

**CODE OF ETHICS**  
**AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY**  
*(Revised and Approved by Council 2005)*

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The American Society for Microbiology is dedicated to the utilization of microbiological sciences for the promotion of human welfare and for the accumulation of knowledge. These goals demand honesty and truthfulness in all activities sponsored or supported by the Society.

**Ethics Standards for Society Members**

Guiding Principles

- (1) ASM members aim to uphold and advance the integrity and dignity of the profession and practice of microbiology.
- (2) ASM members aspire to use their knowledge and skills for the advancement of human welfare.
- (3) ASM members are honest and impartial in their interactions with their trainees, colleagues, employees, employers, clients, patients, and the public.
- (4) ASM members strive to increase the competence and prestige of the profession and practice of microbiology by responsible action and by sharing the results of their research through academic and commercial endeavors, or public service.
- (5) ASM members seek to maintain and expand their professional knowledge and skills.
- (6) ASM members are obligated to discourage any use of microbiology contrary to the welfare of humankind, including the use of microbes as biological weapons. Bioterrorism violates the fundamental principles upon which the Society was founded and is abhorrent to the ASM and its members. ASM members will call to the attention of the public or the appropriate authorities misuses of microbiology or of information derived from microbiology.

## **Rules of Conduct**

1. ASM members shall not commit scientific misconduct, defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism. However, scientific error or incorrect interpretation of research data that may occur as part of the scientific process does not constitute scientific misconduct.

2. ASM members shall avoid improper conflicts of interest and potential abuse of privileged positions. ASM members shall make full disclosure of financial and other interests that might present a conflict in ASM activities.

3. ASM members shall abide by the ASM standards of publication that are contained in a document entitled “ASM Editorial Policies/Ethics: Procedures and Guidelines.” The Instructions to Authors for each ASM journal also articulate the ethical publication standards of the ASM. In regard to the presentations made at annual ASM meetings, conferences and workshops, the ethical standards that pertain to the publications of the Society will be observed.

4. ASM members shall take responsibility to report breaches of the Rules of Conduct and to recommend appropriate responses, as defined in the Ethics Review Process.

5. Members shall not represent any position as being that of the ASM unless it has the approval of the appropriate unit of the ASM.

6. ASM members, by accepting membership in the Society, agree to abide by this Code of Ethics.

## **Ethics Review Process**

ASM members recognize the responsibility of the Society to consider breaches of the Code of Ethics and to recommend appropriate responses. These responses are defined under Ethics Review Process.

*Publications:* As specified in the Rules of Conduct, allegations of violations of the ASM Editorial Policies/Ethics: Procedures and Guidelines shall be processed according to the standards and procedures set forth in such Guidelines.

*Members:* If allegations of scientific misconduct are made against a member of the ASM, where appropriate, the academic or other institution that employs the member should make the investigation and resolution of the issues.

The Ethics Review Process is confidential and mandates several discrete steps, as follows.

1. *Complaint.* Allegations of ethical misconduct must be sent by signed letter, marked “Confidential, to the President of the ASM.” This letter should include a description of the alleged behavior, information in support of the allegation, and citation of the Rules of Conduct deemed violated.
2. *President's Response to a Complaint.* The President of the ASM shall determine, in consultation with the Chair of the Ethics Committee, whether the alleged conduct may constitute a violation of the ASM Rules of Conduct. If it is deemed that the alleged facts would not constitute an ethical violation, the President shall dismiss the complaint at this point and so inform the complainant.

If a determination is made that the conduct would constitute a violation, the President shall appoint a panel of ASM members to investigate the complaint. There must be at least three (3) members on the panel. At this point, the President shall notify the complainants and the accused that an investigation has been initiated. Both parties also are directed to prepare written evidence for presentation to the panel.

3. *The Investigative Panel.* The panel shall have full authority to investigate the validity of the allegation and of the defense against the allegation. The panel shall provide the accused the opportunity to know and respond fully to the allegations in the complaint. The panel may decide to permit the presentation of oral evidence in addition to the written materials that are submitted. However, if the facts forming the basis of the complaint are substantial and verifiable, the matter may be decided on the basis of written material; the panel may act

solely on the basis of such written material. A majority of the panel must agree to the recommended decision and recommended action.

At the conclusion of its investigation the panel shall make a report to the Ethics Committee. That report shall consist of (a) the full record of the complaint, the responses of the accused, and the investigation; (b) a recommended decision as to whether a violation occurred; (c) a recommended action by the Investigative Panel, which may include dismissal of the complaint; and (d) a synopsis of the findings of the panel on which its recommended action is based.

4. *Decision by the Ethics Committee.* Upon receipt of the report of the investigative panel, a quorum consisting of a majority of the Ethics Committee will review the entire report. On the basis of the report and its own deliberations, a majority of the full membership of the Ethics Committee will render a decision and report that decision to the President. The Ethics Committee's report must contain a synopsis of the complaint and its investigation, and a decision whether an ethical violation occurred. The Ethics Committee can dismiss the complaint. If the Ethics Committee decides an ethical violation has occurred, it must order an action by the ASM.

5. *Notification of the ASM Decision.* Upon receipt of the decision from the Ethics Committee, the President of the ASM shall promptly and in confidence notify all parties in writing of the decision and order of action. If the decision is other than dismissal of the complaint, the notice will inform the accused of the right to appeal and shall provide the parties copies of the reports of the investigative panel and the Ethics Committee.

6. *Right of Appeal.* If the accused wishes to file an appeal, the President of ASM must receive such appeal within sixty (60) days of receipt of notice of the decision. If such notification is not received, the decision of the Ethics Committee will be carried out.

The appeal may be based on claims that the decision was incorrect in light of the evidence presented and/or that the investigation procedure was flawed. The President must receive arguments supporting the appeal within ninety (90) days of receipt of the notice of decision by the accused.

If an appeal is made, the President shall request the ASM Council to appoint an Appeal Committee consisting of at least five (5) Council members. The Ethics Committee will release the entire record to the Appeal Committee .

7. *The Appeal Committee.* Following review of the entire record, the Appeal Committee will render its decision. The Appeal Committee may reverse the decision of the Ethics Committee and dismiss the complaint, modify the sanction imposed by the decision, sustain the decision of the Ethics Committee, or take such other action as it deems appropriate. Action by the Appeal Committee shall require a two-thirds vote of the Appeal Committee. Denial of the decision of the Ethics Committee by the Appeal Committee may be based on the conclusion that the original decision was not supported by substantial evidence, that the original decision was clearly erroneous, or that due process had not been followed. The

Appeal Committee will communicate its decision to the President and all materials will be returned to the Ethics Committee.

Upon receipt of the report of the Appeal Committee, the President shall promptly notify all parties of the decision and order of action.

8. *Implementation of Decisions.* In the case of removal from membership or requested resignation, the name of the member and the sanction applied will be published in the ASM News. If the charges are dismissed, the accused shall be given the choice of whether that decision is published. The decision and order of action will be the final disposition of the matter by the ASM.

9. *Confidentiality.* It is essential that all aspects of the investigation of alleged ethical misconduct be treated in a strictly confidential manner. Only the participants will know all elements of the investigation and adjudication, including the fact that an investigation is proceeding. Breach of this confidentiality shall itself be considered ethical misconduct.

This confidentiality shall be maintained until thirty (30) days after receipt of notice of decision from the President of ASM. In the event of appeal, the President shall extend this confidentiality until thirty (30) days after the notification of decision of the Appeal Committee.