

Enforcement Policy & Procedures - Code of Ethics

The Geological Society of America, Inc. (“GSA” or the “Society”) expects all “Members”¹ and recipients of GSA honors or awards (“Awardees”) to meet commonly held standards of professional ethics and scientific integrity. In the rare cases in which Members or Awardees no longer meet this expectation, the following guidelines and procedures are to be followed. This Policy sets forth the only rules for processing possible violations of GSA’s Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct (“Code of Ethics”). This policy is not a formal legal process and the procedures described are designed to operate without the assistance of attorneys.

I. Scope

GSA will, in its sole discretion, consider enforcing the Code of Ethics against Members and/or Awardees in cases of proven scientific misconduct or serious breaches of professional ethics. Enforcement may include, but is not limited to suspending or terminating membership and fellowship status, revoking awards, and restricting privileges associated with participation in GSA-sponsored publications, technical sessions, meetings, events, or other activities. All requests for GSA to consider enforcing the Code of Ethics (“Enforcement Requests”) will be handled in accordance with the procedures set forth in Section III below.

Serious breaches of professional ethics include, but are not limited to, violations of the mandatory standards of conduct set forth in GSA’s Code of Ethics; violations of the law; and/or any other violations deemed by GSA to be prejudicial to the Society’s interests. This policy and the Code of Ethics cover professional activities wherever they take place, including academic buildings, laboratories, field sites, research stations, field course venues, professional meetings, or any such professional settings. This policy includes interactions with colleagues, subordinates, students, teaching or research assistants, venue or administrative staff, or anyone else with whom Members or Awardees interact as part of their professional activities.

All Enforcement Requests must be submitted in writing together with an investigative report documenting the findings, sanctions, or actions taken by an independent organization or agency, including but not limited to an institute of higher learning or professional society, or GSA itself, including all GSA affiliations (e.g., Scientific Divisions, Geographic Sections).² Alternatively, a public announcement of the information in a report, or actions that have been taken, may be submitted. Media reports alone may not be sufficient to support an Enforcement Request. GSA will only consider disciplinary requests within four years of publication of the report or announcement of the

¹Under GSA’s bylaws, membership consists of Members, Affiliates, Fellows, and Honorary Fellows (herein each a “Member” and collectively, “Members.”)

²A finding by GSA itself could be the basis for an Enforcement Request, but only if the finding results from an investigation into alleged misconduct at a GSA-sponsored event or activity. For example, if GSA investigates and finds evidence of misconduct at a Society meeting, the ensuing investigative report and adverse finding by GSA could form the basis for an Enforcement Request. (See GSA’s [Events Code of Conduct](#) and [Ethical Guidelines for Publication](#) for details on the rules GSA uses for processing alleged misconduct at GSA-sponsored events and activities).

finding, sanction, or action, and will not consider Enforcement Requests against deceased Members or Awardees.

GSA will not serve as an independent investigative body for claims of professional misconduct taking place at other institutions or professional settings outside of its control. GSA will investigate pertinent misconduct claims arising at or in connection with GSA-sponsored events or activities. Please refer to GSA's [Events Code of Conduct](#) and [Ethical Guidelines for Publication](#) for information on the rules GSA uses to address such conduct concerns.

II. GSA Ethics Committee

- A. Authority.** GSA's Bylaws, Article IV, Section 9 and 10, govern Member and Awardee discipline. Section 9 states in pertinent part that "GSA retains the discretion and authority to revoke an award or impose disciplinary sanctions upon any member, fellow, honorary fellow, affiliate, or Awardee with such sanction as determined by the Council. Section 10 states in pertinent part that "[a]ny fellowship, membership, award, or affiliation in the Society may be terminated, revoked, or suspended by the Council, after a hearing or opportunity to be heard, for conduct deemed prejudicial to the interests of the Society."
- B. Purpose.** The GSA Council (the "**Council**") recognizes that when Members and/or Awardees engage in conduct that violates the Code of Ethics, such conduct may be prejudicial to the Society's interests. Accordingly, and pursuant to the GSA Bylaws, the GSA Ethics Committee (the "**Ethics Committee**") was constituted and authorized to receive, process, and make recommendations with respect to Enforcement Requests in accordance with this policy. The specific responsibilities of the Ethics Committee are set forth below in Section III. The Ethics Committee will act in good faith, exercise honest judgment in furtherance of GSA's interests, and avoid conflicts of interest pursuant to GSA's Conflict of Interest Policy.
- C. Composition.** The Ethics Committee generally will be comprised of three individuals: GSA's Past Past President, GSA's Executive Director ("**Executive Director**"), and GSA's Ethics & Compliance Officer ("**Ethics Officer**") or another member of GSA's management staff appointed by the Executive Director. GSA will maintain a pool of qualified former Presidents who may be called upon to serve on the Ethics Committee in case there is a real or perceived conflict of interest involving either the Past Past President or the Executive Director. The pool will consist of former Presidents, who have finished their initial terms serving on the Ethics Committee. Former Presidents will be part of the pool for four (4) additional years after they end their terms as Past Presidents. If a real or perceived conflict of interest prevents a GSA Past Past President or Executive Director from serving on the Ethics Committee, this individual shall be replaced by drawing from the pool described above. The most recent former President will be asked to serve first, and if he or she has a conflict, the next most recent will be asked and so on. If none of the former Presidents is available to serve due to a conflict of interest or another reason, GSA's President shall nominate alternate individual(s) to the Ethics Committee for the Council's consideration; the Council shall appoint replacement members to the Ethics Committee in those situations. If a real or perceived conflict of interest prevents GSA's Ethics Officer or another member of GSA's management staff from serving on the Ethics

Committee, the Executive Director shall have the discretion to name a replacement drawing from GSA's management staff.

III. Procedures

- A. Written Enforcement Request and Supporting Documents Required.** All Enforcement Requests must be made in writing using this [Enforcement Request Form](#). Completed forms will be received by GSA's Ethics Office (**Ethics Office**), which may be reached for questions at ethics@geosociety.org. In all steps of these procedures, the requestor's identity generally will not be revealed by the Ethics Office except as may be required by a court of competent jurisdiction or as otherwise required to comply with GSA's legal obligations.

Every Enforcement Request must include an investigative report and/or public announcement of findings or actions taken (or links thereto) from a credible body such as the Federal Government's Office of Research Integrity, other Federal or state agencies, a professional organization or society, an academic institution, a court of law, GSA itself³, or an admission of misconduct by the individual in question.

Enforcement Requests may only be made by GSA Members and must include detailed information about the sources used to enable verification of information. In addition, the Member must agree in writing to maintain the confidentiality of the matter until its conclusion at GSA.

- B. Confidential Review and Deliberations.** During each phase of its review and deliberations, GSA will only consider the evidence provided in support of the Enforcement Request Form. GSA will not conduct its own investigation of alleged Code of Ethics violations beyond the information presented in the Enforcement Request Form or otherwise available publicly (such as publications or court records). GSA will strive to maintain the confidentiality of all matters covered by these procedures and will use its discretion to limit disclosure on a need-to-know basis.

- 1. Step 1: Executive Office Review.** GSA's Executive Office (Executive Director and/or Ethics Officer) will conduct a preliminary review to determine if the Enforcement Request is substantive, has adequate documentation, and complies with these procedures. As a result of this review, the Executive Office either will dismiss the Enforcement Request or forward it with all supporting documentation to the Ethics Committee for further consideration and processing. (The requestor's name and identifying information will be redacted before sharing.) In either case, the Executive Office will notify the requestor of its decision, and it will maintain, and submit to Council annually, an anonymized log of all Enforcement Requests.

Upon receipt of an Enforcement Request, GSA's Executive Office has the discretion to evaluate the need for interim action pending a final decision by Council. See paragraph 4 below for additional information.

³See the previous footnote for information on when a GSA investigation may be used to support an Enforcement Request.

2. **Step 2: Ethics Committee Review.** Upon receipt of an Enforcement Request and supporting documents, the Ethics Committee will manage further review of the request pursuant to these procedures, culminating with a recommendation to Council about any potential enforcement action. The Ethics Committee will remain active until a recommendation has been made, and this work may continue past the end of an Ethics Committee member's term. (See Section II above for information on the composition and responsibilities of the Ethics Committee.)
 - a. **Timing.** While the Ethics Committee is not bound by a specific timeline, it will make a reasonable effort to review and process Enforcement Requests in an expeditious, fair manner in accordance with the guidelines that follow. The Ethics Committee may grant time extensions or postponements, at their discretion, as applicable, in response to timeline requests.
 - b. **Notice.** The Respondent (i.e., the person reported to have engaged in misconduct) will be given written notice of the Enforcement Request so that they have an opportunity to be heard. Notice will consist of sending the Respondent a copy of the Enforcement Request Form (redacted to prevent disclosure of the requestor's name and identifying information) and applicable supporting documents. The Respondent will be invited to respond and also will be offered the option to relinquish their status as a Member, Fellow, and/or Awardee.
 - c. **Response Deadline.** The Respondent shall have thirty (30) calendar days from the date of receipt of Notice to provide a written response to the Ethics Committee. If a Respondent fails to provide a response or request a timely extension, the Committee may proceed without their participation.
 - d. **Deliberations.** After the deadline for responses has passed, the Ethics Committee will consider the Enforcement Request Form, supporting documentation, and any response. The Ethics Committee may also consider any pertinent information of public or official record. As part of its deliberations, the Ethics Committee will discuss and consider whether the Respondent's Conduct is prejudicial to GSA's interests and, if so, what disciplinary action would be appropriate, up to and including suspending or revoking awards, membership status, fellowship status, and/or the privilege of participating in GSA-sponsored publications, technical sessions, meetings, events, or other activities. The Ethics Committee will then vote on what disciplinary action, if any, will be recommended to Council.
 - e. **Recommendation to Council.** At the conclusion of its deliberations and vote, the Ethics Committee shall, within a reasonable time, provide Council with a written report and recommendation. The report shall include the redacted Enforcement Request Form, supporting documentation, and any response. The report will also include a succinct explanation justifying the Ethics Committee's recommendations on what disciplinary action, if any, is deemed appropriate.
3. **Step 3: Final Decision by Council.** Upon receipt of the Ethics Committee's report, Council will meet in Executive Session, in person or online, as soon as practicable to make a final

decision. In general, Council will aim to reach a final decision within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving the Ethics Committee's report. Although Council may only consider the written information submitted by the Ethics Committee, Council may choose to accept or reject the Ethics Committee's recommendations. Council has the sole discretion to determine whether disciplinary action is warranted and, if so, what form it will take. Council's decision shall be final and there is no appeal.

After the decision is made, Council will direct GSA's Executive Office to notify the Requestor and Respondent of the final decision, and to take appropriate steps to implement it.

GSA's Executive Director and President may determine, in their sole and exclusive discretion, whether and where there should be an announcement or publication of enforcement decisions.

4. **Discretionary Interim Action.** Upon receipt of an Enforcement Request, GSA's Executive Office, in conjunction with Step 1 above, may evaluate whether interim action is appropriate to prevent the possibility of further harm pending a final decision by the Council. Examples of interim action may include, but are not limited to, temporary suspension of a Member or temporary suspension of Fellowship or their consideration for an honor or leadership role, or the privilege of attending GSA events. The Executive Office shall make a recommendation to the Ethics Committee regarding any such proposed interim action; the Ethics Committee shall review such recommendations and take such interim action in its sole discretion. In reaching a decision regarding interim action, the Ethics Committee will reasonably balance GSA's legitimate interest with the Respondent's right to due process, fairness, and confidentiality. If the Council decides not to enforce the Code of Ethics against a Respondent that has been subject to interim action, GSA will restore any status or privileges that have been removed as part of any interim action to the extent reasonably possible.
5. **Records.** GSA shall maintain all official records developed pursuant to this Policy in accordance with GSA records retention and destruction practices. All other records including, but not limited to, records and notes of Ethics Committee members and Council shall be destroyed after the closure of any case.

Duly Adopted: October 8, 2022⁴

⁴On October 8, 2022, the GSA Council approved this policy and bylaw changes designed to codify an earlier decision to make the Code of Ethics applicable to Awardees. Membership approval is needed to change the bylaws, but not the substance of this policy. It is anticipated that the bylaw changes will be ratified at GSA's Corporate Meeting on April 28, 2023.