

## **The Statistical Society of Australia Code of Conduct**

The SSA Code of Conduct is one of the most important determinants of professional and ethical conduct for the statistical profession in Australia. The Code of Conduct is a guiding document developed by the Statistical Society to define the behaviour expected of Society members practising in everyday professional life.

It is a guideline for all members of the SSA and is mandatory for all accredited members.

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### **1. Introduction**

The overall objective of the Statistical Society of Australia (SSA) and its branches is to further the study and application of statistical theory and methods in all branches of learning and enterprise. In general, the public has no ready means of judging the quality of professional service except from the reputation of the provider. Membership of an association of professionals, such as the SSA, will often be taken by the public as an assurance of ability and integrity. It is therefore essential that the highest standards are maintained by all members of the SSA whenever they are acting professionally and whatever their level of qualification. In common with professional bodies in other fields, the Society has formulated its own rules as a Code of Conduct to define the behaviour expected of Society members practising in everyday professional life. This code of conduct has been drawn up to reflect the standards of conduct and work expected of all practising statisticians. It is a guideline for all members of the SSA and is mandatory for all accredited members.

### **2. Authority**

The authority for the SSAI Code of Conduct derives from its formal adoption by the SSAI at the AGM of 7 July, 1998. Changes to the code were accepted by the Executive (18 February 2019) and Central Council (21 February 2019). The changes were based on the “Safe SSA” committee that was formed in 2018 to provide recommendations to the SSA Executive Committee and Central Council to help ensure that SSA events and conferences are free of unacceptable behaviour. The Society binds itself to observe the principles of the code.

### **3. Rules of Professional Conduct**

As an aid to understanding, these rules have been grouped into the principal duties which all members should endeavour to discharge in pursuing their professional lives.

#### **3.1. Standards of Behaviour**

1 The Statistical Society expects appropriate conduct from all Members at all times. Members shall refrain from engaging in unacceptable behaviour, including, but not

limited to sexual harassment, stalking, and harassment including verbal comments relating to gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion (or lack thereof), age, national origin, gender identity or expression, or physical appearance.

2 When attending events or conferences run by the Statistical Society, members are required to abide by the event or conference Code of Conduct in addition to the Society's Code of Conduct. Any breaches of the relevant Code may be reported to and recorded by the Society. To assist them in their selection of speakers and awardees (who may be members or non-members) that best represent the Society's high standards of behaviour, the future Chairs of Awards Committees and Conference Organising and/or Scientific Program Committees will communicate the names of nominated speakers/awardees to the President and Executive Officer. Chairs of these committees will be informed of the nature and seriousness of any records associated with nominated individuals.

### **3.2 The Public Interest**

3 Members shall ensure that within their chosen fields they have appropriate knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation, regulations and standards and that they comply with such requirements.

4 Members shall in their professional statistical practice have regard to procedures designed to ensure the highest ethical standards. In particular, members shall ensure that the collection of information and the publication of results shall observe relevant privacy laws.

5 Members are encouraged to advance public knowledge and understanding of statistics and to counter false or misleading statements. Members shall not make any public statement in their professional capacity unless competent to do so and, where appropriate, authorised to do so.

### **3.3 Duty to Employers and Clients**

6 Members shall carry out work with due care and diligence in accordance with the requirements of the employer or client and shall, if their professional judgement is overruled, indicate the likely consequences.

7 Members shall not disclose or authorise to be disclosed, or use for personal gain or to benefit a third party, confidential information acquired in the course of professional practice, except with prior written permission of the employer or client, or at the direction of a court of law.

8 Members shall declare any interests, financial or otherwise, which could be perceived as influencing the outcome of work undertaken for a client or employer.

9 Members should try to prevent the use of any misleading summary of data in their name. They should ensure that full disclosure is made of all assumptions and caveats.

### **3.4 Duty to the Profession**

10 Members shall uphold the reputation of the Profession and shall seek to improve professional standards through participation in their development, use and

enforcement, and shall avoid any action which will adversely affect the good standing of Statistics and Statisticians.

11 Members shall not speak in the name of the Society without the authorisation of the Executive Committee of the Society.

12 Members shall encourage and support fellow members in their professional development and, where possible, provide opportunities for the development of new entrants to the Profession.

13 Members shall act with integrity towards fellow statisticians and to members of other professions with whom they are concerned in a professional capacity, and shall avoid engaging in any activity which is incompatible with their professional status. Whilst members of the Society are free to engage in controversy, no member shall cast doubt on the professional competence of another without good cause.

### **3.5 Professional Competence and Integrity**

14 Members shall seek to upgrade their professional knowledge and skill and shall maintain awareness of technological developments, procedures and standards which are relevant to their field, and shall encourage their colleagues to do likewise.

15 Members shall seek to conform to recognised good practice including quality standards which are in their judgement relevant, and shall encourage their colleagues to do likewise.

16 Members shall only offer to do work or provide service which is within their professional competence and shall not lay claim to any level of competence which they do not possess.

17 Members shall accept professional responsibility for work in their name, and any professional assessment which they are asked to give shall be objective and reliable.

18 Members should set out in writing any conflict, potential or actual, with the interests of the client or employer.

### **3.6 Code of Conduct for conferences and events**

19 This usage guide and example Code of Conduct were prepared by the Committee for Prevention and Response to Harassment in February 2018.

20 The aim of a code of conduct for SSA conferences and events is to provide conference and event attendees (be they members of SSA or not) a clear indication that the SSA will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour or harassment of other conference/event attendees, and that action, which may include but not be limited to exclusion from the event or removal of Society membership, may be taken against offenders. The usage guide provides requirements and recommendations for how this Code should be modified for use at particular events and disseminated at those events. This example Code of Conduct below is based on the American Statistical Association's Conduct Policy (available [here](#)), the user!2018 conference (available [here](#)), and ACEMS (available [here](#)).

## 21 Usage Guide: Populating the Code of Conduct

Event organisers may populate and modify the example Code of Conduct as appropriate for their event. Key requirements of the Code are that it includes the list of unacceptable behaviours (additional behaviours may be added), includes names and contact details for at least two members of a response team from different institutions/employers, that it be clear that social events associated with the conference are covered by the Code, and that the consequences of violating the code be clearly stated.

## 22: Usage Guide: Displaying and disseminating the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct must appear on the conference/meeting/event website, and must be communicated to event attendees via email prior to the commencement of the event. If a conference app is developed, it must also appear within the app; if a program or abstract book is being distributed to attendees, it must appear within the book. If no such book is being distributed, a one-page summary of the Code with contact details of the Response Team should be made available at the registration desk. Conference or event attendees should be reminded to familiarise themselves with the Code of Conduct during the opening remarks.

## 23: Example Code of Conduct (details to be completed by each event)

The organisers of [event name] are committed to providing a [conference/meeting/event] that is welcoming and safe for all participants, is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment, and where all participants are treated with dignity and respect. Harassment is unlawful under both federal and all Australian state anti-discrimination laws, and as such, people suspected of such misconduct may be reported to authorities. Adherence to this Code of Conduct is a requirement for all [conference/meeting/event] participants and sponsors, and covers all aspects of this [conference/meeting/event], including [conference sessions and breaks], all social events and all communication, including that via email or social media (including but not limited to Facebook and Twitter) associated with the [conference/meeting/event]. Unacceptable behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

Harassment, including verbal comments relating to gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, age, national origin, gender identity or expression, or physical appearance.

Inappropriate and/or unwanted physical contact.

Unwelcome sexual attention, which can include inappropriate questions of a sexual nature, asking for sexual favours or repeatedly asking for dates or contact information.

Stalking or deliberate intimidation.

Unwanted photography or recording (if you are asked to stop photographing or recording someone, please do so; if someone indicates that they do not want to be photographed or recorded, do not record or photograph them).

Discriminatory or sexual images in public spaces.

Sustained or wilful disruption of talks or other events.

[Meeting organisers may add to this list as they see fit.]

To report violations of this Code of Conduct, alert a member of the Response Team (names and contact details listed below). Reports may be made by people subject to, or witnesses of, unacceptable behaviour.

### *Code of Conduct Response Team*

[In this section list the names, email addresses, and if appropriate, telephone numbers, of people tasked with responding to reports of violations of the Code. At least two people must be listed, but ideally there will be several listed contacts, from a variety of institutions/workplaces, including both men and women. The list should include, but is not limited to, conference/meeting organisers. Ideally members of this response team will have some training in dealing with reports of harassment.]

For example: Abba B Abbason, Senior Lecturer at Stats University. Email:...,  
Phone number:....

If an individual participates in unacceptable behaviour, the Response Team may take lawful action that they deem appropriate, including asking the individual to stop or removal of the individual from the [conference/event/meeting] without refund of registration and/or other applicable fees. Reports of unacceptable behaviour may be communicated to the Statistical Society of Australia, and individuals who participate in unacceptable behaviour may face consequences including being disallowed from attending future events. Individuals who are ejected will not be allowed to give any planned oral or poster presentations, and their place may be allocated to another attendee. The reason for the replacement presentation may also be announced (e.g., “Professor X has violated this event’s code of conduct and has been asked to leave and therefore will not be able to present today, in their place we will instead hear from ...”). Violations may be reported to the individual’s employer or research funders. Statistical Society of Australia members may have their membership cancelled without refund of membership fees.

All efforts will be made to protect the anonymity of persons reporting violations. Persons reporting violations of the Code may request that their report remain confidential and that no further action be taken. However, if the Code of Conduct Response Team deems it necessary for the safety of event attendees, action will be taken, including referral of the report to the Statistical Society of Australia.

This Code of Conduct is designed to ensure that this event can be enjoyed by all participants. We hope you have an inspiring and enjoyable time.

### **3.7 Recording of breaches**

24 In accordance with the decision of the Member Conduct Committee regarding alleged breaches, breaches of the Code of Conduct (be that the Society Code of Conduct or a conference Code of Conduct) will be added to a securely stored, password-protected repository that will be maintained by the Executive Officer, accessible only to the Executive Officer and President. Members and non-members will be informed when they have been added to the repository. The repository in its entirety will only be available to the Executive Officer and President, and will not be

routinely available to members. However, as a standard step in speaker and awardee selection, we require the Conference Organising Committee Chair and Awards Committee Chair to ask the Executive Officer whether a candidate keynote speaker or awardee is on the list. If an individual appears in the repository, the Committee Chair will be informed and will keep confidential particular details of the recording. The Committee Chair will decide whether to inform the committee of the broad details of a record associated with an individual, while always keeping the precise nature of the event confidential. We expect that such findings will strongly influence Committee decisions. Informing further parties of records associated with an individual will be at the discretion of the President and Executive Officer, for example such information may be provided where members of the media seek SSA for comment regarding particular individuals, or to law enforcement agencies.

25 We note that any and all breaches of the Code of Conduct will be recorded, including inappropriate statistical practice (e.g., fraudulent analysis) as well as inappropriate behaviour.

### **3.8 Disciplinary Procedures**

26 A member is expected to act at all times in a manner likely to be judged by informed, respected, and experienced peers in possession of all the facts as the most ethical way to act in the circumstances. This code sets out certain basic principles that are intended to help members maintain the highest standards of professional conduct. Should a case arise where a member is believed to have wilfully acted in a manner which violates these principles then the disciplinary and appeal procedures set out in Rules 36 and 37 of the Society shall apply.

27 A Member Conduct Committee will oversee matters relating to any breaches of the Code of Conduct. When members have been accused of breaching the code, the members of this group will recommend what action should be taken in response to these accusations.

A) No action: An anonymised record of the incident and resolutions (if any) may be added to the repository, but no further action will take place. Note that this recommendation does not mean that the incident did not occur or that anyone involved in the reporting or investigation process is not believed. This recommendation might be made, for example, if there is insufficient evidence to justify any action; if it is felt that actions already taken voluntarily or through an informal process were sufficient to address the reported conduct; or if the reporter withdraws permission for the conduct review to continue and requests this outcome and the Committee decides that such outcome is appropriate under the circumstances.

B) Information recorded: This means that the incident and resolutions (if any) including the accused's name will be added to the repository and no other action will be taken unless further evidence emerges. This recommendation might be made, for example, if there is insufficient evidence to justify other action but there is sufficient concern to warrant action if a subsequent corroborating report is received; or if the reporter requests this outcome with no further action at this stage and the Committee decides that such outcome is appropriate under the circumstances.

C) Further investigation: This recommendation might be made, for example, if the Committee has undertaken an internal investigation and decides that an investigation

by a third party ombudsperson is warranted; if a third party review has been undertaken but more time is required to reach a satisfactory conclusion; or if review by another party is required.

28 An action will aim to address a violation, remedy harm caused, and/or to otherwise enforce and promote the SSA Code of Conduct. Actions may include but are not restricted to any combination of the following:

- Verbal or written warning or counselling.
- Requirement of conciliatory efforts that may include a verbal or written apology, informal mediation, or other steps intended to facilitate restoration of relationships.
- Coaching by a designated mentor or professional training at the offender's expense.
- Service to the SSA community or the profession.
- Restitution for damage caused to another's person, property, impairment of opportunity or professional reputation.
- Suspension of eligibility for certain SSA benefits, e.g.:
  - Attendance and/or participation in specified SSA activities.
  - Holding a leadership position or other position of trust within SSA or representing SSA.
  - Awards, to be a presenter, to be published in SSA materials, or other opportunities.
  - Travel grants or similar funding.
  - Revocation of past awards or honours.
  - Suspension of SSA membership, subject to review for reactivation.
  - Expulsion from SSA membership.
  - Referral to the police, university, workplace or other relevant authority.
- An announcement to SSA Members via the SSA e-mail or newsletter that summarises the incident and actions taken. The SSA will also respond to external requests (e.g., from employers or journalists) concerning the incident and our actions.

29 Any action may be offered as voluntary or imposed as mandatory for a specified period of time, or, in severe cases, for an unspecified period of time subject to periodic review, or permanent.

30 If a member who breaches the code refuses to fully comply with the actions recommend by the Member Conduct Committee, then the actions may be escalated, including the potential suspension of eligibility for certain SSA benefits as described in paragraph 28.

31 The Member Conduct Committee will determine the circumstances under which a reported violation of the Code is reviewed, including whether a conduct review process will be conducted internally by the Member Conduct Committee or by engagement of a third party ombudsperson. Reported conduct may be reviewed internally by the Committee, either initially, in part or in whole, if it is a minor violation or, if deemed appropriate, when this is the request of the affected member who made the report. All other matters will be referred to a third party ombudsperson to administer a conduct review on behalf of the Committee. A report may be referred by the Committee to an ombudsperson for review on behalf of the Committee at any time before a final decision on an Outcome. The ombudsperson will be appointed by

the Committee in conjunction with the SSA Executive Committee, and will be an independent professional consultant with experience in the type of conduct under consideration. The ombudsperson will provide his/her/its findings to the Committee for decision on the Outcome by the Committee or referral by the Committee to the Board for decision, as provided below.

32 Member Conduct Committee members will ordinarily serve two year terms, and the representativeness of the Member Conduct Committee in terms of, but not limited to, sex, race, cultural background, career stage, location, and employer will be borne in mind in the nomination of potential members. Member Conduct Committee members will be contactable, with contact details made available on the SSA website.