

IAVS CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

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Approved by IAVS Governing Board in July 2020.

A. Preamble

The International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS) promotes research in vegetation science and its applications, and it provides mechanisms and opportunities for vegetation scientists to communicate with each other and with those who might benefit from their work. The IAVS Code of Professional Ethics (the Code) supports the goals of IAVS by providing guiding principles of conduct for all members of IAVS in their professional activities as vegetation scientists, whether in the context of paid employment or otherwise. The Code establishes standards to be followed in submission of manuscripts for publication in the Association's journals, for participation in IAVS-sponsored conferences and events, and for service roles in the society (e.g. Governing Board, Council, Committees and Working Groups, journal editorial roles). The Professional Ethics Committee (the Committee) will be a standing committee within IAVS that assists IAVS (the Association) in implementing the Code. The Committee will receive and respond to grievances related to the Code as outlined below; it will also be responsible for considering and proposing amendments and additions to the Code.

B. General Principles

IAVS advocates observation of the following principles by all vegetation scientists in their professional affairs, particularly, but not exclusively, in their participation in the publications and activities of IAVS.

1. In their relationship to the Association

a. Members of IAVS will not represent themselves as spokespersons for the Association unless expressly authorized by appropriate officers of the Governing Board or charged as spokespersons by Council or General Assembly.

2. In their work as vegetation scientists

a. Members of IAVS will cooperate with other researchers whenever possible and appropriate to ensure rapid interchange and dissemination of their findings.

b. Members of IAVS will not plagiarize in verbal or written communication but will give full and proper credit to the works and ideas of others, and they will make every effort to avoid misrepresentation of those works and ideas.

c. Members of IAVS will not fabricate or falsify results, deliberately misrepresent research findings, or otherwise commit scientific fraud.

d. Members of IAVS will conduct their research so as to minimize adverse effects on natural systems of their presence and activities and will do so in compliance with legal requirements for protection of researchers, human subjects, or research organisms and systems.

3. In their professional relationships with others

a. Members of IAVS will not practice or condone harassment of any sort in any professional context; they will not discriminate against others, in the course of their work, on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, creed, religion, race, national origin, citizenship, age, economic status, disability, or organizational affiliation.

b. Members of IAVS will not seek employment, grants, or economic or professional gain, nor will they attempt to injure the reputation or professional opportunities of another scientist by means of false, biased, or undocumented claims, by offers of gifts or favors, or by any other malicious action.

C. Principles for Publication

The following principles of ethical professional conduct apply to IAVS members reviewing, editing, or submitting papers for publication in the professional literature in general. They also apply, where pertinent, to abstracts for meeting presentations and to grant proposals. They will be enforced particularly with respect to all manuscripts submitted to the Association's journals. IAVS subscribes to the general guidelines and best practices in publication ethics laid out by the Association's publishers, and it incorporates these guidelines in the implementation of the Code.

1. Authorship

a. Researchers will claim authorship of a paper only if they have made a substantial contribution. Authorship may legitimately be claimed if researchers have contributed through one or more of the following means:

- i. conceived the ideas or questions addressed by the paper;
- ii. designed sampling or experiments that generated new data reported;
- iii. collected data or conducted experiments used in new analyses presented in the paper;
- iv. conducted new analyses or interpretation of data, or developed new models or simulations used in the paper;
- v. developed new analyses or meta-analyses of data drawn from previous publications or databases (such reanalysis or meta-analysis may not require authorship by original authors of datasets); or
- vi. wrote the manuscript.

b. Coauthors should be given the opportunity for review and approval of a proposed final version of a manuscript with sufficient time for feedback before submission for review. A coauthor should be dropped from a manuscript if they specifically request removal.

c. Manuscripts using data obtained through established databases or data-management consortia should follow policies established by those organizations.

d. In the case of manuscripts produced by committees or working groups, care should be taken to offer co-authorship to all individuals meeting standards for authorship. It is good practice, for papers co-authored by larger teams, to briefly describe individual contributions of team members in the paper.

e. Individuals or organizations funding or otherwise supporting research should be appropriately acknowledged. Both researchers and supporting individuals or organizations should establish a clear prior understanding concerning appropriate forms of recognition.

f. Lead authors have responsibility for ensuring that authorship guidelines are followed.

g. If authors submitting manuscripts to IAVS journals believe that the peer-review or editorial processes were not conducted in accord with stated procedures or with principles of this Code, their concerns or complaints should be lodged with the journal's Chief Editor(s) or the Professional Ethics Committee rather than being taken directly to referees or handling editors.

2. Use and presentation of data

a. Researchers will not submit for publication any manuscript containing data they are not authorized to use. IAVS assumes that the lead or corresponding author of a submitted manuscript has ensured that

unpublished data used in the paper are used in accordance with guidelines of appropriate custodians of the data. Authors submitting manuscripts using data from databanks should verify that their use of data is consistent with any restrictions or rules set by that source.

b. Researchers will not represent research results as new if they have been published or submitted elsewhere or submit a manuscript for publication while it or a substantial part of it is under review for possible publication elsewhere. The guideline regarding previous publication applies primarily to peer-reviewed, effective publication; prior presentation of some aspects of a study in dissertation form, in 'gray literature' with no external peer review, preprint archives, or in popular media may not be considered previous publication in this context.

c. IAVS encourages making original datasets and metadata available through online databases, public repositories, reprint servers, or other forms of data publication. Such publication of data does not constrain subsequent and separate peer-reviewed publication of new analyses and interpretation using these datasets.

d. When using ideas or results of others in manuscripts submitted for publication, researchers will give full attribution of sources. If the ideas or results have not been published, they may not be used without permission of the original researcher, who must also be explicitly acknowledged. Illustrations or tables from other publications or manuscripts may be used only with permission of the copyright owner and acknowledgment of the source.

e. IAVS members submitting manuscripts for publication will promptly report to editors any significant errors discovered after submission or publication; this guideline concerns, particularly, errors that might lead to changed interpretation of results.

3. Expectations regarding editors and referees

a. Editors and referees will treat manuscripts under review as confidential, recognizing them as intellectual property of the author(s).

b. IAVS members asked to serve as editors or referees of a manuscript should undertake this role only if they are confident that they have no conflict of interest that would interfere with objective evaluation of the work. If the member is uncertain whether a relationship constitutes such a conflict, they should consult with the relevant handling or managing editors.

c. IAVS members acting as reviewers or editors will not purposefully delay publication of another person's manuscript to gain advantage over that person.

d. In submitting a manuscript to an IAVS journal, authors agree to abide by the peer-review process and to pursue any complaints or issues with the process only through established editorial and professional ethics procedures.

D. Principles concerning other IAVS Activities

1. All attendees at and participants in IAVS events (including, but not limited to, workshops, field trips, and conferences) are expected to adhere to the same general principles of conduct outlined above.

2. Conference presentations at IAVS events should adhere to guidelines for author attribution and use of data laid out for publication in IAVS journals.

3. Harassment, intimidation, or discrimination in the context of IAVS events or activities is unacceptable. Unacceptable behavior should be reported immediately to meeting organizers or on-site IAVS staff. Participants or IAVS staff may choose to refer an incident to the Committee, in which case procedures described in Section F will be followed.

E. Membership and Structure of the IAVS Professional Ethics Committee

1. The Committee shall consist of:
 - a. A Committee Chair, appointed by the President of IAVS with approval of the Governing Board;
 - b. Up to five regular members, appointed by the President of IAVS in consultation with the Committee Chair; and
 - c. One of the Chief Editors of the IAVS journals, selected by the Governing Board.
2. The Committee Chair and regular members will be appointed to staggered, five-year terms. If circumstances require multiple, simultaneous appointments, the President may make some appointments for less than five years, but no less than three years.
3. The Chair will convene the Committee as required to address grievances brought to the Committee and to address tasks set by the IAVS President or Governing Board. The work of the Committee may be conducted through digital communication or through in-person meetings in conjunction with the IAVS Annual Symposium if at least a 2/3 majority of the Committee is in attendance.
4. Committee decisions and recommendations will require a simple majority of the Committee membership.

F. Procedures for Implementation of the Code of Ethics

IAVS advocates the application of the above principles in the practice of vegetation science generally. All participants in the Association's activities -- including the Association's journals, meetings and conferences organized or sponsored by the Association, and excursions and field trips sponsored or sanctioned by the Association -- are particularly expected to adhere to the Code. The Association reserves the option of enacting penalties in response to violations of the Code in the context of such Association activities.

IAVS will undertake to make its membership and researchers submitting to its journals aware of its Code of Professional Ethics, through references in its publications and on its website and by other means as appropriate. The Association's Governing Board and Chief Editors will develop operating policies and procedures that implement the ethical guidelines stated in this Code.

1. Members are encouraged to resolve issues concerning potential violations of the Code through informal interactions among individuals concerned, resorting to formal grievance procedures below if this is impossible or unsuccessful.
2. Concerns having to do specifically with IAVS publications should be brought initially to the relevant Chief Editor(s) to be addressed within the existing editorial structure. If issues cannot be resolved through these avenues, formal ethics grievances should follow procedures below.
3. Lodging of grievances related to the Code:
 - a. Any member of IAVS who believes another member of the Association has violated the Code in the context of IAVS-related activities may lodge a grievance calling for a response to that perceived violation.
 - b. Both members and non-members of IAVS may lodge grievances against members or non-members in connection with actions related to contributions to IAVS publications (as authors or reviewers) or in the context of IAVS-sponsored events and activities.

c. Grievances submitted to the Committee should be communicated to the Chair of the Committee; all subsequent communications between grievant, respondent, and other individuals concerning the grievance or complaint should be transmitted through the Committee Chair,

4. Review of grievances

a. Upon receipt of a formal grievance, the Chair of the Committee will communicate the grievance to the members of the Committee and to the President of IAVS. The Committee may, at this point, request further information from the grievant.

b. Individuals accused of violating the Code will be notified at this point by the Committee Chair of the existence and nature of the grievance, and they will be invited to make a written response to the grievance in general and to particular points as requested by the Committee.

c. After receipt of materials related to a) and b), the Committee will assess evidence and attempt to reach a conclusion as to whether the Code was violated. If further information is needed, the Committee may request such information from the grievant, the accused individual, or other IAVS members who might have direct involvement (e.g., editors, co-authors, IAVS officers) before reaching a judgment.

d. In its considerations and actions in review of a grievance, the Committee shall maintain confidentiality insofar as possible. Individuals accused of violation of the Code shall be informed of the identity of the grievant. Either party to a grievance may specifically request that other individuals be contacted by the Committee to support their position or claims. In general, however, prior to completion of the review, identities of the grievant and the accused, and the nature of the grievance should be communicated only as essential to the conduct of the review.

e. Following review and deliberation, the Committee may determine either that i) the evidence is convincing that a breach of the Code did, in fact, occur, or ii) there is not sufficient evidence to reach that conclusion, or iii) no violation of the Code occurred. The Committee's conclusion, with supporting evidence and reasoning, will be reported in confidence to the IAVS President, along with the Committee's recommendations of any actions to be taken (see below).

f. The President will, in discussion with the Governing Board, decide either to accept, modify, or reject the Committee's determination and recommendation. The President may choose to call for further information and deliberation by the Committee on specific points and may suggest additions or modifications to the Committee's Report, before making their decision. Any modifications are at the discretion of the Committee. The President will convey the decision of the President and Governing Board, along with the Committee's final report, to the grievant and the accused, along with any penalties or measures adopted.

5. Potential penalties for violations of Code:

a. If review of a grievance leads to a conclusion by the Committee that a violation has occurred, the Committee may recommend responses or penalties. This recommendation, with rationale, will be submitted to the IAVS President along with the report of the Committee's deliberation and determination.

b. Recommended measures in response to violations of the Code may include, in order of increasing severity:

i) no official measures beyond a communication of the findings to the parties involved;

ii) a formal letter of reprimand communicated to the parties involved and kept on file with appropriate officers of IAVS;

iii) a formal letter of reprimand communicated to the employer or host institution of the individuals judged to have violated the Code;

iv) limitations on an individual's right to publish in IAVS journals or on participation in future IAVS-sponsored events (either as attendee or as presenter) or on holding official roles within IAVS for a specified period of time;

v) expulsion from IAVS.

c. In assessing appropriate penalties, the Committee should consider both the severity and nature of the violation; the more severe penalties should be reserved for particularly egregious or repeated violations. The Chair of the Editors or Chief Editor of the journal concerned should be specifically consulted concerning penalties involving access to or participation in IAVS journals.

d. The Committee's role with respect to penalties is advisory to the President; final determination of the penalty will be on approval of the President.

6. Appeals and Exceptions

a. Appeals of decisions or penalties as outlined above may be made to the IAVS Governing Board, who will consider the appeal independent of the President's input. Any decision by the Governing Board concerning an appeal will be final.

b. If the President is a subject of a grievance, then the roles of the President as outlined above will be taken by the Governing Board as a body, without the participation of the President; any decision of the Governing Board in this case will be final.

c. If any member of the Committee or of the Governing Board is the subject of a grievance, that individual will be excluded from the processes outlined above. If that individual is the Chair of the Committee, Committee members will choose another member to act as Chair. If the representative of IAVS Chief Editors is a subject of a grievance, the President of IAVS should appoint another of the IAVS Chief Editors to serve in an *ad hoc* role on the Committee.

G. Review and Amendment of the IAVS Code of Professional Ethics

1. Any member of IAVS may suggest modifications of or additions to the Code. Suggestions should be communicated to the Chair of the Professional Ethics Committee. The Committee will deliberate on potential amendments and may choose to submit proposed amendments to the Governing Board.

2. The Governing Board may direct the Committee to formulate and propose amendments addressing specific issues or needs. The Committee will report back to the Governing Board with its recommendation regarding such amendments.

3. The Chief Editors may call upon the Committee to formulate and propose amendments addressing aspects of the Code pertaining to IAVS publications. The Committee will report its recommendations on such amendments to the Governing Board.

4. In all cases, the final decision concerning modifications to the Code rests with the Governing Board.