

2020 Annual Ethics Report

Reporting Period: January 1 to December 31, 2020

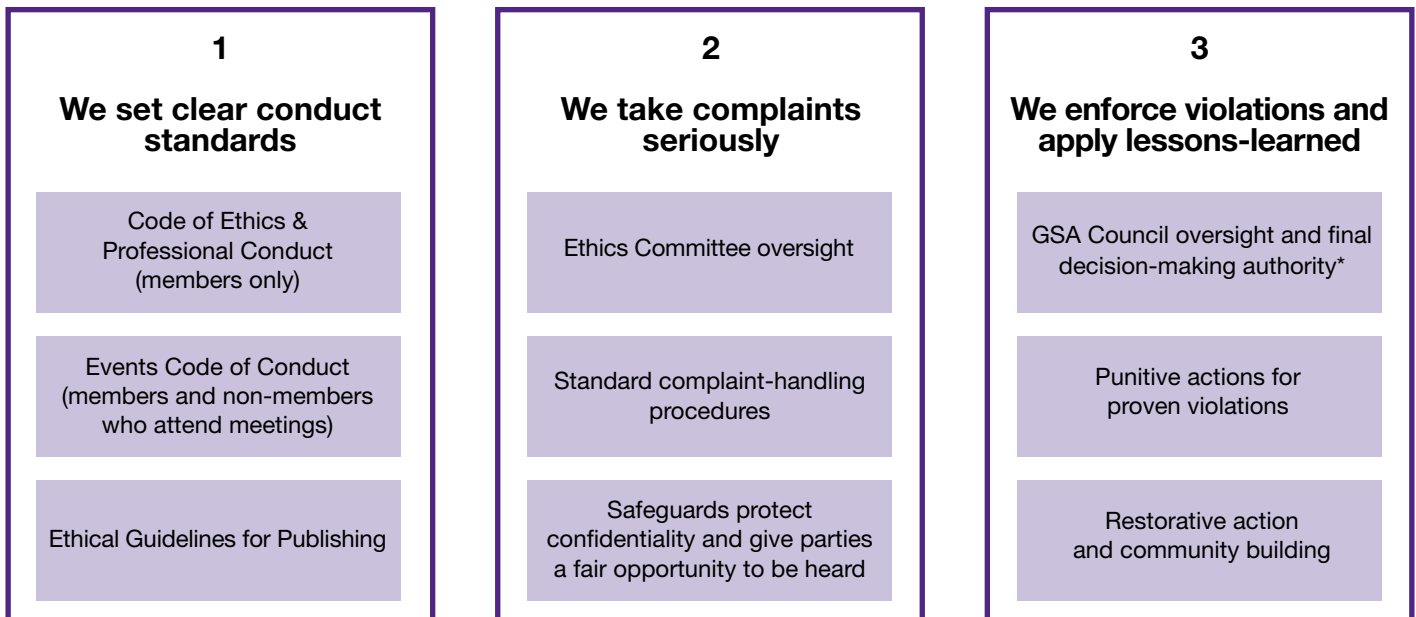
The Geological Society of America (GSA) strives to promote excellence and integrity in the geosciences; we have implemented several strategies to foster ethical, respectful, and inclusive conduct by our members and editors in carrying out their professional activities and by those who participate in GSA-sponsored events. GSA is pleased to offer this Ethics Report to share information about our progress.

Part A provides an overview of the framework GSA has created to infuse high ethical standards into our operations and offerings, including enforceable conduct policies and complaint-handling procedures. Part B highlights information about the ethics complaints and concerns that have been brought to our attention since 2017, when GSA first started tracking such matters.

A. GSA'S ETHICS FRAMEWORK

GSA uses a robust framework, summarized in the diagram below, to bolster a culture of ethics across the geosciences. Through our ethics program, GSA sets clear conduct standards to guide our leaders, members, and program participants to act with integrity, professionalism, and respect in all of their professional activities. These policies make it clear that GSA takes alleged violations seriously and uses a fair process to hold individuals accountable for engaging in dishonest, unethical, and exclusionary behaviors – including bullying and all forms of discrimination and harassment – that undermine full participation and excellence in the earth sciences profession. Where possible, we pursue restorative action and actively seek ways to learn ways to strengthen our community culture.

Please visit GSA's [Ethics Homepage](#) for additional details about GSA's commitment to ethics, including links to specific policies and procedures.



*The GSA Council oversees the ethics program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness. In addition to approving all conduct standards and related procedures, the GSA Council meets twice a year to review information about ethics program initiatives and anonymized cases. The GSA Council also meets in executive session to decide cases under the Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct ("Member Code of Ethics"). The Society's Ethics Committee investigates complaints under the Member Code of Ethics and presents its findings of fact to the GSA Council without revealing the identities of the parties involved. The GSA Council, in turn, has the sole discretion and authority to determine whether there has been a violation and, if so, what disciplinary, restorative, or corrective action may be appropriate.

B. ETHICS COMPLAINTS & CONCERNS

At GSA, we believe that it is important to be as transparent as possible about our ethics complaints and concerns so that our Members, program participants, and others in the geoscience community have a way to monitor our progress and gauge how our policies work in practice. For confidentiality reasons, GSA does not identify individuals involved in specific incidents, but we do share general information about the types of cases we are seeing and how we have resolved them. In doing so, we hope to demonstrate that GSA is serious about our commitment to ethics, that it is safe for individuals with concerns to come forward, and that individuals found to have violated our policies will be held accountable.

Between 2017 and 2019, GSA began tracking information about ethics complaints and concerns raised under its 3 main ethics policies:

- Events Code of Conduct (launched in 2016),
- Ethical Guidelines for Publishing (launched in 2003), and
- Member Code of Ethics (launched in 2019).

Number, Types, and Location of Ethics Complaints and Concerns

The charts below highlight some of the trends we have seen so far.

Chart 1 shows the number of ethics complaints and concerns filed by year under each policy. There are no Member Code of Ethics cases prior to 2019 because that is the year Council approved that policy.

Chart 1: Number of Complaints/Concerns By Policy

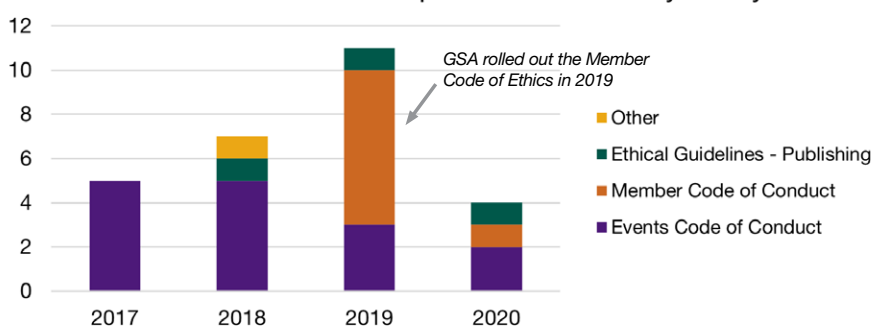


Chart 2 shows the main types of issues that have been reported to GSA since 2017. Gender discrimination/harassment is the most common, followed by microaggressions, and research misconduct.

Chart 2: Complaints/Concerns by Issue Type

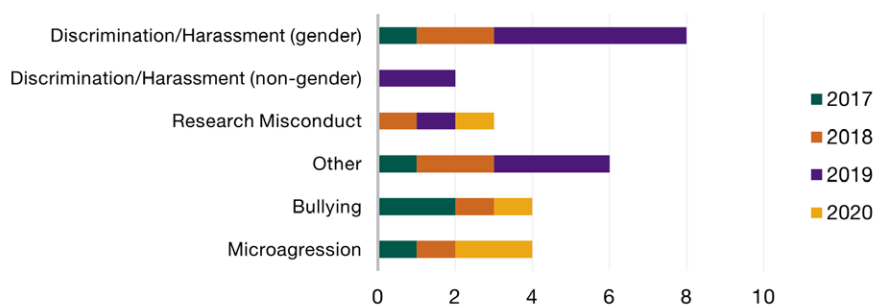
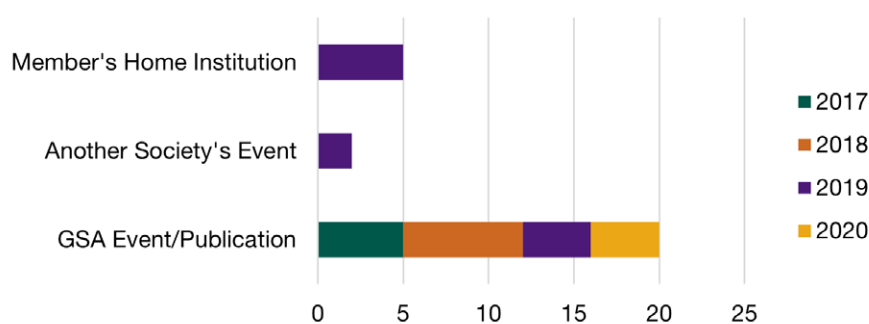


Chart 3 shows where the alleged misconduct occurred. For the first time in 2019, GSA received several complaints related to our Members' conduct at other societies' events and at their home institutions. These claims are permitted under GSA's Member Code of Ethics (launched in 2019), which applies to our Members' professional conduct regardless of location.

Chart 3: Complaints and Concerns by Location



Ethics Complaints* – Type, Case Status, and Outcomes

*The main difference between complaints and concerns is their specificity. Concerns tend to be more general, while complaints include detailed factual allegations that GSA investigates to determine whether there have been any policy violations.

Chart 4: Complaints by Issue Type (2017 to 2020)

Since 2017, GSA received 15 complaints, all of which were investigated in accordance with our policies. As illustrated in **chart 4**, gender-based discrimination/harassment is the most common followed by research misconduct.

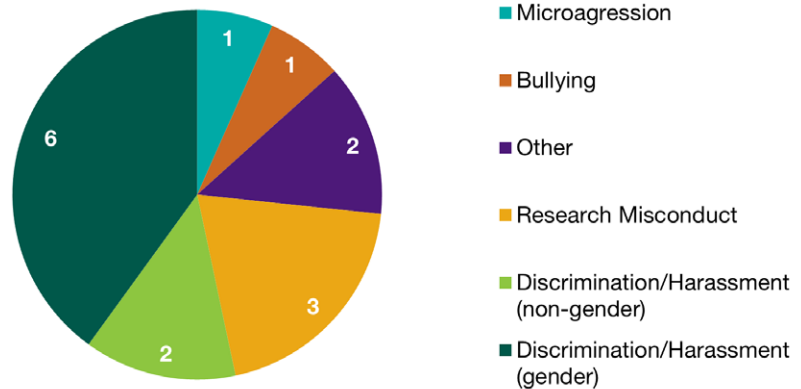
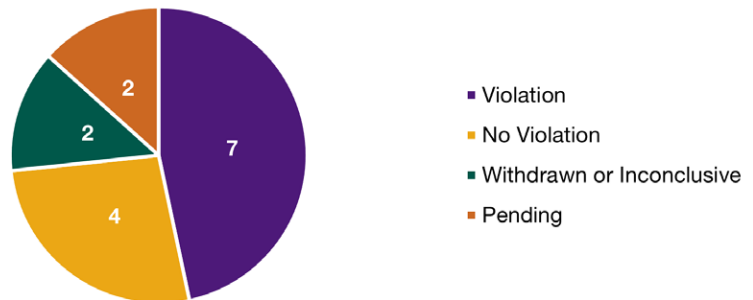


Chart 5: Complaint Outcomes (2017 to 2020)

Chart 5 shows the outcome of the 15 complaints filed with GSA. GSA found seven violations. Of the remaining eight cases, two are still pending, two were withdrawn by the Complainants, and four were dismissed because there was insufficient proof to support a violation.



GSA imposed disciplinary action in each of the seven cases where we found violations. As shown in **chart 6**, the most common discipline has been banning offenders from GSA events followed by terminating their status as GSA Members and/or Fellows. Even though GSA has found only seven violations, chart 6 shows more than six instances of discipline because some offenders received more than one type of discipline.

Chart 6: Disciplinary Action (2017 to 2020)



We encourage you to visit GSA's [Ethics Homepage](#) for more information about our ethics initiatives. Please direct any questions, comments, or feedback to ethics@geosociety.org.