

MAA Code of Conduct: In Support of a Welcoming and Inclusive Community

I. Statement of Purpose

For there was always light, if only we are brave enough to see it. If only we are brave enough to be it.
-- Amanda Gorman, January 2021

The Mathematical Association of America's (MAA) mission, values, and vision call us to take a hard look at our policies and practices, and insist that we adopt new ways of viewing each other and living our professional lives. We welcome and celebrate progress while recognizing the historical legacy of prejudice and false ideas of who can succeed in mathematics. MAA is committed to addressing the entrenched inequalities that remain so that we can grow together to more effectively pursue our vision of a society that values the power and beauty of mathematics and fully realizes its potential to promote human flourishing.

The MAA was founded in 1915, five years before the ratification of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote, and fifty years before the Voting Rights Act established legal protections for Black citizens' right to vote. It was only in 1987 that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from their list of mental disorders, yet the rights of LGBTQ individuals still are not adequately protected by law. Further, in spite of the legal protections that do exist, new ways of rationalizing the marginalization of women and underrepresented people continue to undermine the intent of those legal protections that do exist.

The mathematical sciences do not exist outside of society, but are practiced by members of society, who have the same limitations as our fellow human beings. Historically, the norms of mathematics were set by and for a community of white males. While we acknowledge the progress made over the last half-century to bring more diverse voices into our profession, we must also acknowledge the toxic consequences of sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination that continue to disadvantage so many. That inequity is reflected in numbers of women and other historically marginalized groups in our professions.

It is not enough for us to simply modify our own behavior and "do our best" as individuals. Rather, if we are to live our values, we must pursue collective effort to speak against attitudes and behavior that continue to harm less-privileged members of our profession and our society. To do less is to diminish ourselves and our profession.

II. Code of Conduct

The MAA strives to integrate the Core Values of community, inclusivity, communication, and teaching & learning across all its work. The MAA is advancing the understanding of mathematics and its impact on our world, and strives to facilitate and support environments that foster this goal. As a professional society, the MAA is committed to providing an inclusive climate that encourages the open expression and exchange of ideas, that is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, and that is welcoming and comfortable to all members and to those who participate in its activities. In pursuit of that commitment, the MAA is dedicated to the practice of equal opportunity, treatment, participation, and outcomes for all regardless of gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion or religious belief, age, marital status, disabilities, veteran status, field of expertise, or any other reason not related to scientific merit. This philosophy applies to all MAA activities including conferences, publications, programs, and governing structures and bodies.

The MAA expects the standards set in this Code, as articulated below, to be upheld by its members; leaders; staff; awardees; and participants in meetings, conferences, events, or social media exchanges regardless of the capacity in which they are performing (be it as an individual, organizer, delegate, speaker, sponsor, exhibitor, or in any other capacity). Many of the principles in the Code are designed to ensure that individuals feel safe, comfortable, and welcomed when engaging with the MAA community.

The code applies to the behavior of members of the MAA and individuals who interact with the MAA in their professional lives. These expectations apply to the teaching, research, service, and other duties carried out by MAA members in their workplace and their behavior in the mathematical community. Violations of any part of this Code can be reported as detailed in [Section VII](#) and may result in consequences described therein.

III. Expectations for Participation in MAA Communities

We expect that the MAA staff, MAA members, and affiliated parties (non-members attending or supporting MAA events) will:

- promote the study, application, teaching and understanding of mathematics;
- act with integrity, and strive to be objective, unbiased, and truthful in all aspects of our work;
- act to support MAA's commitment to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion;
- never intentionally discriminate against another person on the basis of gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion or religious belief, age, marital status, disabilities, veteran status, field of expertise, or any other reason not related to scientific merit;
- avoid biased, demeaning, intimidating, coercive, or harassing/hostile conduct or commentary, whether seriously or in jest (e.g., based on power differential, gender [sex, identity, expression], sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or national origin, religion, marital status, veteran status, age, body size or other physical appearance, disability, or other identities);
- never bully, abuse, victimize, or engage in harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment, whether via spoken or written words, emails, offensive images or graffiti, social media posts, or any other means;
- avoid injuring others, their property, reputation, or employment by false or malicious action;
- be respectful of the privacy of others and the protection of their personal information and data;
- accept and offer honest criticism of technical work, acknowledge and correct errors, and credit properly the contributions of others;
- do not claim authorship of something that is not yours and do not claim sole authorship of something created with another person or in a group setting;
- demonstrate that differing perspectives are valued by critiquing only ideas (not people);
- answer questions about conduct concerns in a forthright and complete manner;
- assist colleagues and co-workers in their professional development and support them in following this code of conduct;
- avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest whenever possible, and disclose them to affected parties when they do exist.

IV. Expectations for Safe and Inclusive Meetings

The MAA is committed to, and benefits from, the full and equitable participation of a diverse community in its membership, in its activities, and in the audiences that it serves. Hence, the MAA wants to maintain a welcoming environment for all its meetings.

The MAA expects that all communication should be appropriate for a professional audience including people of many different backgrounds. The MAA will make every effort to maintain, at all its meetings, a respectful environment that is free of harassment, bullying, retaliation, and discrimination of any kind for all attendees.

The MAA considers that harassment, intimidation, or discrimination includes offensive comments and actions related to age, gender, gender identity and gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, ethnicity, marital status, nationality, political affiliation, educational background, or any other characteristic protected by law; sexual images in public spaces; deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following; harassing photography or recording; sustained disruption of talks or other events; inappropriate physical contact; and unwelcome sexual attention.

The MAA expects that attendees to its meetings who either witness or are made aware of discrimination, harassment, or bullying by others should actively seek to prevent, report, and/or otherwise mitigate the offensive behavior. Violations may be reported confidentially and anonymously as described in [Section VII](#). The reporting mechanism ensures the respect of privacy while alerting the MAA to the situation.

For MAA events and meetings, organizers are encouraged to review the policies of the meeting site to ensure that there are no conflicts with this Code of Conduct.

V. Expectations for Social Media Use

The MAA strives to use social media as a mechanism for learning from one another. Therefore, anyone sharing social media content or engaging in conversations on behalf of MAA or within MAA's social media communities is asked to adhere to the following Social Media Use expectations. Here "social media" refers to websites and applications that are designed to allow people to share content quickly, efficiently, and in real-time. This ability to share photos, videos, opinions, events, and other content empowers individuals to connect with each other in new and exciting ways. With this ability comes great responsibility; this policy describes expectations for all who participate in social media on behalf of or within MAA.

To support the MAA's goal of advancing excellence by enabling equitable and full engagement and contributions by all, conduct on social media must meet Expectations for Participation in MAA Communities and the following requirements specific to social media:

- Be collaborative. Be mindful not to exert dominance over others. Consider the effect of relationship, position, experience, privilege, and power differentials.
- Be careful not to share content that is not your own without permission or appropriate attribution.
- Consider accessibility issues for your posts, including captions for videos and alt text for images and other visual elements.
- Where possible, respectfully seek input from individuals of varied identities and roles.
- Remember that local posts can have global significance. Once a post has been published, it can be referenced and shared with others outside of the initial network where it was posted, whether by word of mouth or reposting.
- If in doubt about whether a particular post is appropriate, it may be better not to post. Use sound judgment, common sense, and consider having trusted colleagues review the post prior to making it public.
- Be respectful in online interactions, especially when encountering criticism and disagreement, and even—where possible—when encountering rude or offensive language. It may be helpful to step away from an interaction that is causing distress or frustration and return to it later, or to disengage from the source.

Note About Differences of Opinion and Offense. It is not a violation of MAA's Social Media Conduct Policy to express an opinion, point to research, or describe an experience ("articulation") that is at odds with the opinions of or is offensive to others, provided the articulation is part of an on-point discussion and is offered in a manner that does not interfere with others' reasonable ability to participate fully. That means expressing differing positions with respect and consideration for all, in a manner that reflects intellectual rigor and is demonstrably mindful of minimizing, as much as possible, any potential adverse effect on others' ability to participate. (Offering an advance warning of the potential for impact on others is one way to demonstrate such respect and consideration for all.) It also means not making an articulation that is reasonably expected to cause offense gratuitously (i.e., unrelated or unnecessary for the discussion at hand). It means not directing the articulation as a personal attack or put-down of an individual and not dominating the discussion. It further means demonstrating consideration for anyone who appears to be in distress by promptly stopping the cause and demonstrating caring, while still pursuing a way to share pertinent information, with assistance from community members as appropriate.

VI. Expectations for Leadership, Awards, and Honors

The MAA selects individuals for leadership positions, and confers honors and awards for exemplary writing, teaching, and service, and such decisions are determined in the Association's judgment and discretion. When the MAA selects leaders and awardees, the decision reflects the Association's judgment that an individual's contributions to, and effect on, the field are exemplary. The MAA considers the effect on the field of the totality of the individual's work, professional and ethical conduct, and reputation. It expects those who hold leadership positions or receive awards to demonstrate that participation in and recognition by the field are privileges; and that the field's leaders, and others it celebrates, embody highly professional and ethical conduct in their work. Unethical conduct perpetuates long standing structural and systemic barriers to full participation of all talent in the field, which have an immediate adverse impact on individuals and undermine excellence in the field.

In particular, the MAA strives through the selection of leaders and awardees to both honor specific kinds of professional accomplishments, and to collectively represent a vision of our profession that is inclusive, and to inspire current and future members of the mathematics community towards a future that embraces our vision of a society that values the power and beauty of mathematics and fully realizes its potential to promote human flourishing.

The MAA retains the right to grant, defer, or decline to grant an Honor to any person. The MAA also retains the right to revoke or suspend an Honor already granted if, in its judgment and discretion, the MAA determines that it is in the best interests of the field to do so. Suspension means the Honor (and the ability of the recipient to exercise any associated privileges and rights) are held in abeyance until notice by the MAA that the Honor is reinstated or revoked.

The MAA finds, in its discretion, that determined unethical conduct of a current or prospective holder of an Honor—as well as credible, but undetermined, questions about the ethical conduct of such an individual—can contribute to longstanding structural and systemic barriers in the field. Consequently, for the purpose of placing heavier weight on what is best for excellence in the field than what is best for any individual when the two must be balanced, the MAA will not confer any leadership position, prize, or award, on any individual whose conduct has been determined to be unethical. That determination will be based on the MAA's own review or investigation and, if useful in the MAA's discretion, the MAA's consideration of any others' determinations (with supporting information) made available to the Association.

The MAA may choose not to confer any leadership position, award, or honor on an individual whose ethical conduct is the subject of a credible question known to the Association, as long as the question has not been finally and favorably determined to the MAA's satisfaction, in its discretion. Determined unethical conduct may also justify suspension or revocation of any leadership roles or awards; and a credible but undetermined question of ethical conduct may justify suspension. When applying this policy in situations of credible but undetermined questions, the MAA is withholding judgment and is not making a statement or determination regarding any individual. Rather, the Association is implementing a prophylactic measure to support the field's priority efforts to break down long standing barriers to excellence.

The MAA's conferral of an honor is an exercise of its discretion, not an obligation. The MAA, in its discretion, may suspend or revoke an honor if its assessment of the recipient's actual or potential impact on the field changes for any mission-driven reason.

VII. Reporting, Follow Up, and Whistleblower Policy

New procedures for reporting violations, how these reports will be investigated, and the consequences for violations are being developed. The intent is to create a sustainable compliance committee, trained in handling complaints, particularly in the area of sensitivity to those who have reported violations. Until the details of a new procedures have been implemented, MAA will follow the current process:

Violations may be reported directly to the Executive Director or the Compliance Officer (Vice President). For immediate concerns at a meeting, proceed to the registration area or hotel/convention center security office.

Whistle Blower Protection Policy

General

The MAA will not tolerate intimidation, coercion, or discrimination of any kind against employees or other individuals who file complaints or who testify, assist, or participate in any manner in an investigation or hearing. All such acts against complainants or other participants should be reported immediately to the Executive Director or Compliance Officer (Vice President).

Reporting Responsibility

It is the responsibility of all Directors, Officers, members and employees to comply with the Code of Ethics and to report violations or suspected violations in accordance with this Whistleblower Policy.

No Retaliation

No Director, Officer, member, or employee who in good faith reports a violation of the Code of Ethics shall suffer harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequences. An employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment. A volunteer may be removed from an appointment or elected position.

This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns within the MAA prior to seeking resolution outside the Association.

Reporting Violations

The Code establishes the MAA's open door policy and suggests that employees and members share their questions, concerns, suggestions or complaints with someone who can address them properly. In most cases, an employee's supervisor is in the best position to address an area of concern. However, if the employee is not comfortable speaking with his or her supervisor or the employee is not satisfied with their supervisor's response, the employee is encouraged to speak to anyone in management, including the Executive Director, whom they are comfortable in approaching. Supervisors and managers are required to report suspected violations of the Code of Ethics to the Executive Director, who has specific and exclusive responsibility to investigate all reported violations. In the case of a suspected violation of the Code of Ethics by the Executive Director, a report should be filed with the Compliance Officer. For suspected fraud, or when the employee is not satisfied or is uncomfortable with reporting to the MAA management, an individual should contact the MAA's Compliance Officer (Vice President).

Members should report suspected violations either to the Executive Director or the MAA Compliance Officer. The Executive Director will report all violations of the Code of Ethics, actions taken, and

resolutions to the MAA's Compliance Officer. For immediate concerns at a meeting, members should proceed to the registration area to contact MAA staff or otherwise the hotel/convention center security office.

Compliance Officer

The MAA's Compliance Officer is responsible for ensuring that all reported complaints and allegations concerning violations of the Code of Ethics have been properly investigated and resolved and, at his or her discretion, shall advise the Executive Director and/or the Audit Committee. The Compliance Officer has direct access to the Audit Committee of the Board of Directors and is required to report to the Audit Committee at least annually on compliance activity.

Acting in Good Faith

Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation of the Code of Ethics should act in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation of the Code. Any allegations made by staff members that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense and will be handled accordingly. Allegations made by members that prove to be malicious or knowingly false will be reported to the Board of Directors and the member may be censured and relieved of MAA duties.

Confidentiality

Violations or suspected violations may be submitted on a confidential basis by the complainant or may be submitted anonymously. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

Handling of Reported Violations

The Compliance Officer will notify the sender (if not anonymous) and acknowledge receipt of the reported violation or suspected violation within one month of the next Board of Directors meeting following the filing of a complaint. All reports will be promptly investigated and appropriate action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.

Sections I-VI Approved by Board of Directors, May 2021.

Section VII. Whistleblower Policy passed by the Board of Governors, November 2005 via email ballot.
Amended by the Executive Committee, January 2015 and July 2015
Amended by the Board of Directors on July 25, 2017 to reflect bylaws approved January 7, 2017.