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INCOSE SySTEAM Initiative
SySTEAM Code of Conduct



Revision 1.1

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Overview

This document serves as the code of conduct for the INCOSE Systems, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (SySTEAM) Initiative. It defines ethical and professional standards for the manner in which SySTEAM community members and participants at SySTEAM-associated events are expected to conduct themselves, and further establishes processes for inquiry reporting and investigation.

Document information

Document authored by: Caitlyn Singam, SySTEAM Program Director on 25 June 2023

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

The INCOSE SySTEAM Initiative is comprised of an international community of volunteers from a variety of different personal, academic, geographic, and professional backgrounds, and is committed to ensure that attendees at SySTEAM events and members of the SySTEAM community are able to share and discuss their ideas with others in an inclusive, safe, and welcoming environment. All attendees, speakers, and participants at SySTEAM events, as well as individuals using SySTEAM-affiliated platforms, are required to abide by the following code of conduct.

The requirements stipulated below are adapted from the principles set forth in the Model Code of Conduct promulgated by the United Nations (<https://bit.ly/43C0EYk>), with modifications made to suit the needs and practices of the SySTEAM Initiative.

1.1. Scope

SySTEAM is an INCOSE initiative, and as such abides by all applicable INCOSE policies and bylaws. This code of conduct supplements (i.e., adds on to) the requirements set forth in the INCOSE Code of Ethics (<https://bit.ly/450wE9H>), and should not be considered a replacement or waiver for any obligations specified under the INCOSE Code of Ethics. In any instance there is a contradiction between the SySTEAM Code of Conduct and another applicable policy (e.g. the INCOSE Code of Ethics), the higher standard of the two (i.e., the more restrictive rule) applies.

1.2. Applicability

All members of the SySTEAM community and participants in SySTEAM events must abide by the INCOSE Code of Ethics (as posted on the INCOSE website), regardless of whether or not they are INCOSE members. The SySTEAM Code of Conduct applies to members of the SySTEAM community whilst acting in affiliation with, or on behalf of, the SySTEAM Initiative, and extends to attendees and participants in SySTEAM-organized events as well as to online activity using, or otherwise facilitated by, a SySTEAM-run platform (including, but not limited to, the SySTEAM community Discord).

1.3. Plain-language summary

Members of the SySTEAM community and attendees at SySTEAM events are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner, and to interact with their colleagues, fellow community members, and all members of the public in a respectful and cordial manner. Harassment or discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

2. Prohibited conduct

2.1. General guidelines

Generally, conducting oneself in a manner that would be considered appropriate at a formal workplace should be more than sufficient to ensure compliance with the Code of Conduct. Nonetheless, should there be any doubt as to whether certain behavior does or does not violate the rules set forth herein, individuals are strongly urged to err on the side of caution. A good rule of thumb is to refrain from engaging in conduct or using language that would be considered inappropriate in an academic environment where there are pre-collegiate students in attendance (e.g. a secondary school), and to keep discussions on-topic (or at least SySTEAM-relevant) when using SySTEAM-run platforms or attending SySTEAM events. SySTEAM events and platforms are open to all members of the public, including students, and are not age-restricted; as such, individuals participating in SySTEAM events or using SySTEAM platforms are encouraged to conduct themselves in a manner that is appropriate for a mixed audience of students, educators, and industry professionals from around the globe.

2.2. Inflammatory language

While differences of opinion are a typical (and indeed, often necessary) part of academic/intellectual discussion, it is expected that all discourse (both verbal and written) at SySTEAM events or on SySTEAM platforms remains civil and professional. This means that the use of inflammatory language (e.g., *ad hominem* attacks), profanity, name-calling, or slurs is strictly prohibited along with lewd or suggestive material. Similarly, threats of violence, or expressions conveying a wish for harm to befall an individual or group are also strictly prohibited under any and all circumstances. There are no exceptions for inflammatory language claimed to be used ironically or in jest.

2.3. Discrimination

SySTEAM has a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination. Behaviors, gestures or remarks that disparage or are otherwise targeted against a group or class of individuals (or a member of that group or class) based on their demographics or personal characteristics are explicitly prohibited. This stipulation applies to, but is not limited to, behaviors, gestures, and remarks based on: race/ethnicity, skin color, physical features, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, disability, age, pregnancy, or veteran status. Confirmed instances of discriminatory behavior are grounds for temporarily or permanently suspending an offending individual's access to the SySTEAM platform or event they are using to enact their discriminatory conduct.

This does not limit discussion of demographic characteristics in general, especially since SySTEAM-relevant discussion of disparities in systems education may benefit from discussing how factors such as gender or race impact individuals' experiences progressing through the STEAM educational pathway. It does, however, prohibit conduct and language that is offensive, hostile, derogatory, and/or exclusionary.

2.4. Harassment

SySTEAM also takes a zero-tolerance approach to harassment. SySTEAM uses the definition of harassment from the United Nations' Model Code of Conduct, which states that “[h]arassment is any improper or unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person”. This includes, but is not limited to, threatening, derogatory or demeaning behavior/conduct against an individual or group of individuals, including but not limited to derogatory jokes, comments, pictures, gestures, and/or verbal, electronic, or written messages conveying hostile, humiliating, or offensive content. Repeated conduct or statements towards a person or group that are unwanted and/or unwarranted, and that an individual or group continues to repeat despite being told to stop, also constitute harassment, regardless of whether that unwanted conduct is via visual, verbal, or physical means. Other prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Stalking - i.e., repeatedly following an individual in an unwanted and unwarranted manner, or threatening manner via online platforms and/or in person – or using SySTEAM events and/or platforms to facilitate such behavior (e.g., obtaining a person's Discord username via the SySTEAM Discord server to repeatedly send them unwanted messages);
- Sexual harassment and all communications, requests, or demands, of a romantic or sexual nature, including but not limited to lewd, obscene, or suggestive imagery, messages, comments, or conduct;
- Coercion, including offering an individual or group potential or actual favor(s) of a professional or personal nature in return for an “off-the-record” exchange of money, goods, or services;
- Verbal or written communication that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably and negatively interfering with the employment, potential employment, reputation, safety, or freedom of an individual or group of individuals, as well as actions with the same effect as such communication, such as filing a false incident report with SySTEAM; and/or
- Isolated threats against individual(s) or their property, regardless of whether the individual(s) or group(s) making the threat(s) are able to act on the threat(s), are considered harassment as well, even if they are not repeated.

Confirmed instances of harassment are grounds for temporarily or permanently suspending an offending individual's access to the SySTEAM platform or event they are using to enact their harassing conduct, and may be grounds for expulsion from all present and future SySTEAM activities.

2.5. Illegal activity

It should be inherently obvious that illegal activity is blatantly and completely prohibited at SySTEAM events and on SySTEAM platforms, and is grounds for immediate and permanent expulsion from a SySTEAM event/platform. It is the exclusively the responsibility of individual

SySTEAM community members/event participants to ensure that they are abiding by the appropriate laws and regulations that apply to them and their jurisdiction.

2.6. Spam and misuse of SySTEAM resources

In order to ensure that SySTEAM events and SySTEAM-run platforms can be optimally used for their intended purposes, use of SySTEAM events or SySTEAM-run platforms for the purposes of engaging in financial transactions/sales or business promotion of a company and/or product is generally prohibited. This prohibition also extends to using SySTEAM events or platforms to collect personal or contact information (e.g. email addresses or Discord handles) of individual(s) for non-SySTEAM purposes (e.g. marketing or mass-adding to one's social media) without their direct consent. The intent of this stipulation is to prevent misuse of SySTEAM resources, and to ensure that individuals feel safe engaging with SySTEAM events and/or platforms without putting their personal information at risk. There are very limited exceptions to the prohibition on promotional messaging, such as mentioning an employer(s) while introducing oneself, or when discussing a SySTEAM-related business product with other individuals in designated networking space(s) provided by SySTEAM. Barring those exceptions, it is generally expected that individuals should aim to keep their discussions SySTEAM-relevant and on-topic while using SySTEAM-run platforms or while at SySTEAM events. Individuals are encouraged to use non-SySTEAM resources and platforms such as their own personal social media and email for their promotional needs or for continuing off-topic discussions that might arise during SySTEAM meetings or on SySTEAM platforms.

3. Accountability

Individuals are responsible for ensuring that their conduct meets the requirements set forth in the SySTEAM Code of Conduct and INCOSE Code of Ethics. Minor infractions (e.g. an isolated incident of disruptive but non-harassing behavior during a meeting) may be handled informally through the issuance of verbal or written requests to the concerned individual asking for them to stop the offending behavior, if SySTEAM has a reasonable belief that addressing the issue informally will result in the fastest means of fully addressing the issue. Individuals who receive a verbal or written request from a SySTEAM event organizer or platform manager asking them to refrain from or to stop engaging in problematic behavior are expected to comply immediately. SySTEAM retains the right to take action without warning in the case of suitably severe infractions, such as (but not necessarily limited to) incidents of harassment or threats of violence. As addressed in the 'Incident Reporting' section below, any behavior or conduct not consistent with the requirements set forth in the SySTEAM Code of Conduct and/or INCOSE Code of Ethics may impact the ability of the associated individual(s) (i.e., the individual(s) or group(s) engaging in improper conduct) to participate in the SySTEAM community, attend present or future SySTEAM events, and/or use SySTEAM-run platforms such as the SySTEAM Discord server.

4. Incident reporting

4.1. Reporting process

If, while at a SySTEAM event, or while using a SySTEAM-run platform, you are involved with or witness an incident that violates the SySTEAM Code of Conduct or the INCOSE Code of Ethics, please contact the event organizer or platform administrator immediately with a detailed description of the incident and any supporting documentation/information (screenshots of messages, names/contact of other individuals who may have seen the problematic conduct, etc.) that you might have to corroborate your report. Please be as detailed as possible when filing a report so that SySTEAM can investigate the incident thoroughly and take appropriate action. Incident reports may be filed via email or via the following incident report form:

<https://forms.gle/zxGCSN7Z16xju8Mk6>. All reports will be investigated based on available evidence.

4.2. Inquiry process

SySTEAM will investigate all reports of misconduct under its purview to the best of its ability. If the investigation indicates that an infraction of the Code of Conduct/Code of Ethics occurred, SySTEAM reserves the right to take action at its discretion against the individual(s) who violated the Code of Conduct/Code of Ethics, with the severity of the offense generally being tied to the severity of the resulting intervening action. These actions may include, but are not necessarily limited to, short-term, reversible consequences for minor offenses (e.g., muting a participant's microphone during a web-conference meeting, in the case of a noisy/disruptive participant), as well as permanent consequences (e.g., removal of an individual from a SySTEAM event or, in particularly egregious cases, banning them from the SySTEAM community in the case of harassment or illegal activity). Given reasonable cause, SySTEAM reserves the right to take immediate, reversible preliminary steps in response to an incident (e.g., temporarily removing an offending party from a meeting in a suspected case of harassing behavior) while an incident is being investigated, particularly if it needs to do so in order to guarantee the immediate safety of SySTEAM community members, SySTEAM event attendees, and/or the general public. SySTEAM also retains the right to escalate an incident report to relevant authorities if appropriate or if otherwise required to do so by applicable law or regulation.

Appendix A: Acronyms and abbreviations

This document utilizes non-standard acronyms and abbreviations for the sake of readability and concision. Applicable non-standard acronyms and abbreviations are defined in the table below. All entries are listed in alphabetical order for convenience.

Acronym/abbreviation	Definition
INCOSE	International Council on Systems Engineering
MOA	memorandum of agreement
MOU	memorandum of understanding
SE	systems engineering
ST	systems thinking
STEAM	science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
STEM	science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics
SySTEAM	Systems, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (Initiative)

Appendix B: Version history

The following chart indicates the version history for this document.

Version	Modified on	Release date	Modified by	Remarks
1.0	25 June 2023	26 June 2023	C. Singam (author)	Initial release (mini-conference packet)
1.1	1 November 2023	1 November 2023	C. Singam	Standalone document release

Appendix C: Changelog

The following table documents major (i.e., non-grammatical) revisions to this document for the purpose of identifying differences between document versions.

Version	Changes made by	Description of changes
1.0	C. Singam (author)	Initial release
1.1	C. Singam	Conversion to standalone document, addition of appendices & section numbering