

Letter of Intent

Recommendations for ASOR Policy of Professional Conduct and Codes of Conduct from the Committee on Growth, Innovation, and Visibility

Subcommittee Members:

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Preamble

The Committee on Growth, Innovation, and Visibility (GIV) submits this Letter of Intent to initiate a comprehensive review of ASOR's Policy of Professional Conduct, Code of Conduct for Fieldwork Projects, and Code of Conduct for the ASOR Annual Meeting and Other ASOR Sponsored Events. Based on our findings, we will recommend amendments to enhance the clarity and inclusivity of these policies to better serve the needs of ASOR's broad membership and event attendees. In addition to suggesting updates to current policies, we will suggest means to establish reporting mechanisms and transparent procedures for ASOR to respond to policy violations. Our recommendations aim to strengthen our community's safety and align our practices with the established standards of peer organizations, such as the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and the Society for American Archaeology (SAA).

Background and Methodology

The recommendations made by the Committee are grounded in a review of related policies from peer professional associations, such as SAA, AAA, AIA (American Institute of Archaeology), ARCE (American Research Center in Egypt), and SCS (Society for Classical Studies). For example, AAA, SAA, and AIA-SCS (joint) have specific policies to address sexual and other forms of harassment, which include detailed grievance reporting processes that involve an ombudsperson or third-party mediator.¹ In contrast, ASOR has not yet established a separate sexual harassment policy. Instead, harassment, including sexual harassment, is briefly addressed in section III.C.4 of the Policy on Professional Conduct and in the Code of Conduct for Fieldwork Projects and the Code of Conduct for ASOR Annual Meetings and Other Sponsored Events. The Committee's recommendations are also informed by evidence from reports, articles, surveys, and scholarly publications, including ASOR-sponsored initiatives like Beth Alpert-Nakhai's Initiative on the Status of Women.²

¹ <https://americananthro.org/about/aaa-policy-on-sexual-harassment-sexual-assault/>; <https://americananthro.org/news/aaa-revises-its-guidelines-on-sexual-harassment-and-sexual-assault/>; https://documents.saa.org/container/docs/default-source/doc-careerpractice/harassment_resource.pdf?sfvrsn=d5b7b7d8_4; [https://saa.org/quick-nav/saa-media-room/saa-news/2023/08/18/saa-and-tpa-partnership-offers-expanded-meeting-safety#:~:text=The%20Society%20for%20American%20Archaeology%20\(SAA\)%20and,to%20strengthen%20the%20SAA%27s%20Meeting%20Safety%20Policy](https://saa.org/quick-nav/saa-media-room/saa-news/2023/08/18/saa-and-tpa-partnership-offers-expanded-meeting-safety#:~:text=The%20Society%20for%20American%20Archaeology%20(SAA)%20and,to%20strengthen%20the%20SAA%27s%20Meeting%20Safety%20Policy;); <https://www.archaeological.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Grievance-Procedure-rev.-Dec.-2019.pdf>; <https://www.archaeological.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/AIA-SCS-Joint-Harassment-Policy.pdf>

² Clancy, Kathryn B. H., *et al.* 2014. Survey of Academic Field Experiences (SAFE): Trainees Report Harassment and Assault. *PLOS One* 9 (7): e102172; Colaninno, Carol E., *et al.* 2024. Cultivating inclusivity: strategies field school directors use to

Guiding Inquiries

The investigation will be guided by the following questions, which will assist in identifying areas for improvement within our policies:

- **Reporting mechanisms within ASOR:** Current procedures ask members to report incidents of harassment to the Executive Committee. How might this protocol discourage individuals, especially those in less powerful positions, such as members from underrepresented groups, graduate students, and international scholars, from reporting incidents? Would the establishment of a Community Accountability and Safety Committee and/or the appointment of an ombudsperson produce a more secure environment for those reporting?
- **Transparency and enforcement of conduct policies:** The power of the Policy of Professional Conduct, Code of Conduct for Fieldwork Projects, and Code of Conduct for the ASOR Annual Meeting and Other ASOR Sponsored Events ultimately derives from their enforcement. Currently, the absence of transparent guidelines that detail the steps for addressing instances of harassment and other violations of ASOR's Policies and Codes of Conduct may encourage distrust in these processes and discourage reporting. Would developing a consistent and impartial guide outlining ASOR's procedures for responding to such incidents enhance the safety of members wishing to report violations and ensure a fair framework for ASOR's response?
- **Proactive measures against harassment:** Externally conducted surveys and reports, such as those mentioned in the above Background section, indicate that harassment is a recurring issue in archaeological fieldwork. Would implementing a confidential post-excavation survey available to all participants of ASOR-affiliated excavations, from undergraduate and graduate students to senior excavators and directors, provide a safe platform for feedback and reporting? Would doing so enhance the effectiveness of the Policy of Professional Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Fieldwork Projects and help prevent future instances of harassment?

Final Product

The following includes potential deliverables from this project to the President, President-Elect, and Executive Director, derived from the committee's ongoing research:

- **Amendments to existing policies:** Detailed recommendations for revisions to the current ASOR Policy of Professional Conduct, Code of Conduct for Fieldwork Projects, and Code of Conduct for the ASOR Annual Meeting and Other ASOR Sponsored Events to enhance clarity, inclusivity, and effectiveness.
- **Creation of a Sexual Assault and Anti-Harassment Policy:** Proposal to establish a task force responsible for developing a comprehensive Sexual Assault and Anti-Harassment Policy in

promote safe and supportive field schools. *Southeastern Archaeology* 43 (1): 30–46; Emerson, Matthew C. 2021. Toward a Safe Archaeology Field School Insights into Policies, Procedures, and Team-Based Learning. *Advances in Archaeological Practice* 9 (1): 66–73; Fox, Alacia, *et al.* 2019. Evaluating the Prevalence and Quality of Conference Codes of Conduct. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116 (30):14930–14936. Nelson, Robin G., *et al.* 2017. Signaling Safety: Characterizing Fieldwork Experiences and Their Implications for Career Trajectories. *American Anthropologist* 119: 710–722; Voss, Barbara L. 2021. Documenting Cultures of Harassment in Archaeology: A Review and Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Studies. *American Antiquity* 86 (2): 244–260; Voss, Barbara L. 2022. Disrupting Cultures of Harassment in Archaeology: Social-Environmental and Trauma-Informed Approaches to Disciplinary Transformation. *American Antiquity* 86 (3): 447–464.

collaboration with the GIV Codes of Conduct Committee. The comprehensive Sexual Assault and Anti-Harassment Policy would include codified definitions to ensure clarity and consistency of standards across the community.

- **Confidential reporting mechanisms:** Introduction of confidential mechanisms for reporting Policy and Codes of Conduct violations, ensuring privacy and security for complainants. This includes the establishment of a clear, transparent step-by-step procedure taken by ASOR to address and resolve instances of violations.
- **Establishment of the Community Accountability and Safety Committee:** A recommendation to form a standing Community Accountability and Safety Committee comprised of ASOR members from various ranks, career stages, and academic affiliations. This committee would use the newly established procedure to investigate claims of harassment and oversee the use of a liaison or independent third party, as appropriate, to record, investigate, mediate, resolve complaints, and offer recommendations to the proposed Committee.
- **End-of-season survey:** Implementation of end-of-season surveys for all ASOR-affiliated events and excavations, facilitating members to confidentially report any instances of harassment or other violations of ASOR's Codes of Conduct and Policies.

We ask the Executive Committee and the Board to consider these actions, and look forward to working together to help ensure ASOR affiliated programs can support the growth and safety of all members.