ABSW Member Code of Conduct

ABSW Mission

We champion independence and excellence in the reporting of science, medicine, engineering and technology.

ABSW Vision

- For science and technology to truly benefit society they need to be clearly communicated but also held accountable.
- We need both explanatory and investigative journalists and media professionals who are free to report clearly, accurately and to the highest professional standards: journalists who are independent, honest and unbiased, and who are not afraid to challenge the information they are given.
- The ABSW strives to help create a world where this is the norm, where media professionals are free to responsibly and critically report on any aspect of science, to do so openly and safely, and to be paid fairly for their work.
- We want to help build a society that encourages and values open, independent, objective and fair assessment of science and its role in society, and rewards diversity, originality and flair in reporting.

Participation guidelines:

A. Behaviour as a member of the Association (internal-facing)

1. **Respectful communication**
    a. No harassment, bullying, or discriminatory behaviour.

        Discrimination is the unfair or unequal treatment of an individual based on characteristics such as their age, sex, race, religion, ability, sexual orientation. Harassment is unwanted or offensive behaviour that creates an unacceptable

working environment or professional space. This includes, but is not limited to, verbal or physical abuse. Please see the ABSW's policy on Harassment for further information.

b. Civil discourse in meetings, online channels, and events.Civil discourse is expected in all meetings, online channels and events. Members will adhere to moderation rules in online spaces and event rules for in-person meetings. Please refer to the ABSW's policies on online communication and events for further information.

2. **Integrity within the organisation**
    a. Do not misuse ABSW membership for personal gain or imply ABSW endorsement.

    b. Respect confidentiality where appropriate. For example, board meetings, committee meetings, and Discord groups have different confidentiality requirements. Please ensure that you respect the level of confidentiality required in a given forum

3. **Electoral and governance integrity**
    a. Respect democratic processes.

        The organisation's democratic processes will be respected, and manipulation of elections or AGM procedures will not be tolerated.

    b. No intimidation or manipulation of elections or AGM procedures.

4. **Use of ABSW platforms**
    a. Follow moderation rules.
    b. Do not spam, advertise improperly or promote harmful content.

5. **Professionalism at ABSW events**
    a. Follow event rules.
    b. Be respectful to speakers, organisers, and attendees.

B. Behaviour outside ABSW when representing the Association (external-facing)

These guidelines aim to cover membership-linked representation, and do not intend to police professional ethics.

1. **Correct use of membership status**

Only describe yourself as “member of ABSW,” not “ABSW accredited” or “ABSW endorsed.” ABSW members must not misuse ABSW membership for personal gain or imply ABSW endorsement.

2. **Avoid bringing the association into disrepute**

ABSW members will avoid bringing the association into disrepute through behaviour that undermines the organisation’s reputation, such as harassing others while claiming to represent the ABSW.

3. **Transparency when conflicts exist**

If ABSW members use their ABSW affiliation in a context that may imply endorsement, members must clarify independence.

4. **Adherence to UK legal requirements**

ABSW will adhere to the laws of the United Kingdom when attending ABSW events or participating in ABSW fora. This extends to defamation, data protection, and safeguarding.

Reporting and accountability

To report any violation of these guidelines, please contact the ABSW chairperson. If the report involves the chair, please contact an ABSW Director (Vice-Chair/Secretary/Treasurer).

In the subject line of your report, please state who your email is for the attention of (FAO: Chair of the ABSW for example) and send via one of the following official ABSW contacts: sallie.robins@absw.org.uk (Executive Secretary), vera@absw.org.uk (Community Manager), or info@absw.org.uk (General, accessible by Vera Novais/Sallie Robins only).

Process

All reports are confidential and will be the subject of a meeting of the ABSW directors (excluding any Director to which the complaint may relate). Anyone with a conflict of interest will be asked to recuse themselves, and another independent board member will be co-opted into the meeting.

The team will investigate in a fair, timely and impartial manner. Retaliation against any person filing or adjudicating a complaint is strictly prohibited.

At its sole discretion, the Executive Board may, by a simple majority vote, expel any member whose behaviour has in its opinion brought the ABSW into serious disrepute; it will account to the next AGM for its action. Any member so expelled will have the right to appeal the decision at that AGM. The decision will be duly recorded in the Executive Board and AGM Minutes.

Last update on 22 October 2026