

SSPH+ Anti-harassment Policy and Code of Conduct

SSPH+ is committed to providing an environment that is conducive to the free and robust exchange of scientific ideas. This environment requires that all participants be treated with equal consideration and respect. While SSPH+ encourages vigorous debate of ideas, personal attacks create an environment in which people feel threatened or intimidated. This is not productive and does not advance the cause of science. All participants in SSPH+ and SSPH+ managed events and activities are therefore expected to conduct themselves professionally and respectfully.

It is the policy of SSPH+ that all forms of bullying, discrimination and harassment, sexual or otherwise, are prohibited in any SSPH+ or SSPH+ managed events or activities. This policy applies to every individual at the event, whether attendee, speaker, exhibitor, award recipient, staff, contractor or other. It is also a violation of this policy to retaliate against an individual for reporting bullying, discrimination or harassment or to intentionally file a false report of bullying, discrimination or harassment.

Bullying, discrimination and harassment of any sort by someone in a position of power, prestige or authority is particularly harmful since those of lower status or rank may be hesitant to express their objections or discomfort out of fear of retaliation.

SSPH+ may take any disciplinary action it deems appropriate if, after thorough investigation, it finds a violation occurred.

What are bullying, discrimination, harassment and retaliation?

For purposes of this policy, “Bullying”, “Discrimination”, “Harassment” (including “Sexual Harassment”) and “Retaliation” are defined as follows.

Bullying is the ongoing abuse and intentional mistreatment of one or more vulnerable persons or groups by a more powerful individual or group. Bullying consists of repeated verbal (name-calling, verbal attacks), physical (use of physical force or aggression) and/or social behavior (ostracism, exclusion, spreading rumors) that causes physical or psychological harm. Being “more powerful” may include being physically bigger or stronger, having more social status or having influence over someone’s employment or professional advancement.

Discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of categories of people based on personal attributes such as race, sex, age, color, sexual orientation, body size, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation or other attributes not related to the merit of one’s work or scientific research or ideas.

Harassment consists of unwanted, unwelcomed and uninvited behavior that demeans, threatens or offends another and results in a hostile environment. Harassing behavior includes, but is not limited to, the use of epithets, derogatory comments or slurs, assault, stalking, impeding or blocking movement, threats of violence, offensive touching, any physical interference with normal work or movement and visual insults, such as derogatory images, posters or cartoons. Harassment is often (but not always) based upon personal attributes such as race, sex, age, gender, color, sexual orientation, body size, ethnic or national origin and disability.

Sexual harassment consists of harassing behavior based upon sex, gender or sexual orientation. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors (often accompanied by overt or implied promises or threats relating to employment, professional advancement or recognition), lewd comments or images or other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature where such conduct creates an unreasonable, intimidating, hostile or sexually offensive environment and may interfere with the target's professional performance.

Retaliation consists of negative action or treatment toward someone who has reported bullying, discrimination or harassment based upon such report. Retaliation may include terminating or demoting a reporting employee, excluding a reporting individual from work or professional activities, injuring a reporting individual's professional or personal reputation or unjustly demeaning a reporting individual's work. Retaliation can be used as a method of bullying or harassment, but more importantly retaliation creates an environment that discourages victims and bystanders from reporting offensive behavior.

What should I do if I experience or witness bullying, discrimination or harassment?

Individuals may be unaware that their conduct is offensive and are often willing to correct their behavior if so informed. If you experience or witness bullying, discrimination or harassment and feel empowered to do so, you are encouraged to immediately inform the individual that their comments or behavior are unwelcome.

However, SSPH+ understands that direct confrontation is not possible or advisable in every situation. Please note that you are not required to directly address or confront a person engaged in offensive behavior. If you do not feel comfortable addressing the violator, or if the violator continues the behavior after being advised that their conduct is unwelcome, you should report the incident.

How do I report an incident?

If you wish to report bullying, discrimination or harassment you have witnessed or experienced, you may do so through the following methods:

- contact any SSPH+ staff member (if onsite at an event or meeting)
- use the email info@ssphplus.ch

You are also encouraged to write down as many relevant details as you can recall (e.g., names, dates, times, locations, behavior or statements made, etc.), which can be helpful in assisting any future investigation of the incident.

To ensure a fair and complete investigation, SSPH+ cannot accept anonymous reports of bullying, discrimination or harassment. However, SSPH+ is very sensitive to the potential ramifications of making a report and will maintain your confidentiality except where doing so would compromise another person's rights or SSPH+'s ability to conduct a thorough investigation. In such cases, SSPH+ will limit disclosure only to that information necessary to ensure proper investigation and compliance with procedures.

No retaliation will be taken or tolerated against anyone who makes a good faith report of bullying, discrimination or harassment to SSPH+.

What happens if I report an incident?

Upon receiving a report of misconduct, SSPH+ will conduct a prompt, thorough investigation, which will include speaking with all parties with knowledge of the incident, including the reporting

individual, the alleged victim (if different from the reporting individual), any known witnesses and the alleged offender.

The SSPH+ Administrative Director will lead the investigation, working in conjunction with the entire SSPH+ Directorate as needed. SSPH+ may seek other legal or professional counsel as needed prior to recommending a decision and any follow-up actions to the SSPH+ Foundation Board. SSPH+ may consult with the alleged victim and/or the reporting individual prior to taking any action.

If SSPH+ finds that a violation of this policy has occurred, SSPH+ may take any disciplinary action it deems appropriate, which may include suspension or ejection from an SSPH+ activity or event without refund or recompense. Serious or repeated offenses may result in more significant consequences such as being banned from participation in future SSPH+ events or volunteer activities, contacting the violator's employer, filing a report with law enforcement, etc. if applicable.

For any question about this policy, or SSPH+'s incident investigation process, remedial actions or appeals process, please contact SSPH+ at info@ssphplus.ch.

Zurich, April 2025