

Department of Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences Code of Conduct

Members of the Department of Earth, Environmental, and Planetary Sciences (EEPS) are required to follow the University's general [Code of Conduct](#) as well as University statements on [Campus Climate](#) and [Free Speech](#) that affirm the dignity of all members of the University community. EEPS recognizes that the University Code is broad and lacks examples that address unique situations that may arise within our departmental and scientific community. Therefore, EEPS offers this code of conduct to provide behavioral guidance in our contexts. EEPS is committed to fostering a professional, respectful, and inclusive environment for all its members, including students, faculty, staff, and visitors. By upholding these principles and practices, we aim to create a supportive and equitable atmosphere that promotes excellence, integrity, and collaboration in all our endeavors.

Expectations & Scope

EEPS faculty, staff and student members and their invited guests and named affiliates are expected to:

- Conduct themselves lawfully by upholding University rules, and
- Foster a safe, respectful, inclusive, and diverse environment.
- **These expectations apply in all settings in which EEPS community members and their affiliates represent the University and EEPS on and off campus**, including, but not limited to, in the office, classroom, and laboratory; while leading field trips and conducting fieldwork; and at professional meetings.

Fundamental Principles

- Excellence, Integrity, and Honesty: Maintain high standards and perform duties in good faith.
- Civility, Fairness, and Inclusion: Treat others with respect, act without prejudice, and do not intentionally cause harm.
- Cooperation: Participate unselfishly in departmental activities.
- Legal Compliance: Adhere to all legal and University policies.

Specific Responsibilities

- Professional Conduct: Act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others in all aspects of daily work, teaching, learning, and research pursuits.
- Research Integrity: Adhere to the relevant ethical standards provided by scientific societies (AGU, GSA, PS, etc.) to ensure the trustworthiness of research by following best practices in the documentation & communication of original data and research products.
- Public Communication: Limit professional comments to areas of expertise when representing UT and EEPS.
- Community Interaction: Maintain a safe, inclusive, and professional environment.
- Cooperation: Share responsibilities fairly.
- Awareness of Power Imbalances: Be sensitive to dynamics in professional and mentoring relationships and do not abuse the power differential, no matter the context: lab, class, office, or field.
- Diversity and Inclusion: To the extent possible, ensure diverse representation in department decision-making and community activities.
- Misconduct: Avoid and report discrimination, harassment, or other forms of misconduct.

Reporting & Support Options

Report misconduct through the following channels:

- [EEPS Department Head or Associate Head](#)
- [Campus Climate Reporting Form \(Dean of Students\)](#)
- [UTK Office of Investigation and Resolution \(OIR\)](#)
- [UTK Office of Title IX \(OTIX\)](#)
- [All-in-One reporting form when jurisdiction is unclear or may involve multiple offices](#)
- [Law enforcement \(UT Police or Knoxville Police Department\)](#)

Confidential support services that may be able to provide guidance:

- [Office of Ombuds Services \(OOS\)](#)
- [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)
- [Student Counseling Center](#)

- [Student Health Center](#)
- [UT Psychological Clinic](#)

Non-confidential support services:

- [Student Disability Services](#)
- [Pride Center](#)

Examples of Unacceptable Behaviors

EEPS works to maintain an environment that allows science and scientific careers to flourish through the respectful, inclusive, and equitable treatment of others. As outlined above, members of EEPS will not discriminate based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, religion or religious belief, age, marital or parental status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic background, disability, veteran status, or any other reason. Additionally, the department opposes all forms of bullying including threatening, humiliating, coercive, or intimidating conduct that causes harm to, interferes with, or sabotages academic activity and careers.

The following behaviors by EEPS members or affiliates, whether they occur in the lab, office, conference, or field setting, are considered violations of the EEPS Code of Conduct and should be addressed, reported and investigated, with consequences if an offense is found to have occurred. Unacceptable behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexual Harassment, such as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, and offensive comments related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical appearance, race/ethnicity, or body size.
- Sexual Misconduct, including rape, sexual assault, inappropriate touching, sexual battery, sexual exploitation, coercion, and other forms of non-consensual sexual activity.
- Dating and Domestic Violence, including emotional, verbal, and economic abuse with or without the presence of physical abuse.
- Violating the Ask Once guideline, which means you can ask out someone from your EEPS peer group once, and if they do not say yes, you do not ask them out again until that person explicitly expresses a change in mind to you. This includes indirectly “hitting on,” expressing interest, or making advances. If the indirect advance is not reciprocated, it is considered a “no.”
- Stalking, such as repeatedly following, harassing, threatening, or intimidating including by telephone, mail, electronic communication, or social media.
- Patterns of inappropriate social behavior, such as unwanted or unwarranted physical contact.
- Persistent patterns of microaggression.
- Power- or authority-based control or intimidation of another person.
- Deliberately mischaracterizing a person’s gender identity.
- Scientific misconduct, including fabrication of data, falsification of results, plagiarism, concealment of scientific misconduct of others, making false allegations, unethical treatment of people participating in a scientific program, misuse of scientific funding, and misusing scientific credentials.
- Retaliation, such as withholding employment or academic opportunities or other actions against anyone reporting a violation of this policy.

Violating the EEPS Code of Conduct

If an EEPS member or affiliate is found to have violated the Code of Conduct through information delivered through any of the channels described above, the EEPS Department will follow up with and participate in the University procedures summarized below:

Review Process: At UT, OIR will collaborate with other campus units (e.g., OTIX, Student Conduct & Community Standards (SCCS)) to investigate the complaint. OIR will consider all relevant University policies and may proceed with or without notice to the Complainant. OIR will consider the following prior to closing or referring the case:

- Any risk of additional or ongoing violations of university policy;
- Any indication of a pattern or history of noncompliance with university policy;
- Any threat of further noncompliance with university policy;
- The nature and scope of the alleged violation(s) of university policy;

- Any indication of a health and/or safety risk to a Complainant or other campus community member (e.g., staff, student, faculty member, affiliate);
- Whether OIR can pursue an Investigation without the participation of the Complainant (e.g., whether there are other available means of obtaining relevant evidence);
- Whether the allegations indicate a continuing effect on the university's education programs, activities, and/or employment settings if not addressed; and/or
- The university's commitment to fostering a safe and non-discriminatory campus environment.

Guidance would follow depending on the outcome of the investigation(s).

Outcomes for Faculty and Staff: Reports of faculty and staff misconduct are referred to OIR for review: <https://oir.utk.edu/process-overview/>. If it is determined that a form of misconduct has occurred through investigation by OIR or other organization on campus, disciplinary actions relating to violations of a Covered Policy are determined by the appropriate administrator (i.e., vice chancellor, dean, or supervisor). Disciplinary actions will be implemented in accordance with relevant university rules, policies, or procedures detailed in the Faculty Handbook and HR 0525 documents. Such action can include, but is not limited to, an oral or written warning, change in state (e.g., reassignment, demotion), suspension, counseling, monetary loss (e.g., denial of raise), and termination of employment. Involvement by the Department in this process may occur through follow-up meetings between the Department Head and the individual(s), and/or written documentation of the report in a person's personnel file, and/or ensuring that required training (e.g., bias) is completed. Retaliation is prohibited in any UTK investigation.

Outcomes for Students: If it is determined that a form of misconduct has occurred through investigation, then SCCS handles the process and consequences for students, as well as sanctions and potential disciplinary actions for students: <https://studentlife.utk.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct-process/>. The accused have the right to be assisted by an advisor in hearings. Types of sanctions could include, but are not limited to warning, disciplinary probation, deferred suspension, suspension, expulsion, withholding of degree and/or educational activities restitution, and related actions. In the case of student misconduct, EEPS's goal is to turn the incident(s) into a "teachable" or "learning" opportunity by first directly and immediately addressing the issue via the above channels, and then formulating a long-term response that leads to personal growth for those involved. Retaliation is prohibited. For a full sanction listing and explanations, see <https://studentlife.utk.edu/studentconduct/sanctions/>.

Outcomes for Affiliates: Relevant departmental leadership (e.g., Non-Tenure-Track Faculty (NTTF) Committee, dissertation committee, lab director and manager, seminar coordinator and Head) will form a team and meet to consider the alleged misconduct if the individual does not fall under the purview of University policies and Human Resources. This team will determine the nature of the departmental response, which may include disaffiliation. The team and department head may provide recommendations for that individual to seek further education or training prior to re-affiliating.

Definitions

Affiliate means any person working in direct association with EEPS, whether on a short term (e.g., seminar, workshop, or field trip leader or participant) or longer-term basis (e.g., adjuncts, dissertation/thesis committee members) who may not specifically be bound by the UT Code of Conduct.

Bullying is the use of force, threat, or coercion to abuse, intimidate, or aggressively dominate others in the professional environment that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

Discrimination means unequal or unfair treatment in professional opportunities, education, benefits, evaluation, and employment (such as hiring, termination, promotion, compensation) as well as retaliation and various types of harassment. Discriminatory practices can be explicit or implicit, intentional, or unconscious.

Diversity means all kinds of differences among people.

Equity means that everyone is supplied with the resources and opportunities to achieve outcomes equivalent to their peers who do have access to those resources, or the absence of avoidable differences among groups of people.

Harassment is a type of discrimination that consists of a single intense and severe act, or of multiple persistent or pervasive acts, which are unwanted, unwelcome, demeaning, abusive, or offensive.

Inclusion means making sure everyone feels welcome, valued, and respected.

Microaggression refers to verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities that intentionally or unintentionally communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights or insults toward any group.

Sexual harassment includes any unwanted and/or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.

Title IX Violation is the collective term used for incidents involving discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, and/or retaliation.