

## Safe Evolution Transparency Report

*Submitted by the Evolution Meetings Code of Conduct committee:*

*Andrea Case (chair), Brian O'Meara, Sharon Strauss, Jodie Wiggins, Kelly Zamudio*

The societies sponsoring the 2017 Evolution meeting in Portland and the 2018 Evolution Congress in Montpellier required all conference participants to agree to a meeting Code of Conduct. This transparency report serves to inform attendees and society members about reported incidents, general outcomes of those reports, and steps taken by the societies to further prevent inappropriate behavior at our meetings.

In 2017, the societies established a committee responsible for overseeing the procedures for reporting and handling complaints related to the Code of Conduct. In 2018, the meeting organizers contracted with a third-party ("Safe Evolution officer") to receive and investigate complaints.

A total of four complaints have been received to date: one involved unwelcome verbal attention, two unwelcome physical contact, and one inappropriate comments during a presentation.

All complaints were handled confidentially. For three of the four reported incidents, the identity of at least one party was kept anonymous<sup>1</sup> at the request of the complainant. Anonymous reports provide valuable information to meeting organizers in terms of where incidents happen, but because anonymity was requested by the complainants, further investigation and sanctioning were not possible. For the fourth reported incident, relevant information was gathered from witnesses and from the accused, and sanctions appropriate to the offense were imposed, as per Council-approved response procedures, sections F–H (<https://www.evolutionmeetings.org/uploads/4/8/8/0/48804503/reporting.pdf>).

Details of all reports will be kept confidential and made available each year to the designated Safe Evolution officer for the sake of documenting repeat offenses at our meetings.

The following changes have been made to proactively address reported incidents:

- A clear statement added to the Code of Conduct about appropriate behavior during presentations
- Starting with the 2019 Evolution meeting, all meetings will contract with a third-party ("Safe Evolution officer") to receive and investigate complaints
- A group of Evo Allies will be identified and trained to provide support during the meetings (see [entoallies.org](http://entoallies.org) ; [astronomyallies.com](http://astronomyallies.com) for examples)

### Context Statements:

One criticism of transparency reports is that they lack specific detail. It is a delicate balance: the community wants to know that there are real sanctions being applied to offenses, but we also must maintain our commitment to confidentiality. With few actionable reports over the past two

years, it would be relatively easy to determine which sanctions were applied to a particular incident, or in some cases, a particular person. As more actionable reports are received, we will be able to provide aggregate data. We also do not report whether or not a complainant is satisfied with the response, as we do not want to impose pressure on them or expose them to potential backlash. However, there is never a non-disclosure requirement placed on any complainant, so they are free to report to others if they are satisfied with the process or not, and they can seek their own avenues for resolution.

The small number of actionable reports we received could mean that there were few violations of the Code of Conduct or, as is common for Title IX offenses at universities, there was underreporting of inappropriate behavior for very legitimate reasons. We will be proactive in taking steps to make the Evolution meetings safer and more inclusive without solely relying on formal reporting. However, our hope is that a robust commitment to confidentiality, use of a trained external investigator, and public access to our detailed response procedures will reduce some concerns about backlash, retaliation, or inappropriate sanctions. This is a long-term process through which we need to earn the trust of the community. Ideally, our response procedures will be shown to be robust and fair enough for attendees to feel safe reporting incidents that can lead to appropriate actions and make our meetings safer and more inclusive. We welcome feedback from the community on ways to improve these.

Notes:

1. An important distinction is between **anonymity** (identify of someone is unknown) versus **confidentiality** (identity is known only to the investigator and never publicly revealed). For a complaint to be actionable, the person investigating must know the identity of the person making the complaint and the person being accused of inappropriate behavior: that is, they must not be anonymous, but all identities will be kept confidential to the extent permissible by law.