

Anti-Harassment Guidelines of the LIGO Scientific Collaboration

The LIGO Scientific Collaboration (LSC) does not tolerate harassment of any form between its members and is committed to ensuring a working environment free from harassment. It is the responsibility of every LSC member to prevent harassment from taking place and to give assistance to fellow LSC members who perceive that they have been subject to harassment.

Scope of this document

The purpose of this document is to reaffirm that the LSC firmly repudiates, and does not tolerate, any form of harassment, sexual or otherwise among its members. The scope of this document is also to extend the LSC policy for Formal Complaints (LIGO Document [M1300005](#)) to matters of sexual harassment and offer some guidance and advice to LSC members who perceive that they have been subject to (or who have witnessed) harassment by fellow LSC members during the performance of LSC activities including at LSC conferences or events.

Definition of harassment

For the purposes of this document, the LSC adopts the definition of *sexual harassment* and *other harassment* of the *Anti-Harassment Policy for Meetings and Activities of the American Astronomical Society and Divisions* (<http://aas.org/policies/anti-harassment-policy>).

Sexual harassment

“Sexual harassment refers to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Behavior and language that are welcome/ acceptable to one person may be unwelcome/offensive to another. Consequently, individuals must use discretion to ensure that their words and actions communicate respect for others. This is especially important for those in positions of authority since individuals with lower rank or status may be reluctant to express their objections or discomfort regarding unwelcome behavior.

Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature. It refers to behavior that is not welcome, is personally offensive, debilitates morale, and therefore, interferes with work effectiveness. The following are examples of behavior that, when unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment: sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions; verbal comments or physical actions of a sexual nature; sexually degrading words used to describe an individual; a display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; sexually explicit jokes; unnecessary touching.”

Other harassment

“Harassment on the basis of any other protected characteristic is also strictly prohibited. This conduct includes, but is not limited to: epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; demeaning jokes and display or circulation of written or graphic material that demeans or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group.”

Code of conduct

LSC members asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately. Harassment may constitute a willful and/or egregious violation of LSC rules. If an LSC member engages in behavior that meets the above definition of harassment, the LSC leadership may take any action they deem appropriate, ranging from warning the offender to initiating a procedure of expulsion from the LSC.

If you perceive you have been the subject of harassment...

This section offers some advice and guidance to an LSC member in the unfortunate case harassment has occurred. The following suggestions are not in order of importance or priority. Remember that every situation is different and the steps you follow should be adjusted to meet your situation and level of comfort. Safety is the first priority. If you feel endangered, act immediately to leave the situation, attract attention, or seek help. **Depending on the nature and severity of the incident, the LSC member may want to report it immediately to appropriate law enforcement agencies and/or to the relevant office of his/her institution.** The LSC leadership will act to ensure that there are no negative consequences for LSC members reporting an incident. On the contrary, LSC members are strongly encouraged to report instances of harassment. In addition, retaliation for such reports will not be tolerated.

If you perceive yourself to have been the subject of harassment in the performance of LSC activities, you should consider doing some or all of the following:

1. Consult the Ombudsperson for confidential and informal advice. The Ombudsperson will assist the LSC member at any time in identifying and evaluating options for resolving and managing the incident and make referrals to other appropriate academic and community resources. Confidentiality will be honored unless you explicit request an action that requires otherwise (see Ombudsperson role and functions at [LIGO-M1300006](#)).
2. If possible, and you feel comfortable, inform the perpetrator that his/her behavior is unwelcome. Explain what is bothering you, identify the behavior as harassment, and state that you want that behavior to stop. If you are uncomfortable talking to the harasser face-to-face, you may write a brief note or email. Be sure to keep a copy. However, you

are not required or expected to confront your harasser prior to reporting an harassment-related incident and are welcome to consult the ombudsperson for advice on this step. Confront your harasser only if you feel comfortable doing so!

3. If you want to initiate a formal complaint or request actions to be taken by the LSC Leadership, inform the LSC Spokesperson. After consulting with the Directorate and the Chair of the Diversity Committee, the LSC Spokesperson may, at her/his sole discretion, contact affected parties and, in instances of unresolved or serious conflicts, institutional resources of the accused party for a formal investigation. Any further action by the LSC Leadership following the conclusion of the formal investigation by these institutional resources will conform to Section 12.3 or 12.4 of the LSC policy for Formal Complaints (LIGO Document [M1300005](#)), whichever applies.
4. Talk to your advisor, the Human Resource Department, Ombudsperson, Counseling Office or equivalent entity at your home institution.
5. If appropriate, consider reporting the incident to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and/or the fair employment agency in your jurisdiction, or equivalent authorities. In the United States, if you plan to file a lawsuit against a co-worker, you must first file a sexual harassment complaint with these entities.
6. Report the incident to the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

If you witness a case of harassment...

This section offers some advice and guidance to an LSC member witnessing an instance of harassment. As in the previous section, the following suggestions should be adjusted to meet each particular situation.

If you witness a colleague being subjected to harassment during the performance of LSC activities, you should:

1. If you believe that someone's safety is in jeopardy, immediately contact local law enforcement. When reporting the incident, provide as much information as is available, such as the name of the harasser, the nature and approximate time of the incident, the circumstances surrounding the incident, and the names of other people involved in the incident.
2. Report the harassment incident to the Ombudsperson. The Ombudsperson will inform the LSC Spokesperson unless you request otherwise. All reports to the Ombudsperson are confidential and no information will be released but to the LSC Spokesperson without your previous consent. Please do not disclose information about the incident publicly until the Ombudsperson has had sufficient time to address the situation.

Other relevant LSC documents

LSC Diversity Statement

The LSC “Diversity Statement” (LIGO Document [M1300484](#)) recognizes the Collaboration's commitment to inclusiveness and improvement of gender and cultural diversity among its members.

LSC Ombudsperson rules and function

The role and function of the LSC Ombudsperson are described in LIGO Document [M1300006](#). The LSC Ombudsperson provides confidential, informal, independent, and neutral dispute resolution advisory services for all members of the LIGO Scientific Collaboration.

LSC policy for formal complaints

LIGO Document [M1300005](#) describes the LSC policy for formally addressing interpersonal concerns or problems that may arise when a LSC member perceives that, in the performance of LSC activities, an unfair act has occurred which leads to an injustice or harm. This policy defines a “grievance” as any difference arising between two LSC members as peers or in the LSC organization hierarchy while performing activities in support of the LSC mission in the form of presence at the Observatories for commissioning and observation, outreach, service work, and technical and/or analysis contributions. The “grievance” procedure applies only when other formal processes do not exist. It does not take the place of LSC institutions' grievance procedures nor is it intended to replace reporting to appropriate law enforcement agencies. In particular, it does not apply in cases of discrimination in matters of employment or matters of sexual harassment.

LSC Best Practices

Best practices for the LSC are described in LIGO Document [LIGO-M1300501](#). This document includes a set of recommendations to help LSC membership and leadership fulfill the principles of the LSC diversity statement.

Useful Resources

- *Know Your Rights: Workplace Sexual Harassment*, The American Association of University Women (AAUW),
<http://www.aauw.org/what-we-do/legal-resources/know-your-rights-at-work/workplace-sexual-harassment/>
- *United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*, <http://www.eeoc.gov/>
- *Facts on Sexual Harassment*, EEOC, <http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/publications/fs-sex.cfm>
- *Sexual Harassment*, RAINN,
<https://rainn.org/get-information/types-of-sexual-assault/sexual-harassment>
- *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*, National Women's Law Center,
<http://www.nwlc.org/our-issues/employment/sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace>
- *Anti-Harassment Policy for Meetings and Activities of the American Astronomical Society and Divisions*, <http://aas.org/policies/anti-harassment-policy>
- *Northwestern University Sexual Harassment Prevention Office*,
<http://www.northwestern.edu/sexual-harassment/resources/index.html>,
<http://www.northwestern.edu/sexual-harassment/faq/>
- *Stanford Sexual Harassment Policy Office*,
<https://harass.stanford.edu/be-informed/sexual-harassment-myths>

Further Reading

- *Campus Sexual Assault: Suggested Policies and Procedures of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)*,
<http://www.aaup.org/report/campus-sexual-assault-suggested-policies-and-procedures>
- *Create a Sexual Harassment Policy for Your Conference*, Professional Convention Management Association,
<http://www.pcma.org/connect-and-grow/chapters/greater-midwest/chapter-news/2013/08/29/create-a-sexual-harassment-policy-for-your-conference#.U5QEANq9KSN>
- *Conference anti-harassment/Policy resources*, Geek Feminism Wiki,
http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Conference_anti-harassment/Policy
- *Reporting Harassment at a Convention: A First-Person How To*,
<http://whatever.scalzi.com/2013/06/28/reporting-harassment-at-a-convention-a-first-person-how-to/>
- *Conference anti-harassment campaigns do work: Three existence proofs from SF&F, atheism/skepticism, and open source*,
<http://finallyfeminism101.wordpress.com/2013/08/28/conference-anti-harassment-campaigns-do-work-three-existence-proofs-from-sff-atheismskepticism-and-open-source/>