

Draft – Code of Ethics – July 10, 2019

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Take Personal Responsibility	4
III.	Promote a Culture of Scientific and Research Integrity	5
IV.	Promote a Culture of Respect, Fairness, and Inclusivity	7
V.	Make Honest, Unbiased Decisions—Disclose and Act Appropriately to Prevent Conflicts of Interest	9
VI.	Uphold High Ethical Standards in Publishing	10
VII.	Enforcing the Code of Ethics/Filing Complaints	10
	a. Handling Alleged Code of Ethics Violations	
	b. Disciplinary Action	
VIII.	Appendix	13

I. Introduction

The Geological Society of America (“GSA” or the “Society”) serves the geoscience profession and the public in many ways, such as organizing scientific meetings and conferences, publishing scientific journals and books, disbursing research grants, bestowing medals and awards, supporting geoscience teachers, enabling students from diverse backgrounds to seek and maintain careers in the geosciences, and fostering public awareness of geoscience issues. Our vision is to be the premier geological society supporting the global community in scientific discovery, communication, and the application of geoscience knowledge. To achieve this vision, it is imperative that we, as GSA Members, and non-members who seek to publish in GSA journals or books, attend GSA events, or who might expect to be considered for a GSA award (see Scope section, below), adhere to the highest ethical standards in all of our professional activities.

We have adopted this Code of Ethics to foster a culture of integrity and excellence through our work as a Society and across the geoscience profession. The Code of Ethics is designed to guide our Members by including minimum standards of ethical professional behavior, descriptions and examples of expected and prohibited conduct, and details on the process to be used in addressing and enforcing potential violations.

Under GSA’s bylaws, all Members must comply with this Code of Ethics as a condition of joining and continuing their GSA Membership. As such, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the Code of Ethics and also to recognize that it does not cover every ethical or legal expectation regarding your professional conduct and your work. It is your responsibility to

know about and follow the institutional and government standards that apply to your professional activities.

We also want to underscore the importance of making ethical decisions in service to the sciences, humankind, and our natural resources. GSA is a signatory to the following ethical professional guidelines published by the American Geosciences Institute (AGI). We fully support AGI's guidelines and expect you as GSA Members to take the following principles to heart in carrying out your professional activities.

“In day-to-day activities geoscientists should:

- Be honest.
- Act responsibly and with integrity, acknowledge limitations to knowledge and understanding, and be accountable for their errors.
- Present professional work and reports without falsification or fabrication of data, misleading statements, or omission of relevant facts.
- Distinguish facts and observations from interpretations.
- Accurately cite authorship, acknowledge the contributions of others, and not plagiarize.
- Disclose and act appropriately on real or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Continue professional development and growth.
- Encourage and assist in the development of a safe, diverse, and inclusive workforce.
- Treat colleagues, students, employees, and the public with respect.
- Keep privileged information confidential, except when doing so constitutes a threat to public health, safety, or welfare.

As members of a professional and scientific community, geoscientists should:

- Promote greater understanding of the geosciences by other technical groups, students, the general public, news media, and policy makers through effective communication and education.
- Conduct their work recognizing the complexities and uncertainties of the Earth system.
- Sample responsibly so that materials and sites are preserved for future study.
- Document and archive data and data products using best practices in data management, and share data promptly for use by the geoscience community.
- Use their technical knowledge and skills to protect public health, safety, and welfare, and enhance the sustainability of society.
- Responsibly inform the public about natural resources, hazards, and other geoscience phenomena with clarity and accuracy.
- Support responsible stewardship through an improved understanding and interpretation of the Earth, and by communicating known and potential impacts of human activities and natural processes.”

Source: [AGI Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct](#)

Using Our Code of Ethics

As the umbrella policy for ethics at GSA, this Code of Ethics is supported by more detailed policies referred to below. Make sure you understand and comply with the policies that apply to you. If you are reading this Code of Ethics online, click on the applicable hyperlinks to access these supporting policies. If you are reading a printed version, these policies are available on GSA's website. Go to the "About" tab and click on "Ethics."

- [Conflicts of Interest Policy](#)
- [Ethical Guidelines for Publication](#)
- [Events Code of Conduct](#)
- [Policy & Procedures For Handling Potential Ethical Violations](#)
- [Whistleblower Policy](#)

Scope

This Code of Ethics applies to GSA Members, who, pursuant to the GSA bylaws, are categorized as Honorary Fellows, Fellows, Members, or Affiliates (herein, each a "Member" and collectively, the "Members").

Each of the policies identified above may apply to individuals in different roles as set forth in each such policy. For example, some policies apply to employees, non-GSA Members, and/or GSA leaders in specific roles. Please refer to each of the above policies to see which groups are covered by them. In case of a conflict with this Code of Ethics, the applicable rules in each policy will govern.

Some sections of this Code of Ethics list examples of prohibited conduct. For the purpose of this Code of Ethics, GSA considers any such behaviors to be a violation of this Code of Ethics regardless of where the conduct takes place, including, but not limited to, academic buildings, laboratories, field or research sites, governmental labs and institutions, industry facilities, and/or professional meetings (GSA or other).

Consequences of Non-Compliance

Because GSA is committed to ensuring high ethical standards, if you are found to have violated the Code of Ethics, you may be subject to disciplinary or remedial action as deemed appropriate by the GSA Council, the final arbiter of ethics violations pertaining to GSA Members. Please refer to Section VII of this Code of Ethics and GSA's Policy & Procedures for Handling Potential Ethical Violations for additional information on the rules and procedures that govern alleged violations of this Code of Ethics.

Questions and Concerns

At GSA, we value open, honest communication, and we strive for a culture in which each of us feels comfortable asking questions and raising concerns without fear of retaliation. If you have questions or concerns about ethics or compliance matters, please send us an email at ethics@geosociety.org.

II. Take Personal Responsibility

GSA provides opportunities that are essential to the professional growth of earth scientists at all levels of expertise and from all employment sectors. As a GSA Member, you have a personal responsibility to act with professionalism and integrity—regardless of your career level or job title. This means doing the right things to create an organization and culture of inclusivity, equity, safety, and respect where all Members have an equal opportunity to participate, contribute, and be appropriately credited.

A. GSA Member Responsibilities

- Read and understand the Code of Ethics and related policies that apply to you.
- Understand that the Code of Ethics does not explicitly outline every potential circumstance and violation. GSA expects you to comply with both the letter and the *spirit* of the Code of Ethics.
- Ask for assistance if you have questions or need guidance about GSA's expectations by sending an email to ethics@geosociety.org.
- If it is safe for you to do so, speak up when you see a possible violation of the Code of Ethics or related policies. If it is not possible for you to speak up in that moment, report your concerns to GSA. For details on the rules GSA uses for processing possible violations, including how to file a complaint, see [GSA's Policy & Procedures for Handling Potential Ethical Violations](#) or contact GSA at ethics@geosociety.org.
- Cooperate fully if you're asked to take part in an investigation.
- Do not represent yourself as a spokesperson for the Society without express authorization by the President of GSA.

B. Additional Responsibilities for GSA Leadership at All Levels

If you are a GSA leader, such as a Councilor, officer, committee member, Section leader, and/or Division leader, you have a heightened responsibility to lead with integrity in all your professional activities. We expect you to exemplify the Code of Ethics and promote an ethical culture by:

- Providing a professional, ethical tone through your words and actions;
- Weaving relevant Code of Ethics topics into GSA events and meetings;
- Living up to your fiduciary responsibilities as a GSA leader;
- Taking appropriate steps to safeguard the confidentiality of our Members' personal information; and

- Setting an example of professional and ethical behavior to help create a safe, respectful, and inclusive culture.

III. Promote a Culture of Scientific and Research Integrity

GSA is committed to promoting a culture of scientific and research integrity across the geosciences. To earn the public's trust and maintain confidence in the geosciences as a profession, it is imperative that you live up to the highest ethical standards in performing scientific research and reporting on results. Only in this way will we propel the geoscience research into the future. Being a Member of GSA means you have also committed to carry out your work in an honest, objective, competent, dependable, honorable, respectful, and fair manner.

A. What We Expect

In addition to the principles outlined above, we expect you to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Maintain and demonstrate the highest standards of intellectual and personal honesty in providing expert guidance and/or expressing opinions. Be honest and bias-free in reporting findings, resource potential, and modeling results.
- Assume responsibility and be accountable for your own actions and contributions as a researcher. Although honest mistakes may be an inevitable part of the scientific process, and it is not unethical to make mistakes or be wrong, you have an ethical duty to take action if you recognize an error in your work. Specifically, it is your responsibility to readily acknowledge and correct mistakes.
- Follow accepted practices in all phases of your research, including, but not limited to, formulating, planning, executing, collecting and recording data, analyzing and interpreting data, and publishing scientific investigations. To the extent possible, research should be replicable and reproducible. Research records should be clear and transparent such that results may be verified in independent studies.
- Comply with all applicable laws and requirements in your research in the laboratory and in the field. If you become aware of noncompliant research practices, report pertinent details to the appropriate authorities. Reporting such violations is particularly important for incidents that may threaten the safety of individuals, society, and/or the environment.
- Treat colleagues, clients, students, subordinates, and the public with respect, courtesy, and cultural sensitivity. Give full and proper credit to the creativity, ideas, contributions, and work performed by colleagues, subordinates, and students. Cooperate with other

researchers whenever possible and appropriate to ensure rapid interchange and dissemination of knowledge in the geosciences.

- Train and mentor future geoscientists, where appropriate, recognizing their importance to the future of the geoscience profession. At a minimum, this requires establishing mutual responsibilities; clearly defining expectations; providing engaged supervision and feedback; assisting in the professional development of the trainee; and maintaining a safe, supportive, and productive work environment.
- Take appropriate steps to ensure safety in the laboratory, field, and other professional settings. This includes creating a safe physical environment where research is done (e.g., while traveling, on a field trip, while operating machinery, while using chemicals or radioactive materials). It also includes providing a safe social environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying as detailed elsewhere in this Code of Ethics.
- Seek to advance all disciplines of the geosciences, understand the limitations of your knowledge, and respect objectivity and truth in your professional endeavors. You should ensure that your scientific contributions, and those of your collaborators, are thorough, accurate, and unbiased in design, implementation, and presentation. In conducting research, you have a responsibility to address the complexity of the Earth and planetary system, and to honestly report inherent uncertainties in your research results.
- Responsibly conduct sampling activities in your research. Preservation of Earth's geoh heritage is important for future generations, including sites that have scientific, educational, cultural, economic, and aesthetic significance.
- Understand and anticipate the consequences of your work on the environment and natural resources. Strive to communicate your knowledge to protect the environment and to provide appropriate stewardship of natural resources. Public comments on scientific matters must be made with care and precision, without unsubstantiated, exaggerated, or premature statements.

B. Examples of Prohibited Behavior

This section provides *examples* of prohibited behavior, but does not constitute an exhaustive list.

- ***GSA prohibits scientific and research misconduct.*** The future of our profession depends on having geoscientists make ethical decisions in designing investigations, presenting results, and interacting with colleagues. Scientific and research misconduct undermines progress in the geosciences and erodes the public's trust. While we recognize that honest mistakes and differences of opinion arise in the course of our work, research misconduct is strictly prohibited. For the purpose of this Code of Ethics, GSA has

adopted the following definitions of “research misconduct” as set forth in U.S. federal regulations (45 CFR 93.103):

- Fabrication—“making up data or results and recording or reporting them.”
- Falsification—“manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.”
- Plagiarism—“appropriating another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.” GSA interprets this definition broadly to forbid plagiarism in verbal or written communications.

Additional Examples of Prohibited Behavior

- Suppressing results;
- Deliberately misrepresenting research findings;
- Scientific fraud; and
- Knowingly participating in illegal activities.

IV. Promote a Culture of Respect, Fairness, and Inclusivity

GSA is committed to promoting a professional culture across the geosciences in which all people are respected and given an equal opportunity to thrive based on their knowledge, skills, and abilities. All people deserve to work in a safe, supportive, inclusive, and welcoming environment that encourages diverse points of view and backgrounds in order to engage in open and honest communication.

GSA does not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, creed, religion, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, veteran status, marital status, medical condition, pregnancy, education, class, political affiliation, parental status, or any legally protected characteristics. Discrimination and harassment perpetuate unfair, longstanding structural and systemic barriers that have kept capable individuals from fully participating in the processes and relationships that provide professional development.

Note about GSA’s Events Code of Conduct

This section of the Code of Ethics sets forth GSA’s expectations for you, as Members, in all of your professional activities, regardless of where they take place. GSA also has an [Events Code of Conduct](#) detailing the policy GSA has established to provide a professional environment at all GSA events, including meetings, field trips, short courses, mentorships, conferences, forums, and other GSA-supported functions. If you participate in any GSA events, whether or not you are a current GSA Member, we expect you to familiarize yourself with and comply with the Events Code of Conduct.

A. What We Expect

At GSA, we expect you to promote a culture of respect, fairness, and inclusivity in all your professional activities. In addition to the principles outlined above, we expect you to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Foster an environment in which students, colleagues, and other professional contacts are treated fairly and respectfully without regard to any factors unrelated to ability and promise, including the factors listed in the second paragraph of this section;
- If you organize panels, keynotes, and other invitational sessions, strive to ensure diversity among presenters. In moderating such sessions, reinforce the values in this Code of Ethics, including keeping presenters within their allotted time and ensuring inclusive and respectful discussions.
- Exemplify high standards in science, teaching, management, and interactions with others whether you are a professor, research supervisor, manager in a government or industry lab or facility, or in any other role as a senior geoscientist.
- Treat students and subordinates respectfully and without exploitation; provide a safe, supportive work environment; promote learning and professional development; advocate for fair compensation; and extend appropriate credit to students and subordinates for their contributions to research products and other professional results. Mentor and encourage students and subordinates in a way that is open-minded, objective, and designed to promote curiosity, learning, and the honest exchange of ideas.

B. Examples of Prohibited Behavior

This section offers *examples* of prohibited behavior but does not constitute an exhaustive list.

- ***GSA does not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment.*** GSA welcomes participation by all; we do not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on any factors unrelated to ability and promise, including the factors listed in the second paragraph of this section. Examples of prohibited conduct include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors directed toward an individual or group identified above:
 - Unwelcome or offensive comments or gestures, including yelling, name-calling, epithets, slurs, teasing, shaming, and stereotyping;
 - Distribution, display, or discussion of inappropriate written or graphic material or material that denigrates, insults, or shows hostility or disrespect toward an individual or group;
 - Unwanted touching, pinching, patting, grabbing, brushing against, or poking another person's body;
 - Unwanted sexual advances or propositions, including requests for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning a target's grades,

- employment, performance evaluation, promotion, access to spaces, funding, data, or other opportunities; and
 - Criminal behavior, including physical assaults, rape, sexual battery, and molestation.
- ***GSA does not tolerate bullying.*** GSA encourages respectful and rigorous scientific debate. Bullying is the antithesis of any action expected in a welcoming and inclusive community; it is unacceptable. Bullying involves using a real or perceived power imbalance to demean, intimidate, humiliate, frighten, or sabotage the work or efforts of an individual or group. Typically, bullying behavior is aggressive and part of a pattern, but a single severe and egregious incident could constitute bullying too. Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:
 - Making belittling or derogatory remarks (e.g., insults, epithets, teasing, and/or name calling);
 - Making excessive demands beyond reasonable expectations that are outside the scope of assigned work;
 - Making false, biased, or unwarranted claims about another scientist, student, or professional colleague with the intent or effect of injuring the individual's reputation or professional opportunities;
 - Sabotaging or deliberately undermining an individual's scientific activity and career;
 - Setting unrealistic deadlines for someone and/or assigning them tasks that are reasonably likely to limit the individual's ability to perform recognized, ongoing scientific projects;
 - Excluding or isolating someone by withholding information or otherwise preventing access to opportunities, such as training, grants and fellowships, and meeting attendance; and
 - Not giving appropriate credit or proper acknowledgment of scientific contributions.

V. Make Honest, Unbiased Decisions—Disclose and Act Appropriately to Prevent Conflicts of Interest

As Members, you may be involved in various professional activities on behalf of the Society that could give rise to real or perceived conflicts of interest; i.e., situations where your personal interests or relationships could interfere with your ability to make objective decisions. For instance, if you serve in a leadership or committee role for GSA, you may be called upon to make decisions for the Society that also relate to your personal situation or career. Examples include selecting candidates for leadership or committee roles; evaluating and approving Members for honors and awards; and/or reviewing proposals, grant applications, or journal

articles. We expect you to act in GSA's best interest when performing all such activities and to avoid situations that could make someone question your judgment, honesty, or objectivity.

If you are involved in a situation where your personal interests or relationships could reasonably interfere with your ability to make honest, impartial decisions on GSA's behalf, you have an affirmative duty to disclose the situation as soon as possible so that it can be reviewed and resolved. Any such issues should be brought to the attention of the appropriate committee chair, editor, or other officer of the Society or directed to ethics@geosociety.org for redirection to the appropriate individual.

Additional Duties for GSA Council Members, Officers, and Committee Members

GSA has a more specific [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) that applies to GSA Council members, officers, committee members, and employees when they are involved in various financial contracts and transactions. If you are covered by GSA's Conflicts of Interest Policy, make sure you comply with that policy as well as the general guidelines detailed above.

VI. Uphold High Ethical Standards in Publishing

GSA is committed to maintaining a high level of quality and integrity in all of its journals and publications. GSA's [Ethical Guidelines for Publication](#) sets forth the rules the Society has adopted to ensure that everyone involved in the publication process—authors, reviewers, editors, GSA officials, and GSA staff—promote the fair treatment of manuscripts through the peer-review process. Please refer to these guidelines for additional information.

If you serve as an author, editor, and/or reviewer for another entity's publications, we expect you to comply with all applicable ethical guidelines, including:

- Authorship should assign credit for work done and should be recognized based on intellectual engagement in the design, acquisition, interpretation, writing, and revision of the contribution. GSA members take responsibility for their contributions.
- Peer review and editorial functions should be done fairly and thoroughly, free from bias, in a timely fashion, providing useful and constructive feedback, and respecting confidentiality.

VII. Enforcing the Code of Ethics/Filing Complaints

GSA is committed to providing a professional, ethical culture across the geosciences. This Code of Ethics is designed to build awareness of the Society's expectations and to make it clear that all Members have a responsibility to live up to the letter and spirit of GSA's policies. GSA takes this responsibility seriously. Violations of this Code of Ethics and related policies may result in

discipline, up to and including termination of your Membership and/or notifying your home institution.

A. Handling Alleged Code of Ethics Violations

1. **Governing policy.** GSA has adopted a specific policy—GSA’s [Policy & Procedures for Handling Potential Ethical Violations](#) (“the Policy”)—to explain the rules we follow for processing alleged violations of this Code of Ethics. *We encourage you to read the Policy for details on rules and steps GSA will use to handle alleged violations of the Code of Ethics.*¹

GSA’s [Whistleblower Policy](#) is not intended as a vehicle for reporting possible violations of GSA’s Code of Ethics or other related policies governing the conduct of GSA Members.

2. **How to report alleged violations.** Under the Policy, if you would like to report an alleged violation of this Code of Ethics, you must submit an official complaint using GSA’s [Ethics Complaint Form](#) (“Complaint”). (Please refer to the Ethics Complaint Form for details on what to include and how to file a Complaint.) All such Complaints must be made in “good faith,” meaning that you must have a reasonable factual basis for the allegations in the Complaint. GSA will not tolerate Complaints that are made in bad faith. For the purpose of this Code of Ethics, you will be deemed to have filed a “bad-faith” Complaint when you have submitted an official Complaint that alleges a violation of this Code of Ethics without having any reasonable factual basis. GSA considers bad-faith Complaints to be violations of this Code of Ethics and will investigate and address them accordingly.
3. **No-retaliation policy.** GSA prohibits retaliation against anyone who makes a good-faith Complaint alleging a violation of the Code of Ethics. This means we will not tolerate intimidation, threats, or other adverse action against someone for making a good-faith Complaint. (As noted above, we will not tolerate bad-faith Complaints, which are considered violations of this Code of Ethics.). If you believe that you have been retaliated against for making a good-faith Complaint as described in the preceding paragraph, we encourage you to file a Complaint as detailed in the previous paragraph. We will handle any such Complaints in the same manner as other Complaints pursuant to the Policy.

¹ A simplified diagram of the main steps GSA follows to process alleged violations of the Code of Ethics is included in the appendix. This diagram is provided for illustrative purposes only, because the Policy sets forth the only rules to be followed for processing alleged Code of Ethics violations.

B. Disciplinary Action

When a Member is found to have violated the Code of Ethics pursuant to GSA's [Policy & Procedures for Handling Potential Ethical Violations](#), the GSA Council, as the final decision maker, may order disciplinary or remedial action as it deems appropriate, including, but not limited to, one or more of the following:

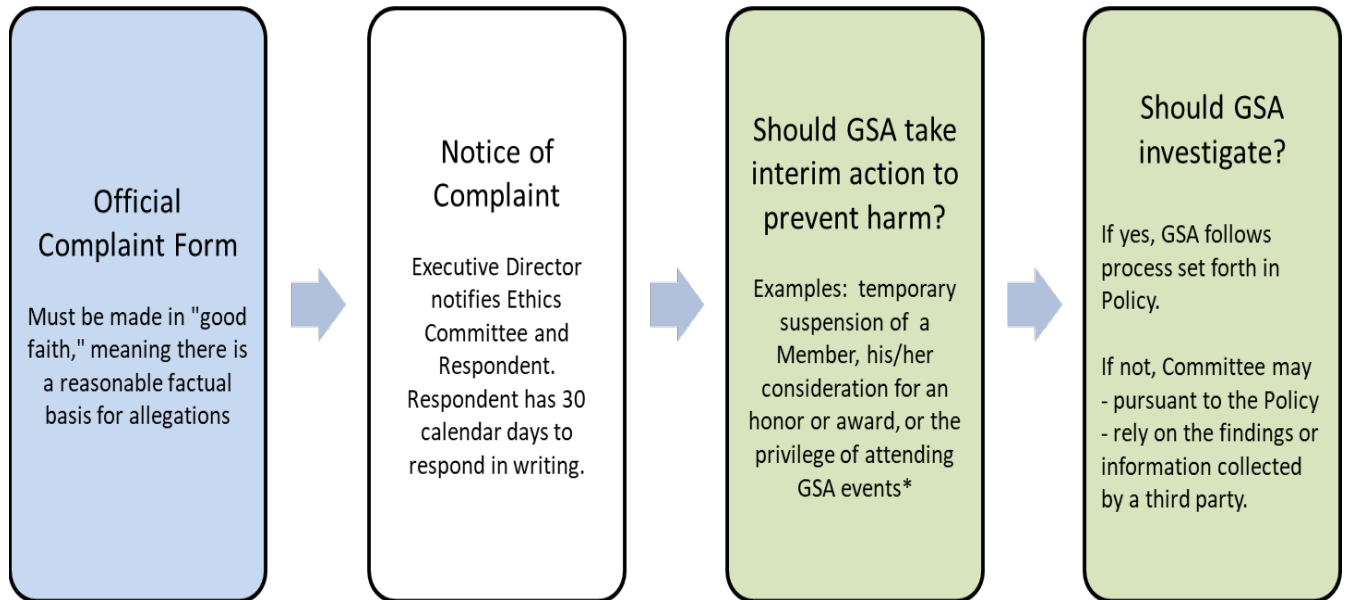
- Private reprimand and censure, including any appropriate conditions or directives;
- Notifying a Member's home institution;
- Membership probation for specified period of time, including any appropriate restrictions or conditions concerning Membership and any other conditions or directives;
- Suspension of Membership for a specified period of time, including any appropriate conditions or directives;
- Revocation of honors and awards, including, but not limited to, medals and fellowships; and
- Termination of Membership.

Appropriate conditions, restrictions, or directives may include, but are not limited to, prohibition against serving on a particular GSA committee; no admittance to participating in a particular GSA-hosted event; undergoing ethics education; and issuing a private apology. The GSA Council has the discretion to and shall determine whether and, if so, how, to publicize any disciplinary action.

Appendix

FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY*—Process When Member Notifies GSA of Investigation

*This flowchart is a simplified description of the steps GSA would take after a member notifies GSA that he/she is under investigation. See [GSA's Policy & Procedures for Handling Potential Ethical Violations](#) for a full explanation of the rules for processing possible ethical violations.



*If GSA ultimately finds that no violation has occurred, GSA would restore the status or privileges removed as part of any interim action(s) to extent reasonably possible.

This chart is color coded to show who the decision maker is at various stages.

Executive Director or Ethics & Comp. Officer

Ethics Committee**

**Includes Past Past President, Executive Director, and Ethics & Compliance Officer (or another member of GSA management appointed by the Executive Director)