



FEMS Code of Conduct

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INTRODUCTION

FEMS is committed to providing an environment that encourages the free expression and exchange of ideas and serves to ensure that staff members, representatives and associates can engage with each other in a safe, supportive and mutually respectful manner. It's our belief that everyone associated with FEMS should endeavour to maintain the highest standards of personal and professional conduct and integrity, including those working in or away from the business office or participating in events organised or hosted by FEMS.

The following Code of Conduct underpins both our commitment and beliefs and is based on the core values and strategic principles of FEMS. It specifies guiding principles to which all FEMS staff members and associates should adhere. It is intended to encourage trust and respect within our Federation and among members.

The FEMS Code of Conduct is therefore applicable to all staff members, directors/trustees, delegates, deputies, proxies, journal editors, and everyone engaging in FEMS activities, since compliance with the rules of conduct is explicitly asked of anyone attending FEMS meetings, conferences and/or gatherings associated with FEMS.

While the Code is comprehensive in scope, it may not cover every issue that may arise. If you have any doubts or queries as to its contents or purpose you are free to contact the FEMS Executive Director or the General Secretary, to discuss.

Finally, if you feel any aspect of the Code has been breached in your interactions with FEMS activities and events, please make use of our grievance procedure, as described in section D.

The Code should not be construed as compromising in any way our commitment to the principles of academic freedom, defined by UNESCO as 'the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely [your] opinion about the institution or system in which [you] work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.

A.Scope and Purpose

The main purpose of this Code of Conduct is to strengthen a culture of integrity, clarify the standards of behaviour and outline the key responsibilities regarding ethical conduct for FEMS.

Integrity – defined as honest, accountable and competent conduct with adherence to strong ethical and moral values and principles – is key in achieving our goals and fostering professional relationships. These relationships are built on mutual trust and shared values. This Code of Conduct makes explicit what those values are, what we expect from the people that work for and with FEMS, and it instructs us on acceptable and unacceptable conduct of staff. It seeks to protect all staff as well as every community member whom FEMS interacts with.

The following standards of behaviour apply to all staff and staff of member organizations, including but not limited to all permanent and temporary staff, interns, consultants, volunteers, and any other individuals working for or representing FEMS, and/or attending FEMS meetings and events.

To uphold and promote the highest ethical and professional standards, staff and associates shall always:

- Act with integrity
- Respect and promote fundamental human rights without discrimination
- Respect and abide by national and international laws and standards
- Treat every person fairly and with respect, courtesy and dignity
- Positively represent FEMS
- Be aware of the use and impact of social media, information you are entrusted with and privacy regulations at all times
- Maintain an environment that prevents misconduct and promotes the implementation of this Code of Conduct. Managers have responsibilities to support and develop systems that maintain this environment, to ensure that all staff are aware of this Code of Conduct, that they understand what it means in concrete behavioural terms and how it applies to their professional context
- Have an individual responsibility to familiarise themselves with the content of the Code of Conduct and assume accountability
- Promote safe and confidential reporting of serious concerns about suspected misconduct following the guidelines (see section D)
- Report immediately any knowledge, concerns or substantial suspicions of breaches of this Code of Conduct following guidelines. Be aware that failure to disclose or knowingly withholding information about any reports, concerns or substantial suspicions of breaches of this Code of Conduct constitutes grounds for disciplinary measures
- Cooperate when requested with any investigation into alleged breaches related to this Code of Conduct
- Must notify FEMS of any criminal convictions or charges prior to employment and of any criminal charges that arise during employment as well as of any former complaints concerning suspected/substantiated misconduct.

B. Core values; our guiding principles for ethical behaviour

Transparency, ownership and accountability

FEMS values accountability and ownership: we communicate in an open way about the actions we undertake, the procedures we follow and the results we achieve.

Mutual trust, dignity and respect

We treat each other with trust, dignity and respect in order to create a safe and healthy working environment for all.

Respect for diverse cultures

We work in many different, cross border contexts and with people with diverse cultural backgrounds. Awareness and respect for diverse cultures and customs is key to the work we do.

Academic Integrity

We value and protect academic integrity and editorial independence. We believe everyone involved in the scholarly process (authors, reviewers, editors, volunteers) should be appreciated and acknowledged.

Professional attitude

We are committed to the mission and vision of FEMS and will conduct ourselves in a professional manner to achieve our shared goals. FEMS ensures that employees are made aware of the integrity principles and standards of behaviour.

Empowerment and personal growth

FEMS values ownership and autonomy and strives to help its employees and the employees of partner organisations to grow within their professional capacities. FEMS aims for continued professional development without hindrance, encouraging and enabling collaborations and careers to develop.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

We strive to create equal opportunity and fair treatment of all and pay specific attention to stimulating and fostering diversity and inclusivity in the workplace and during events.

C. Rules of conduct

Following these values and principles, our employees and partners will observe the following rules of conduct, set apart in several categories:

1. Fraud and corruption

All forms of fraud and corruption are strictly forbidden and should be avoided by not engaging in acts of:

- Bribery, i.e., improperly influencing the actions of another party by offering them money, goods or services, or having one's own judgement and action influenced by accepting money, goods or services.
- Blackmail and extortion, i.e., impairing or harming, or threatening to impair or harm, directly or indirectly, any party or the property of the party to influence improperly the actions of a party.
- Fraud, i.e., any act or omission, including a misrepresentation, that knowingly or recklessly misleads, or attempts to mislead, a party to obtain a financial or other benefit or to avoid an obligation.
- Tax evasion, i.e., facilitating tax evasion with funds, goods and services provided and acquired through the programs of FEMS.
- Deception, i.e., embezzling money or goods by forging or omitting facts from financial reports, activity reports or other documents that account for the use of money and goods.
- Unethical investments, i.e., investing funds provided by and acquired through the programs of FEMS in businesses or activities that conflict with the goals, interests or public image of FEMS or partner organisations of FEMS.
- Collusion, i.e., working together with another party to improperly influence the actions of FEMS or others, or to achieve an improper purpose.

2. Partiality and conflicts of interest

Actions can never be undertaken out of self-interest or the interest of an affiliated party, such as a family member or a friend. All forms of partiality and the appearance or partiality should be at all times avoided by:

- Avoiding conflicts of interest, i.e., situations in which personal interests or those of affiliated parties interfere with the interests of FEMS or partner organisations of FEMS.
- Being transparent about personal relations (family bonds, friendships or romantic relationships) you have with colleagues, program beneficiaries or third parties involved in programs of FEMS or partner organisations of FEMS.
- Avoiding secondary employment or other actions (paid or unpaid) that conflict with the goals, interests or public image of FEMS or partner organisations of FEMS.
- Seeking advice and permission for secondary employment or other actions (paid or unpaid) if you are unsure whether they conflict with the goals, interests or the public image of FEMS or partner organisations of FEMS.
- Reporting any financial interests that you have in contracts, sales or other business transactions undertaken by FEMS or partner organizations of FEMS

3. Discrimination and aggression

All forms of discrimination and aggression are unacceptable and prohibited and dealt with by:

- Not engaging in any form of discrimination and treating everyone with equal respect, regardless of race, age, ethnicity, class, religion, belief, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, health or other status.
- Not engaging in any form of aggression, slander or other forms of intimidation, whether they are of a verbal or non-verbal, physical nature.
- Speaking out against discriminatory behaviour, aggression and, in severe cases, reporting them.

4. Bullying, harassment (misuse or abuse of power)

All unwelcome behaviour that may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, insulting, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient, is recognized as bullying and is strictly forbidden. Harassment is any unwelcome verbal or physical behaviour, including sexual advances, when the unwanted conduct has the purpose or effect of either violating another person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, or humiliating environment for that person. Bullying or harassment may not be intended but often result from a misuse of individual power derived from status/position, physical strength or force of personality and as such will be condemned. Any behaviour leading to unfair treatment of an individual or group based on gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, age or any other kind of personal trait, is included in this definition.

The following types of behaviour are prohibited.

- Unwanted physical contact or physical interaction: This may range from unnecessary touching another's body, physical assault, coercive sexual relations, physical threats, insulting or abusive gestures. It may also encompass invading someone's "personal space" where this is unnecessary.
- Unwelcome verbal conduct: This may include the making of remarks and comments about appearance, lewd comments, sexual advances, innuendo and banter, the making or repetition of offensive or stereotyped comments or jokes, threats and the making of patronising comments whether in person or online.
- Unwanted written or visual interaction: This may include sending unwelcome emails, notes or pictures, and displaying or sending offensive material on any FEMS social media/websites etc.
- Harassment, bullying and victimization by electronic or digital methods. For example, this might involve: Sending emails (with or without attachments) which breach the terms of this Code. Inappropriate copying of emails to parties not seen as relevant to the discussion, as a way of intimidating or inappropriately gaining leverage over someone or some group.
- Reporting or suggesting misconduct without any evidence for the purpose of damaging someone reputation. This might involve but is not limited to false accusations of sexual harassment, fraud, or conflict of interest.

5. Health and safety

The health and safety of the people that work for FEMS or partner organisations of FEMS should be upheld by:

- Not possessing and using any recreational drugs during working hours, or during working trips.
- Not using alcohol during working hours, unless authorised to do so in case of a dinner, reception or other festivities.
- Following the travel and safety instructions provided by your organisation.

6. Information and confidentiality

All confidential information about FEMS, partner organisations of FEMS and about the people we work with, should be kept strictly confidential by:

- Keeping the information and carriers of information (documents, laptops, USB keys, etc.) secure and storing them in a secure location.
- Not disclosing confidential information to the public, such as the media, except when explicitly required by law or your organisation to do so.
- Respecting the privacy of your colleagues and other people you work with and adhering to internal and legal privacy laws and regulations.
- Seeking advice and permission if you are unsure whether the information is regarded confidential.

D. Grievance procedure

Reports or complaints, or information from staff relating to such complaints, will be dealt with fairly, confidentially, and sensitively. FEMS will investigate all reports, and investigations will be conducted in an unbiased manner. Complaints or grievances should be filed as soon as possible after the incident.

There are multiple ways in which to file a complaint or grievance. It is always preferred to talk first and in person with your line manager or with the Executive Director and even possibly the President. If you feel safer writing or sending a message this can also be the start of the procedure.

- In person by talking to the line manager (or next higher level of management if the line manager is a party to the grievance)
- By email or letter to the Executive Director (or in case the Executive Director is a party to the grievance, the President of FEMS).
- By using a mailbox as communicated on the website, which includes anonymous reporting as an option.

ACAS Code of good practices

The complaints handling procedure will be followed according to the ACAS advice on how to approach bullying, harassment or discrimination at work and in a more general sense, grievances related to misconduct will be handled according to the ACAS guide for discipline and grievance at work. In most cases FEMS will tend to resolve the complaint informally first. Dealing with it informally means taking steps to resolve the complaint without using a formal procedure like a grievance.

<https://www.acas.org.uk/handling-a-bullying-harassment-discrimination-complaint/dealing-informally>

<https://www.acas.org.uk/acas-guide-to-discipline-and-grievances-at-work>

The complaints handling procedure has three stages:

1. Submission to a line manager or where complaints of bullying or harassment involve line manager approaches should be made to the Executive Director, Secretary General, President or another appropriate manager, director or trustee. The first thing after submission is to talk to the person raising the issue. This can help to understand more about the issue, and what might help resolve it.
2. Investigation will be conducted in an unbiased manner. The General Secretary of FEMS is responsible for the investigation process unless that individual is party to the grievance. In such circumstances another impartial party will be nominated as Investigation Officer. The person looking into the complaint should look for evidence that supports the complaint, and any evidence that undermines it.

They should ask for any evidence from the person who raised the complaint, anyone the complaint is about, and any witnesses. They should also keep a record of any evidence they find, and the steps they've taken to look for it.

3. Review of the handling of the complaint might be undertaken, upon an appeal, by the FEMS President or the Board member appointed by the President. This appeal process will check to ensure the correct procedures have been followed and applied fairly.

Counselling

Counselling or mediation may be used where appropriate, particularly where investigation shows no cause for disciplinary action, or where doubt is cast on the validity of the complaint. Counselling may be used to resolve the issue or help support the person accused as well as the complainant.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of the complaint process is crucial to achieving satisfactory results, as it protects the complainant, the subject of the complaint and other witnesses. The fact and nature of the complaints, the identities of those involved and documentation resulting from the investigation are to remain confidential and are only shared on a need-to know-basis with the aim of performing the necessary administrative investigation.

E. Adherence to the Code of Conduct

The signatory accepts the consequences of a violation of any of the above provisions under this Code of Conduct.

1. All staff are required to sign the Code of Conduct and this signed document forms an integral part of the employment contract, the associate contract or volunteer/interim contract or assignment.
2. All individuals attending FEMS conferences or meetings, or gatherings associated with FEMS are requested to comply with the Code of Conduct (upon online registration or declaration).

The signed Code of Conduct is valid until the signatory ceases to represent or work for FEMS or until a revised version of the Code of Conduct has been signed.

Any upheld breach of this Code of Conduct will not be tolerated and may, in accordance with relevant legislation, lead to internal disciplinary actions, dismissal or even criminal prosecution. Such action may be taken against both staff and organisations depending on the nature of the problem, the results of the investigation and proposed measures.



Dr Hilary Lappin-Scott, FEMS President

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