

International Conferences on Health Care Systems Engineering (HCSE) Code of Conduct

The aims of HCSE conferences are to promote the dissemination of research results and the collaboration among researchers of different countries, in the fields of System Engineering, Statistics and Operations Research applied to Health Care Systems. To achieve these results, HCSE conferences promote *good conduct* in the practice of our research activities, in our relationships, and in the attendees of the conferences. *Good conduct* includes (but is not restricted to) scientific and ethical integrity, equality of opportunity and treatment, and respectful non-harassing behavior.

The purpose of this Code is to establish and enforce recognized standards for good conduct that the board of the HCSE conferences, the organizers of each conference edition, and all attendees commit to promote and uphold. *Abiding by this Code is essential for attending HCSE conferences and participating to all HCSE related activities*, e.g., professional gatherings, workshops in addition to the HCSE conferences, social occasions organized by HCSE, and communications relating to HCSE or with HCSE members.

Standards of Conduct

Members of the board, organizers and attendees of HCSE conferences **will**:

1. Uphold and promote ethical scientific conduct.
2. Engage in and support professional development for themselves and others.
3. Make every reasonable effort to not disseminate false or misleading information and correct any such act promptly.
4. Make every reasonable effort to uphold equal opportunity for all HCSE involved people.
5. Support opportunities for attendees and colleagues of underrepresented groups to enter and advance in the research activities and/or the profession.
6. Promote respectful, fair, and free of discrimination and harassment participant interactions.
7. Comply with all applicable laws, all ethical practices in research and publishing, all professional rules.
8. Report or seek to remedy conduct in conflict with this Code, as per the attached Procedures.
9. Abide by the attached Procedures in the event of a conduct review.

Members of the board, organizers and attendees of HCSE conferences **will not**:

10. Act in a manner detrimental to the interests of the HCSE community, the research or the profession.
11. Act or communicate in an unethical or illegal manner.
12. Act (knowingly or carelessly) in a way that negatively impacts on scientific reputation, professional integrity or equal opportunity of others.
13. Act (knowingly or carelessly) in a way that endangers the safety and the security of others.
14. Engage in disrespectful, disruptive, violent, abusive, harassing, or intimidating conduct.
15. Use substances to the extent that they adversely affect behavior or negatively impact on others, the research activities or the profession.
16. Act inconsistently with this Code of Conduct or any other HCSE code, rule or policy.
17. Fail to participate to a HCSE conference or an associated activity as requested, or retaliate against anyone because of their participation.

Reporting and Enforcement: Enforcement of this Code of Conduct is governed by the attached Procedures. Members should consult the Procedures if they experience, observe, or know about a contravention of this Code. This Code of Conduct and the attached Procedures must be published on the website of each HCSE conferences, and each new attendee must accept and respect them.

Maintenance of the Code of Conduct: This Code of Conduct is the result of an on-going dialogue within members of the HCSE board and the organizers of the HCSE conference editions; it is subject to periodic review and amendment by the HCSE board. By its very nature it cannot be a complete articulation of all conduct obligations of members and participants.

International Conferences on Health Care Systems Engineering (HCSE) Procedures

Overview. The purpose of this document is to establish the procedures that will be followed by the members of the HCSE board and the organizers of the current HCSE conference in the event of a violation of the HCSE Code of Conduct.

HCSE community expects all members to work proactively to promote good research and professional conduct, prevent violations of the HCSE Code of Conduct and to help each other to resolve violations if they occur. Minor concerns that do not rise to the level of a violation of the Code can often be resolved by discussion with the perpetrator. If the affected member is not able or does not feel empowered to do this, they are encouraged to seek help from a trusted colleague, a member of the board or the activity organizer, or to report the incident to the HCSE board. If a violation cannot be resolved immediately or satisfactorily, it should be reported in accordance with the procedures described below.

Professional Conduct Committee. A designated HCSE Committee ("*Committee*") has been established by HCSE board, to be responsible for administering the Code of Conduct, handling reports of violations, and managing the review of any reported conduct and recommended actions. Members of the Committee will serve a three-year term. The committee will be chaired by one of the members of the HCSE board.

The Committee will determine the circumstances under which a reported violation of the Code is reviewed, including whether a conduct review process will be conducted internally by the Committee or by engagement of a third party ombudsperson. Reported conduct may be reviewed internally by the Committee, either initially, in part or in whole, if it is a minor violation or, if deemed appropriate, when this is the request of the affected member who made the report. All other matters will be referred to a third party ombudsperson to administer a conduct review on behalf of the Committee. A report may be referred by the Committee to an ombudsperson for review on behalf of the Committee at any time before a final decision on an Outcome.

The ombudsperson will be appointed by the Committee, and will be an independent professional consultant with experience in the type of conduct under consideration. The ombudsperson will provide his/her findings to the Committee for decision on the Outcome by the Committee or referral by the Committee to the Board for decision, as provided below.

Reporting a Violation. *Anyone who experiences, observes, or has knowledge of a violation of the HCSE Code of Conduct should bring it to the attention of the Chair of the HCSE Committee. If warranted, it should also be reported to a representative of the activity at which the violation occurred, the Police, or other authorities.*

While this should be done as soon as possible, the fact that there has been a delay should not be used as a reason not to take action or report a violation.

The person will be invited to discuss their concern with the Committee, explore possible avenues for resolving the issue and, if appropriate, make a formal Conduct Statement ("*Statement*") to the Committee.

It is acknowledged that a person may find it difficult to discuss a concern or make a Statement, in which case they are encouraged to seek the help of a trusted friend and/or seek professional help from their workplace or university, trained counsellor, or another source. The HCSE Committee commits to supporting anyone who raises a concern by listening to them, taking their concern seriously, considering their wishes, taking action according to the procedures described below, and keeping them informed throughout any applicable review process.

Conduct Review Process. All Statements received by the Committee will be reviewed internally by the Committee or externally by a third party ombudsperson, as described above. Concerns may be reviewed without a Statement when the concern may impact more than just the person who raises it. Where appropriate, the advice of legal counsel may be sought. The timing, scope, and actions to be taken in each conduct review process will be determined on a case-by-case basis. HCSE will make reasonable efforts to conduct review processes as promptly as the scope of each review dictates.

The Committee will provide notice to any members who may be contacted as part of a conduct review to let them know that a conduct review has commenced and that their participation is requested, and will provide information regarding the nature of their requested

participation and any related timing. The Committee will inform other members regarding the conduct review on a need to know basis, and will take such other interim measures as the Committee deems appropriate under the circumstances, such as asking or requiring alleged offenders to abstain from participating in certain or all HCSE activities until the conduct review process has concluded, at which time they will be informed that conduct review has been completed.

Where warranted, all conduct reviews will include but not be limited to: interviews with the reporting party, other involved parties and material witnesses; and review of relevant documents and other information. Any party interested in a conduct review may submit to the Committee (or the third party ombudsperson when applicable) any information, materials or tangible evidence that he/she believes to be relevant, including without limitation names of potential witnesses; documents, digital media, tangible things and other evidence; character references; and, mitigating factors.

Conduct reviews will be conducted with professionalism and fairness to all parties, and any mitigating or aggravating factors that are brought to the attention of the reviewer(s) will be considered. Mitigating factors may include without limitation: consent by the receiving party, severity of the offense, the extent of harm caused or that could have been caused, discrepancies in evidence, length of time since the offense, history before or after the offense, acceptance of responsibility and commitment to change unacceptable behavior, and character references. Aggravating factors may include without limitation the foregoing factors, as well as the circumstances of any prior offense(s).

It is of utmost importance for members to participate fully and honestly in conduct reviews, as the HCSE ability to enforce this Code is limited by the quality and quantity of information provided to the reviewers. While it may attempt to do so when reasonable and practical, HCSE cannot take on the responsibility to obtain information outside its organization.

It is a violation of the Code for any person to retaliate in any way against a person for making a good faith Statement or participating in a conduct review or decision-making under the Code.

A conduct review, whether conducted internally by the Committee or externally by a third party ombudsperson, will conclude with a written Conduct Review Summary which will comprise the Statement, activities undertaken during the conduct review, evidence and findings of fact, any relevant witness credibility and mitigation factors, and a recommended Outcome with supporting justification. The Conduct Review Summary will be presented to the Committee for a decision regarding an Outcome or next steps (see below).

Potential Outcomes. Four Outcomes are possible.

1. *No action.*

This means that the Statement and Conduct Review Summary will be filed and no further action will take place.

Note that this recommendation does not mean that the incident did not occur or that anyone involved in the reporting or investigation process is not believed. This recommendation might be made, for example, if there is insufficient evidence to justify any action; if it is felt that actions already taken voluntarily or through an informal process were sufficient to address the reported conduct; or if the reporter withdraws permission for the conduct review to continue and requests this Outcome and the Committee or Board decides that such Outcome is appropriate under the circumstances.

2. *Information escrow.*

This means that the Statement and Conduct Review Summary will be added to a database and no other action will be taken unless further evidence emerges.

This recommendation might be made, for example, if there is insufficient evidence to justify other action but there is sufficient concern to warrant action if a subsequent corroborating report is received; or if the reporter requests this Outcome with no further action at this stage and the Committee or Board decides that such Outcome is appropriate under the circumstances.

3. *Further investigation.*

This recommendation might be made, for example, if the Committee has undertaken an internal investigation and decides that an investigation by a third party ombudsperson is warranted; if a third party review has been undertaken but more time is required to reach a satisfactory conclusion; or if review by another party is required.

4. *Action.*

An Action will aim to address a violation, remedy harm caused, and/or to otherwise enforce and promote the HCSE Code of Conduct. Actions may include (but are not restricted to) any combination of the following:

- i. Verbal or written warning or counseling.
- ii. Requirement of conciliatory efforts that may include a verbal or written apology, informal mediation, or other steps intended to facilitate restoration of relationships.
- iii. Coaching by a designated mentor or professional training at the offender's expense.
- iv. Service to the HCSE community.
- v. Restitution for damage caused to another's person, property, impairment of opportunity or professional reputation.
- vi. Suspension of eligibility for certain HCSE benefits, e.g.:
 - attendance in specified HCSE activities (a HCSE conference or a related activity);
 - participation in the HCSE board or in the organization of one or more HCSE activities;
 - awards, to be a presenter, to be published in any HCSE material, or other opportunities;
 - travel grants or other fundings.
- vii. Revocation of past awards or honors.
- viii. Suspension from HCSE activities up to a review for reactivation.
- ix. Expulsion from all HCSE activities.
- x. Referral to the police, university, public or private research center, workplace or other relevant authority.

Any Action may be offered as voluntary or imposed as mandatory for a specified period of time, or, in severe cases, for an unspecified period of time subject to periodic review, or permanently.

Decision-making Process. The Board has delegated to the Committee the authority to make a final Outcome decision in matters involving violations of the Code. In the case of any set of circumstances that may warrant an Action Outcome that is the same or similar to 4(v) – 4(x) above, or in any case where the Committee in its discretion feels that a Board decision is warranted, the Committee will provide a recommendation or referral to the Board, which will make the final decision.

Upon receipt of a Conduct Review Summary the Committee will: (a) make a final decision, ratifying the recommended Outcome in the Conduct Review Summary; *or* (b) decide on a different Outcome and provide justification for this decision; *or* (c) provide a recommendation to the Board for a final decision. Referral to the Board may be made without a recommendation if the Committee is unable to reach a decision or if there is a substantial level of concern about the case.

A decision made by the Committee will require a majority vote.

Neither the Committee nor the Board is limited in decision-making by any recommendation presented in a Conduct Review Summary or by the list of Actions above. Further information, including legal counsel, may also be sought before a decision is made.

HCSE will take care to impose actions that are in proportion to the offenses, that consider the professional and personal implications for all parties involved, and the purposes of the HCSE Code of Conduct. Continued HCSE membership is contingent upon full compliance with all Actions imposed as mandatory by the Board and ongoing adherence to the HCSE Code of Conduct.

Actions available to HCSE to address violations of this Code are necessarily limited by HCSE jurisdiction and resources. As a result, HCSE cannot guarantee good conduct outside HCSE activities. *In addition to reporting violations of the HCSE Code of Conduct, individuals are expected to take such other actions as they deem necessary to promote ethical, equitable and harassment-free behavior, and protect themselves, their property and their professional reputation.*

In all cases, HCSE reserves the right to report conduct to any applicable law enforcement agency, security staff, event venue, or other authorities.

Decisions made by the Committee or the Board are final and are not subject to appeal.

Communication of Decisions. HCSE decisions and any details related to a conduct review will be promptly communicated to the parties involved in the conduct at issue, on a need to know basis taking into account legal and other considerations, the professional and personal implications for all parties involved, and the purpose of the HCSE Code of Conduct. At a minimum, HCSE will inform the reporting party, and potential offenders if they were contacted, that the case has been completed. HCSE reserves the right in its sole discretion to make an announcement at any time to its members or to the public regarding a conduct review and/or outcome of any matter reported pursuant to this Code of Conduct, upon a determination by the Board that it is in the best interest of the society to do so.