are founded and constitutes professional misconduct.

As a learned society and membership body, the PSA is committed to providing an atmosphere that encourages the free expression and exchange of ideas. Consistent with this commitment it is the policy of the PSA that all individuals (including PSA and external staff) involved in PSA activities and events should enjoy a welcoming, collegiate, courteous and respectful environment, free from discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), bullying or otherwise inappropriate behaviour. The PSA recognises a shared responsibility of all members, participants and attendees to establish and uphold that environment for the benefit of all.

All participants in PSA activities are expected to comply with this Code. Participants encompass anyone involved in PSA activities including event and meeting attendees, students, guests, staff, contractors, and exhibitors. This Code applies to (but is not limited to) all PSA-related committee or board meetings, specialist groups, network or joint meetings with other organisations, or any other official activity carried out in the name of the PSA. These expectations also apply to interactions in unofficial or informal activities, and we expect everyone in our community to always treat each other with dignity and respect.

All individuals participating in in-person or digital PSA activities must comply with these standards of behaviour. All individuals must behave responsibly and respectfully in any PSA activities and communities in which they participate.

During all PSA activities, whether digital or in-person, individuals are expected to uphold the highest standards of professional and respectful behaviour, refraining from any actions that may cause distress or harm to others, or that could bring the PSA into disrepute. This includes any form of harassment which is defined under the Equality Act 2010, ‘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.”

Unacceptable 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 and other including but not limited to sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, age or disability; or other personal characteristics, political views, status, affiliations or relationships including but not limited to class or employment status.

- 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 Code shall be construed as a restriction on the ability of participants to respectfully and constructively critique one another's work or restriction of academic freedom.

2. Reporting breaches of this code

All attendees at PSA events, including remote participants must:

- adhere to high standards of behaviour and treat others with courtesy and respect and

- comply with reasonable instructions from the PSA's staff and representatives.

For immediate actions, breaches of this Code should be reported (preferably in person at physical events or private chat function for online events) to the organiser of the activity, which will be the senior volunteer/trustee present from the relevant PSA committee, network, specialist or working group. In the case of PSA Annual Conference and key association events, breaches should be reported **in person** to either the PSA's Head of Membership, Events & Communications, or a member of the PSA's Senior Leadership Team (PSA Chief Executive, Chair, Vice-Chair, Honorary Secretary or Honorary Treasurer).

When taking a personal report, the organiser(s) will ensure the complainant is safe and cannot be overheard; and confidentiality can be maintained.

If the incident takes place outside official activities, please ensure that this is reported directly to the venue or responsible entity immediately (such as bar staff or security or hotel reception). There may be scheme such as "ASK Angela" in place to ensure your immediate safety.

We encourage any bystander who witnesses a breach of this Code to report this directly, and if appropriate take an Active Bystander approach using the Four D's.

For reporting after the incident, if you want to report a breach after the incident or do not feel that it was effectively dealt with by the organiser (s). This can be done via email through the code of conduct email address **codeofconduct@psa.ac.uk** (please note that this inbox is not monitored continuously, so there may be a delay in responding).

3. Action against breaches of this code

A breach of this Code which is witnessed by the organiser(s) may result in one or more of the following:

- a request from the organiser(s) to refrain from certain behaviour;
- a request from the organiser(s) to clarify a misunderstanding or apologise;
- in the case of virtual events, the organiser(s) turning off the camera and/or microphone of the person breaching the Code, and/or removing them from the session.
- in the case of in person event, the organiser(s) excluding the person breaching the Code from the event.

A breach of this Code which is reported to the organiser(s) (whether by the person affected or by a bystander) may result in the person breaching the Code being excluded from the event where the organiser(s) reasonably consider that the person presents a risk to the safety of others at the event. In such cases, venue security and/or the police may be involved.

Where a breach is reported which does not present an immediate risk to the safety of others at the event, the organiser(s) will establish if the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint (which will be pursued after the event) or is content with the action taken to resolve the behaviour.

All reported breaches (whether or not they are subsequently treated as formal complaints) will be logged by the organiser(s) to PSA centrally via code of conduct email (codeofconduct@psa.ac.uk).

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 and the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation. If anonymity becomes difficult to maintain in particular cases, the PSA will defer to the preferences of the complainant.

4. Sanctions for breaches of this Code of Conduct

If a person breaching this Code is excluded from an event because the organiser(s) reasonably consider that they present a risk to the safety of others at the event, the PSA's Executive Committee with guidance from the Honorary Secretary will consider whether that person's membership of the PSA should be suspended or terminated. Termination may be with

immediate effect and without refund of membership or event fees. A member whose membership is terminated on this basis may appeal in accordance with the PSA's Complaints Policy.

All other breaches of this Code will be considered in accordance with the PSA's Complaints Policy.

Related Policies:

- PSA Complaints Policy [add hyperlink]
- PSA Statement in support of Academic Freedom [add hyperlink]

Policy Owner: PSA Honorary Secretary

Amended: July 2026
To be reviewed by: October 2028

NB: This policy updates what was previously known as the 'Anti-harassment & Discrimination Policy (for PSA events)"