

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEXAG STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS V.1

The inaugural Mercury Exploration Assessment Group (MExAG) Steering Committee (SC) developed (and approved) a Code of Conduct in their December meeting in 2020. The MExAG SC will regularly review and update this Code of Conduct and modify it according to the best community practices at the time of review. The latest review of this document took place in December 2020.

The MExAG SC members established this Code of Conduct to state their intent to promote a safe and more equitable work environment for all members of the community. The MExAG SC Code of Conduct outlines the minimum expected commitment and conduct of the SC members as they work together to support and advance the community's goals for the exploration of the innermost planet. This document outlines: (1) the standards to which we (the MExAG SC) will hold ourselves; (2) unacceptable behavior; (3) means to enforce this Code of Conduct; (4) instructions for filing an incident report; and (5) training and reference materials for meeting participants, organizers, staff, and volunteers on how to respond to incident reports.

1. Conduct Standards

As individual SC members and as the committee as a whole:

- We will refrain from discriminatory behavior.
- We will create mechanisms to implement and monitor conflict of interest policies.
- We will act on behalf of members of MExAG, rather than our personal agendas.
- We will make decisions based on the merits of the issues.
- We will treat MExAG SC colleagues and fellow MExAG members or collaborators as professionals—with respect and consideration, valuing a diversity of views and opinions.
- We will create a safe environment for respectful conversation, critiquing ideas rather than individuals, discussing any concerns in person whenever possible, and taking responsibility for our statements by speaking as much as possible in the first person (“I” statements) rather than in the third person.
- We will not engage in personal attacks nor inappropriate/negative body language directed toward other MExAG SC members, fellow MExAG members, partners, or collaborators.
- Although we may disagree with MExAG SC colleagues during meetings—and discuss personal views with members if asked—we will demonstrate a unified front and support the final decisions made by the SC.
- We will convey the general outcomes of SC discussions, but not the details of who said what during SC meetings, conference calls, or email discussions.
- We will not share confidential or proprietary information.

- We will read the SC agenda materials distributed in advance of SC meetings, come prepared to participate constructively, and refrain from conducting other professional or personal business during meetings.
- We will actively engage in MExAG and MExAG SC activities beyond meetings, equitably sharing the responsibilities of the SC in supporting its mission.
- We will make every effort to ensure that we are participating in SC conference calls/webinars in a private setting, to avoid distractions to the group.
- We will stay informed about current trends in the profession that could affect MExAG.
- We will serve as ambassadors of MExAG's core mission, policies, programs, and services.
- We will refrain from speaking as official spokespersons of NASA to the media, partners, or policymakers, unless we have been designated as such by NASA.
- When we represent MExAG on social media, we will act to promote the core mission of MExAG and adhere to the points of acceptable behavior outlined in this Code of Conduct and the MExAG SC Social Media Guidelines.
- Collectively, and as individuals, we will serve as role models, demonstrating the highest standards of ethical conduct. MExAG SC members will maintain a professional reputation in the community.
- We will ensure an equitable, inclusive, diverse, and accessible work environment within the MExAG SC, where possible through proactive actions such as, but not limited to, participating in professional training opportunities (e.g., unconscious bias training).

2. Unacceptable Behavior

Any of the following behavior is considered unacceptable:

- Discriminatory and disrespectful comments or speculative remarks related to race, national origin, ethnicity, age, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability/health, beliefs, religion, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other personal characteristics that make SC members unique;
- Dissemination of discriminating or inappropriate statements and images in online domains or presentations, whether they be public or for internal use;
- Inappropriate and non-consensual physical contact;
- Real or implied threats, stalking, intimidation, or physical or verbal abuse;
- Unprofessional behaviors that disrupt presentations during meetings;
- Taking pictures or making audio/video recordings of presentations at MExAG and MExAG SC meetings without prior permission from the presenter or convener.

3. Explanation of Enforcement

Standards and unacceptable behaviors outlined in this Code of Conduct will be enforced following these guidelines:

- Insensitive or inappropriate comments are often unintentional (e.g., use of out-of-date language). Such comments can often be addressed through education and helpful rephrasing suggestions. These suggestions are best made in response to the comments, or as soon as possible afterward if the venue is not appropriate. SC members commit to engage in such constructive behavior within SC meetings, as well as in the broader community, to maintain a safe and equitable environment.
- During SC meetings, SC members will do their utmost to resolve a situation as it occurs; however, the person leading the meeting is ultimately in charge (Chair/Vice-Chair of the SC, or designated proxy).
- If a SC member feels that another SC member or the SC as a whole is not acting in an inclusive, equitable, or accessible manner, that member should bring the matter to the attention of the Chair/Vice-Chair of the SC as soon as possible.
- If a member of the MExAG SC directly witnesses or is being made aware of unacceptable behavior by participants of MExAG-related events, the incident should be reported to the MExAG leadership.
- Any MExAG SC member who is requested to stop unacceptable behavior, is expected to comply immediately.
- The MExAG SC as a whole may take any action(s) deemed necessary and appropriate if a SC member violates this Code of Conduct, including but not limited to the immediate removal from the SC and prohibiting participation in any future MExAG SC activities.
- The MExAG SC reserves the right to maintain a record of individuals (SC members) that behaved inappropriately and prohibit their attendance at any future MExAG meeting or other MExAG event.

4. Incident reporting

If you witness harassment, discrimination, or insensitive or inappropriate comments as a bystander, it is important that you speak up and take as many of the following steps as possible:

1. If possible, and assuming it is safe to do so, call out the harassment or discrimination.
2. Let the victim know you have witnessed the behavior and that you are prepared to help e.g., through documenting and reporting the incident.
3. Keep records and notes detailing the incident (e.g., emails or written reports that contain evidences of discrimination, harassment, or insensitive or inappropriate behavior). Notes

should list the time and location of where the incident took place, who was present as a witness, and what was said or done.

4. Report the discriminatory or harassment incident to members, or the Chair/Vice-Chair, of the MExAG SC in writing, along with your records or notes from the reporting process.

If you experience harassment or discrimination, please consider the following steps to help protect yourself:

1. Keep records and notes detailing the discriminatory or harassment experience, whether as the subject or as a witness (e.g., emails or written reports that contain evidences of discrimination and harassment). Notes should list the time and location of where the incident took place, who was present as a witness, and what was said or done.
2. Report the discriminatory or harassment incident to members, or the Chair/Vice-Chair, of the MExAG SC in writing, along with records or notes from the reporting process.
3. Follow up with the MExAG SC for updates on actions by the MExAG SC in response to the complaint.
4. Reach out to friends and family, or seek help from a mental health professional, for support.

In case of insensitive or inappropriate comments directed toward you, consider the following options:

1. Seek clarification and offer a non-threatening option to correct the insensitive or inappropriate comments made by the person.
2. If you are in a situation in which it is reasonable to assume your physical safety is at risk, walk away and report the incident to the members, or Chair/Vice-Chair, of the MExAG SC.
3. In the event that the behavior occurs in a public setting (e.g., a professional meeting) and is witnessed by or brought to the attention of the MExAG SC, the Chair/Vice-Chair of the SC will report the behavior and incident to the meeting organizers.

In case of an emergency situation, if deemed appropriate, emergency services should be called (call 911 in the U.S.) or a local fire alarm should be activated. If you witness a crime or behavior that constitutes an immediate or serious threat to public safety, make sure you keep yourself safe while notifying the appropriate authorities. Follow the directions of facility security and public safety personnel. Initiate first aid based on need and your training. Provide as much specific information as possible (e.g., nature of incident, precise location, number of people involved) to 911 and emergency responders.

5. References for further information

Diniega S., Castillo-Rogez J., Daubar I., Filiberto J., Goudge T., Lynch K., Rutledge A., Rathbun J., Scully J., Smith R., Richey C., Udovicic C.T., and Villarreal M. (2020) Ensuring a safe and equitable workspace: The importance and feasibility of a Code of Conduct, along with clear policies regarding authorship and team membership. White Paper . LPI Contribution Number: LPI-002544.

Favaro et al.: Your Science Conference Should Have a Code of Conduct. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, V. 3. 103. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2016.00103>

Foxx et al.: Evaluating the prevalence and quality of conference codes of conduct. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, V. 116 (30) 14931-14936. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1819409116>