

# SETAC Problem Resolution Standard Operating Procedures

## Preamble

The Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) is committed to high standards of personal and professional ethical conduct. In line with this commitment, SETAC is committed to promoting a culture that encourages civil discourse and takes grievances or complaints seriously and values their effective resolution. Anyone can raise a concern or file a complaint by completing the SETAC [Violation Reporting Form](#) and by following the process described here and in the [SETAC Whistleblower Policy](#).

- **In cases where illegal or unlawful behavior is reported (e.g., physical harm), it will be immediately reported to the authorities.**
- **Every effort will be made to treat the reported concern and identities of those involved in good faith with appropriate regard for confidentiality.**

## Scope

Concerns addressed through the problem resolution standard operating procedures (SOP) include those related to activities (including those in our program, at our events, or in our services or those involving our members) that are not in line with SETAC policies, including the [SETAC Code of Ethics](#), the [SETAC Code of Conduct](#), [SETAC Principles and Values](#) as well as violations of policies and agreements such as the [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) and various confidentiality agreements.

## Process



Problem resolution will be in line with provisions in the [SETAC Whistleblower Policy](#):

- We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.
- We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective, and unbiased manner.
- We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints or their representative in the process as far as possible.
- **We value civil discourse at SETAC, and mediation will always be the first measure undertaken with the goal of reconciliation.**
- We will strive to resolve complaints or grievances upon first contact with SETAC, where possible.
- We will assess and prioritize complaints in accordance with the urgency or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security, the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

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- We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).
- We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.
- Each step of this process will be documented and will be transparent to those involved.

People who make a complaint or file a grievance will be:

- Provided with accessible and clear ways to make the complaint or file the grievance.
- Listened to, treated with respect, and actively involved in the process where appropriate.
- Provided with information as it becomes available.
- Informed promptly of decisions and their reasoning, as well as options for redress or review.

We are committed to informing the complainant as soon as possible of the following:

- The complaints process and the expected time frames for our actions,
- The progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay,
- Their likely involvement in the process, and
- The possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

### Procedures

When a concern is brought to the attention of any SETAC member or staff, it will be immediately escalated to the responsible executive director(s) (EDs) as well as the president of the relevant SETAC entity (SETAC World or SETAC Geographic Unit [GU]) as soon after its occurrence as possible. The relevant SETAC entity and responsible ED are determined as follows:

- Publications is under domain of the SETAC World Council (SWC) and Global ED with assistance from Publications Manager.
- Scientific Integrity is under domain of SWC and Global ED.
- Code of Conduct at a SETAC event will be under the domain of the GU hosting the event (e.g., if a SETAC Pellston Workshop it will be the GED, if at a SETAC GU meeting, it will be the ED of that GU, and where a SETAC GU does not have an ED, the Global ED will act as the GU ED).

The responsible ED will consult all relevant SETAC policies, including the [SETAC Code of Ethics](#), the [SETAC Code of Conduct](#), and if deemed necessary, will expeditiously convene **a committee of responsible persons** as defined in the [SETAC Whistleblower Policy](#) and chair that committee to handle the concern. Members of the committee will be identified from the president, past president, and vice president of the relevant SETAC entity as well select members at large (possibly from the affected SETAC entity [e.g., from the Publication Advisory Committee if related to publications]). In selecting members of the committee, the responsible ED should ensure that the committee is diverse and balanced (sector, geography and gender). The final composition of the committee should be expeditiously approved by the relevant SETAC entity executive committee. All members of the committee, including chair,

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should be able to declare absence of conflict of interest and due understanding of potential bias. Committee members may be recused or may recuse themselves if they cannot act with impartiality on behalf of and for the protection of SETAC.

The committee should begin with a review of the allegations. It may be difficult to definitively determine if the breach of conduct or policy has occurred, unless corroborated by others. Prior to speaking to the individual, the committee may wish to speak with other witnesses to determine with greater certainty that the behavior did, in fact, occur. They may want to consult other reports or investigations, if applicable. SETAC may not have the resources to conduct an independent investigation, and in that case, may initiate an investigation with another institution (e.g., the ethics office at the home institution of the involved individual[s]). The committee should ultimately communicate with the individual in question and ascertain if the allegations are true.

If it is determined that a breach of a SETAC policy (e.g., Code of Conduct or Code of Ethics) has occurred, the committee should inform the individual in question, in person (if feasible) and in writing through the chair, that such behavior is prohibited under the Society's policies and of the potential consequences of the breach depending on the severity of the violation. The committee should simultaneously immediately attempt mediation towards reconciliation through civil discourse. If mediation fails, then the committee, through its chair, can notify the party in question of consequences.

Potential consequences include:

- Warning and Probation
- Expulsion from a SETAC event (e.g., GU meeting)
- Ban from attending a SETAC event (e.g., GU meeting) for a specific number of years
- Ban from authorship in a SETAC publication
- Ban for a period of years from SETAC
- Lifetime ban from SETAC
- Repeal of a SETAC award or accolade
- Exclusions from consideration for SETAC awards or accolades

### **Closure**

The committee will summarize the results of the investigation (substantiated or otherwise), and the outcome will be communicated to the complainant and other involved individuals by the ED. In some instances, the committee may need to create a communications plan for broader dissemination (e.g., public scandal or rescinding awards) or propose changes in SETAC procedures.

The committee who handled the complaint should provide a written summary, which should be retained in the official records. These records will be helpful should the individual engage in repeat offenses, submit a manuscript for publication, be nominated for a SETAC award, or run for SETAC office.

**Approved by SETAC World Council March 21, 2019**