

Seminar Code of Conduct

The Department of Biology at Wilfrid Laurier University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming space for our Seminar Series. Our overarching aim is to provide a collegial, safe, accessible and intellectually stimulating atmosphere advocating for equity, scientific rigour, and mutual respect.

Biology Seminar participants agree and should uphold that seminar interactions will be free of bullying, harassment and discrimination. *“This professional standard is especially important when interactions involve power differentials, because these behaviours have adverse impacts on the careers of scientists and the proper conduct of science.” [1]*

Our Code of Conduct will apply to all seminar participants (internal and external), including speakers, faculty, staff, students, postdocs, guests and other attendees. We have designed this Code of Conduct as a detailed supplement to current Laurier institutional policies and codes that govern behaviour for all university members.

I. Expectations of Appropriate Conduct [2]

- We should show courtesy and respect to other attendees.
- We should practice inclusive and welcoming behaviours.
- We are expected to be respectful of diverse experiences and perspectives.
- We should ask permission from the seminar speaker and audience members before sharing screenshots, content and/or photos on social media.
- Our interactions are expected to be professional in-person or virtually.

II. Examples of Inappropriate Conduct [1,2]

- We should not use prejudicial language (oral/written) that is considered discrimination, i.e. would exclude people based on their race, ethnicity, colour, national origin, cultural background, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, religion, physical/intellectual/developmental disability,

political affiliation, pregnancy or pregnancy role, veteran status, socioeconomic status or any other characteristic protected by applicable laws [1,3].

- We should be civil during interactions and refrain from *“sustained disruption of talks, events or communication; insults or put downs; sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, or exclusionary jokes; excessive swearing.”* [2]
- We need to be conscientious not to cause any participant fear and anxiety for their safety (e.g. deliberate intimidation, inappropriate attention, unwanted contact, violent threats, stalking, following, etc.). [1,2]
- We should not display violent and/or sexual images that would be deemed unwelcome and personally offensive. [1,2]
- Our interactions must be free of bullying, which is defined as any *“aggressive behaviour involving the use of influence, threat, intimidation, or coercion to dominate others in the professional environment.”* [2]
- Our interactions must be free of sexual harassment or misconduct. These include but are not limited to *“unwelcome sexual attention; nonconsensual or unwelcome physical contact, offensive or degrading remarks, sexist slurs, or demeaning comments.”* [2]
- We must not publish private communication without prior informed consent.
- We need to remember that acceptability of certain behaviours vary from person to person. It is important to always use discretion to ensure mutual respect. *“Harassment intended in a joking manner nevertheless constitutes unacceptable behavior. Retaliation for reporting harassment is also a violation of this policy, as is reporting an incident in bad faith. It is essential to remember that it is the perception by the observer and/or receiver of any of the above, **not the intent by the perpetrator**, that constitutes a violation of the code of conduct.”* [1]

III. **Reporting Inappropriate Conduct**

We can report our concerns (experienced directly or witnessed) to Dr. Matt Smith, Chair of Biology (Email: msmith@wlu.ca). If people are uncomfortable directly reporting to the Chair, they can confidentially contact their direct supervisor (Research PI, Course Instructor, Lab Coordinator, etc.) who can then forward their concerns privately to the Chair. All correspondence will be confidential and a response to the complaint and/or corrective actions will be undertaken as soon as possible.

IV. **Consequences of Inappropriate Conduct**

Inappropriate behaviours during the seminars will be subject to immediate actions by the seminar moderator:

- Being warned and/or asked to stop.

- Being asked to leave the seminar.
- Being automatically muted or signed out by the host (for Zoominars).

If complaints are received after the event, we will follow a standardized protocol according to university policies.

V. Supports and Mechanisms are Available beyond the Department of Biology:

- For students: <https://students.wlu.ca/wellness-and-recreation/human-rights-and-conflict-management/finding-the-right-office.html>.
- For employees: <https://lauriercloud.sharepoint.com/sites/dispute-resolution/Pages/finding-the-right-office.aspx>.

Acknowledgement: *This Seminar Code of Conduct was primarily based and adapted from those developed by ASPB (for the Plant Biology Meeting), NAASC (for the International Conference in Arabidopsis Research) and CSEE (for their EDI statement). I heavily drew on and eventually modified these resources. This document is not intended to be viewed as fully original but an amalgamation of the ASPB/NAASC/CSEE Codes of Conducts. (Danve Castroverde)*

References:

- [1] *American Society of Plant Biologists*. Plant Biology Worldwide Summit 2021 Code of Conduct. Accessed October 15, 2021 URL: <https://plantbiology.aspb.org/code-of-conduct/>
- [2] *North American Arabidopsis Steering Committee*. ICAR 2020 Code of Conduct. Accessed October 15, 2021. URL: <http://arabidopsisresearch.org/index.php/en/naasc#ICARCode>
- [3] *Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution*. Diversity and Inclusivity Statement. Accessed October 19, 2021. URL: <http://www.csee-scee.ca/diversity-and-inclusivity-statement/>