

***MeTooAnthro*: Best practice guidelines and action plan for events**

All academic institutions and professional associations have a collective responsibility to respond to, and prevent, their members from being significantly impacted by issues related to any form of discrimination, gender-based violence, and sexual assault and harassment. This relates to sexual assault and harassment that takes place at or prior to events such as professional meetings, where there is a danger of those impacted being required to interact with perpetrators. Professional associations must uphold this responsibility even as they adjudicate the benefits or bestowal of membership.

This document outlines guiding principles for responsive strategies and ways to navigate interpersonal action for **allies** (page 2), **members** of professional associations and other event attendees (page 3), and **academic institutions and professional associations** (page 4) to draw on. Those planning on hosting #MeToo-centred events, panels, or training may also wish to reflect on and implement these points.

These guidelines are intended to be used as a resource and starting point for anyone who wants to respond to issues of sexual misconduct or organise collective action, but is not sure how to do so. We recognise that in these situations, people in varied career stages and varied roles relative to the situation feel uncertain about how to react constructively and actively. Here, we have outlined options for responding that are the most effective in creating a productive, inclusive, research space and which welcome all of us to change our own behaviour for the better. We also recognise that professionals living and working in diverse global contexts encounter, utilise, or are even hindered by distinct legal frameworks in responding to issues of sexual assault and harassment. As such, this series of best practice guidelines are written using broad language, intended to be applicable in various settings.

As a disclaimer, we advise you not to treat this list as a text that should be strictly followed, but as a compilation of pre-emptive, contemporaneous, and post-event strategies to reflect on, consider, and implement in appropriate ways as you see fit. Most importantly, it is also a living document – if you have any further suggestions, or ways to revise, please send an email to metooanthro@gmail.com.

We would like to sincerely thank those who developed or collaborated with us on this work, both unnamed, and named (including Holly Walters, Amy Hanes, Austin Lawrence, Kersten Bergstrom, MeTooSTEM, Rine Vieth, Esther R Anderson, and Mythily Meher).

Action for allies:

None of these suggestions are labour that should be expected of individuals, given the detracting cost of hypervigilance on scholarly work. However, in the absence of an immediate, appropriate action or response by the professional association, it is important to act as an ally to others in the moment, if you feel you can.

Consider – disparate power structures impact different people in different ways (e.g. students, precariously-employed scholars, those with disabilities, First Nations and Indigenous people, LGBTQIA+ people, or People of Colour). Although an issue may not impact you personally, consider how it has affected others, and recognise the validity of others’ feelings. Also consider whether survivors and some allies may not be in a position to directly and safely address the issue. Do they feel unsafe? If not, and if desired, are you able to assist them in practical ways, without impacting your own safety or mental health?

Avoid – positioning those impacted as ‘victims’ – many prefer the term ‘survivors’. However, this is a subjective experience of self-identifying; more simply, it may be preferable to recognise that a person has been impacted, and that they should be understood as such. Also, do not share someone else’s story (in person or online) without their direct permission, and without clarifying what can and cannot be shared (i.e. name, gender, story, university, country). #MeToo sessions may wish to limit use of social media amongst audience members, including banning photography or reproducing quotes, to allow freer sharing.

Centring others – providing support and calling for change should be about action and impact that benefits survivors, rather than your own recognition. Remember that even if you do not receive credit for your support, or are not central to the action, your efforts and support matter a lot.

Check in – with intent and sincerity, not just with survivors, but anyone who may be in need of support or is without immediate support networks. Ask what they need, and how you can help them in practical ways. If it is within your means or ability, offer to listen, spend time, or provide financial support (shared taxi rides, a meal, etc). It is okay to ask someone what they want or need in the moment, but be aware of the fact that they may not be able to ask for or even identify what they need in the moment

Responsibly mobilise the whisper network – “XXX person is in attendance, known to have done XXX. They should not be here.” Create a palpable unwelcoming feeling towards perpetrators. Note that this does not mean engaging in hearsay, gossip, or vilifying an individual over a sour but consensual encounter/relationship.

Identify yourself – it may be helpful to find a way to identify yourself as an ally (if you feel comfortable doing so), to create a visible temporary support network. Some events have *#MeToo* ribbons or badges – is this applicable to you or your association?

Action for members:

Solidarity in numbers – collect signatures for open letters, call for action, flood conference hashtags.

Create an allied network – larger associations in particular may benefit from creating an allied network, where publicly self-identifying as an ally is optional. If no such network already exists, is it worthwhile considering making one? Alternatively, are academic unions an appropriate or useful avenue for recourse?

Boycott – stop paying dues/fees, stop registering for conferences, stop offering to speak or to run panels/roundtables/events until an adequate response is publicly proffered and those impacted are satisfied.

Resignation – if the association fails to respond to a situation adequately, call for the resignation of the board/executive. Further, if it does not already exist, demand the creation of a new position on a new board similar to the American Anthropological Association

ombudsperson¹ (i.e. someone empowered to respond immediately and directly on-the-ground should a situation involving discrimination, gender-based violence, or sexual assault and harassment arise elsewhere).

Target the next event – reconsider signing up and submitting abstracts; dissuade key speakers from joining in, with explanations of past events. Venues, sponsors, and stallholders should be discouraged from participating.

Alternatives – if the association does not respond appropriately, and the conference or event is a ground for predation, find alternative venues and forums for sharing your research. Be cognizant, however, that not all participants are comfortable in bars or at ‘happy hour’ events. Have an ethos of inclusion when planning ‘after hours’ or alternative networking, presentation, or working events, and be mindful of others’ needs.

Ask questions – for events hosted by other associations, email in advance and ask what policies are in place or how they will respond and improve practices. Attend Annual General Meetings and ask leadership structures how they will make their associations safer places.

Action for academic institutions and professional associations:

Take pre-emptive action – committees are not always capable of knowing relevant details about members, including any potential histories of perpetrating discrimination, harassment, or assault), but pre-emptive measures could involve:

- a. Revision of ethical codes²
- b. Developing a code of conduct, either in the code of ethics or in separate policy documents that outlines acceptable behaviour both *at* conferences, and more broadly, expectations of membership in *other* spaces, with consequences such as expulsion or

¹ See: the American Anthropological Association’s note on naming Ombudspersons for Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

(<https://www.americananthro.org/StayInformed/NewsDetail.aspx?ItemNumber=24509>).

² See: the American Anthropological Association’s Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault, 2018 (http://s3.amazonaws.com/rdcms-aaa/files/production/public/AAA_SH_Policy_2018.pdf); the American Anthropological Association’s Important Note Concerning 2019 AAA/CASCA Meeting Safety, 2019 (http://s3.amazonaws.com/rdcms-aaa/files/production/public/Annual_meeting_safety_procedures.pdf); the American Geophysical Union’s Scientific Integrity and Professional Ethics Policy, 2017 (<https://ethics.agu.org/files/2013/03/Scientific-Integrity-and-Professional-Ethics.pdf>).

removal. These should include consequences for transgressing codes of conduct, such as member suspension or expulsion from the association or removal from the event.

How will you disseminate this code of conduct before events in an accessible manner? Consider the following suggestions:

- i. Providing a link to the code of ethics on the conference abstract submission page or other relevant even page.
 - ii. Requiring members to check a box stating that they agree to abide by the code of ethics when submitting an abstract for consideration at a conference.
 - iii. Stipulating that all principal authors of papers should be members (thereby providing oversight regarding the presentation of papers by expelled members).
- c. There should be no allowance of an absence of b), but in lieu of such documents and policies being developed or revised, a commitment should be made by board/committee members to act in accordance with principles of empathy and kindness, morality, and shared values as well as with their association's stated policies and codes of conduct on sexual harassment and assault.
- d. Many institutions and associations are not equipped to act as investigative bodies and, as such, are not always able to decisively respond immediately. However, institutions should have policies in place for what actions they can take in the event that they are awaiting notice of decisions from institutions of survivors/perpetrators, as well as in the event that the institution's decision differs from the society's view of the situation.
- e. Most academic institutions have sexual misconduct policies or appropriate training programs in place. Committee members of professional associations should demonstrate to the executive that they have completed relevant programs, or, otherwise, the association should require committee members to complete a training program of their choosing, relating to how to support others through trauma.
- f. Professional associations may wish to add an executive liaison position to coordinate between institutions and the association. This position would serve as the primary point of contact for issues of sexual assault and harassment for the association, including communicating with institutions when a student or faculty member has been found responsible of sexual misconduct. Additionally, this person should have detailed knowledge of association policies and act as a guide and ally to those impacted through reporting procedures and follow up with institutions. This should be

a rotating position within the association appointed by the association board, executive committee, etc., but accountable to members.

- g. Establishing, and transparently promoting, a reporting system that runs both:
 - i. Prior to the conference (such as an anonymous, optional reporting system to a committee member or staff member who has relevant training, resources and authority to investigate and act on complaints promptly)
 - ii. During the conference (such as ‘talk to me’ ribbons worn by committee/staff members who have the training, resources and authority to investigate and act on complaints promptly, or relevant information regarding assistance at a registration desk)

Prepare – how can it be ensured that these code and policies are implemented and enforced on the ground? What efforts can be made towards the safety and care of members or other attendees? Consult your legal team to create an action plan that can be a public document for your event.

Encourage – the creation of a visible allied network for any members who wish to participate as allies. Many associations provide identifying *#MeToo* ribbons or badges at their events. Is this a possible avenue to explore?

Call for immediate removal – if pre-emptive methods are ineffective, and perpetrators attend an event, consider how a designated person on the event organising committee might swiftly and appropriately remove them from the premises, in a way that does not place the onus of responsibility on survivors or allies.

Avoid re-traumatisation – survivors should not be expected to repeatedly disclose their experiences, either as part of pre-emptive action or institutional bureaucracy, unless they wish to. Ensure survivors have control over their own narratives at all times. The person accepting reports should have appropriate training in responding to individuals who have experienced trauma.

Be accountable – recognise economic, academic, and social cost of such incidents, and how inappropriate it is for survivors and allies to take on such labour, in lieu of institutional action. Are refunds for conference fees required, in the instances where survivors had to leave

the event early? Does counselling need to be offered? Are alternative opportunities to present scholarly work required?

Make social media transparent – do not hide behind closed doors with legal counsel. Come out, speak to the survivors, get the story, and act swiftly and accordingly. If there are mistakes, apologise and move on, focusing on the issue at hand (sexual misconduct) and harm. An institution's reputation is strengthened by transparency and responsible ethical conduct. Do not delete social media posts and comments, and do not block survivors or those who may have legitimate criticisms or suggestions for improving best practices.

Apologise – Make formal personal and public apologies to survivors affected by inaction, ineffective policies and/or the mishandling of information resulting in any type of re-traumatization and/or traumatization. Apologize to all members publicly for inaction, for mishandling information, for ineffective policies and/or for causing distress or trauma of any kind. Apologize for all missteps publicly. As part of making these apologies, take responsibility and determine how and why these transgressions were allowed to happen. Explain what will be done to create a safer space in future.

Offer a post-field debrief – for both the board/committee and association members:

- a. Check in regularly with the on-the-ground support person, conference committee, and legal team to see how your policies and action plans played out, if they are being used, and if/how they can be updated.
- b. Note that some members may only choose to report an incident after safely leaving a situation. Consider implementing a debriefing system for members, via exit surveys or an online portal.