

Deliverable for Session 6: racism and inclusivity

This document contains some general guidelines and language that can be adapted for individual lab policies and field programs.

General thoughts

A safe environment for work and study is integral to conducting research. This means that all laboratory and fieldwork must be conducted in a responsible manner, with regard to the inherent risks of laboratory and fieldwork activities as well as particular attention to the risks faced by minoritized members of the scientific community in the lab and in the field. It is the responsibility of all members of our community who participate in such activities to look after the safety and welfare of themselves and all other participants.

Inclusivity in the lab

All members of EEPS are expected to abide by our Community Principles, which can be found here: <https://eps.wustl.edu/community-principles>

In particular, the Community Principles charge department members to “create and uphold a safe, open, and professional environment for learning, conducting, and communicating science with integrity, respect, fairness, trustworthiness, and transparency.” Creating and upholding such an environment is an active endeavor.

Faculty/Pis are responsible for the behavior in their laboratories and ensuring that the guidelines are followed. Lab members should discuss concerns with their lab manager, lab PI, department chair, or submit any concerns through one of the University’s reporting mechanisms, such as the ombuds office or the BRSS.

We strongly encourage Pis and lab groups to develop codes of conduct and lab policies that clearly state expectations for conduct and communication, and also list university resources and avenues for addressing any problems that arise.

While some researchers may feel that a code of conduct is unnecessary, there’s no real reason why the respectful and inclusive behavior we expect from one another shouldn’t be codified in writing. Having a code of conduct ensures that everyone is on the same page, and means that we won’t only be responding reactively to issues that arise in the future.

A lab policy can also serve as a centralized source of lab-specific information, such as what is expected of lab members at group meetings, how authorship should be discussed among group members working together on projects, or which conferences and workshops lab members find most useful to attend. Lab policies can be living documents that are built over time and help to collect and retain the knowledge of generations of lab members.

Here are some points that can be included in a lab code of conduct (excerpted from the BRG lab policies and code of conduct, CC-BY-4.0):

- All communication, be it online or in person, should be clear, direct and appropriate for a professional audience. The use of literal and specific language is recommended. Be considerate

of people from different cultural backgrounds. Sexual language and imagery are deemed inappropriate.

- Describe desirable behaviors and clarify unspoken expectations, i.e., assumed knowledge that is unspoken, so that all members of the community are familiar with the organization's values and community principles.
- Be kind to others and do not insult or put down other group members.
- Behave professionally. Harassment and sexist, racist, or exclusionary jokes are not appropriate. Harassment includes offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of discussions, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention. Participants asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately.
- Contribute to discussions in meetings with a constructive, positive approach.
- Be mindful of talking over others when discussing in groups, and be willing to hear out the ideas of others.

Faculty and PIs are encouraged to take advantage of available resources that can be adapted to write lab codes of conduct, such as the Basin Research Group lab policies excerpted above (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10y7TP48ik1rcQBPA5Do8mZM7DJ5EbF0hyWP-csgb1QE/edit>) and other examples cited therein.

Making and implementing field safety plans

Field trips in EEPS are conducted under the supervision of various staff members, and involve varied types of risk depending on the work and the place it is conducted. We recommend that PIs and staff members leading field trips or fieldwork implement a field safety plan, and discuss it with all participants in advance of the trip. A field safety plan describes potential risks and hazards associated with the trip, including risks faced by minoritized individuals (e.g., risk for POC working outdoors in potentially hostile communities), and outlines strategies that will be used to mitigate those risks (e.g., have participants wear bright, official-looking clothing like work vests, always work in teams, and carry copies of all necessary permits). The safety plan should also include a code of conduct that describes the expectations for the behavior of all individuals in the field, which should also be thoroughly discussed with participants before the trip. Examples of code of conduct for fieldwork can be found at:

https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/codeofconduct_0.pdf

<https://www.uaf.edu/toolik/handbook/camp-life.php>

<https://wp.las.iastate.edu/ge-at-camp/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2016/02/Code-of-Conduct-2019.pdf>

Field leaders looking for a starting point can find examples of field safety plans and lists of topics to consider on the SERC ADVANCEGEO website

(https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html) and in Demery and Pipkin, 2021 (<https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202008.0021/v1>), among other places.

How to report conduct violations/incidents in the field

Fieldwork poses particular challenges for issues of conduct and reporting, because it takes place outside of everyday settings, under special or temporary supervisory hierarchies, and can make people feel as though personal and professional boundaries are blurred. PIs should take concrete steps to ensure that all participants know before going into the field (a) what behavior is acceptable, and that unacceptable behavior is not tolerated, and (b) that they can and should report any incidents that occur, and who they should report them to. It is also incumbent upon the PI to set a consistent and clear example of stellar conduct in the field and follow all their own rules.

WashU resources

The link(s) to the reporting policy at our organization are here:

<https://universitycompliance.wustl.edu/-university> - policies including the Code of Conduct and reporting contacts for different types of complaints

<https://hr.wustl.edu/policies/> and <https://wustl.edu/about/compliance-policies/> - university-wide policies

For students, Bias Report and Support System (BRSS): <https://students.wustl.edu/bias-report-support-system/>

For employees, reporting bias, harassment, etc. falls under the university Discrimination and Harassment policy (<https://hr.wustl.edu/items/discrimination-harassment-policy/>) and employees can report to coordinators listed on that website (Title IX coordinator, discrimination and harassment coordinators for Danforth and med school campuses). There are also confidential hotlines for compliance reporting.

Reports can be made anonymously online through the WashU Confidential Concern Reporting Portal (<https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/57349/index.html>), through the Office of University Compliance online reporting form (<https://universitycompliance.wustl.edu/code-of-conduct/online-reporting-form/>) or by phone through the university's confidential compliance hotline (314-462-4998), as well as non-anonymously via phone or email to the discrimination coordinators mentioned above. Formal complaints against staff are supposed to be submitted in writing to the Vice Chancellor for Human Resources (Legail Poole Chandler) according to the posted review process (<https://hr.wustl.edu/5706-2/>).