

## Policy 3.0: Ethics and Conduct

### 1. Standards

- A. All programs, activities, communications, and conduct of Toastmasters clubs and members shall be represented in an ethical manner, consistent with Toastmasters International's governing documents, mission, and values. Each club is responsible for the actions of its members.
- B. If the actions of any club are in conflict with the basic principles, ideals, or standards of Toastmasters International, or if any Toastmasters club, area, division, district or other official group violates ethics and conduct standards, they may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension, and/or other appropriate action.
- C. If the actions of any individual member are in conflict with the basic principles, ideals, or standards of Toastmasters International, or if any individual member, at any level, violates ethics and conduct standards, the individual member may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal from good standing with Toastmasters International and/or other appropriate action.
- D. Members shall not conduct or condone programs, activities, or communications which are defamatory, malicious, offensive, derogatory, damaging, false, libelous, or otherwise detrimental to the best interests of Toastmasters International. Members shall not assist, support, aid, facilitate, invite, or condone anything that interferes with the programs, proceedings, or affairs of Toastmasters International or its clubs.
- E. Each club, not Toastmasters International, is legally and practically responsible for resolving personal conduct issues within the club. Clubs are not liable for claims against the international organization and the international organization is not liable for claims against the clubs.
- F. Members in leadership roles above the club level are subject to the ultimate authority of the Board of Directors. The Board may remove a member from good standing or expel a club, under [Article III](#), Sections 4, 8, and 13 of the Bylaws of Toastmasters International. Removal of district officers is governed by [Article VII](#), Section (g) of the District Administrative Bylaws and discipline of Board members is governed by [Policy 11.12](#).
- G. Matters of personal conduct within districts above the club level are resolved by district officers when possible, with assistance from World Headquarters to the extent necessary and practically possible. The Chief Executive Officer is

notified of incidents occurring above the club level and may initiate independent action to assure that proper corrective steps are being taken.

## **2. Nondiscrimination, Background, and Character**

- A. Nondiscrimination is defined in [Article III](#), Section 7 of the Bylaws of Toastmasters International.
- B. When voting on the admission of a member or the election of an officer, members are entitled to consider any information about the person's background or character of which they are aware, but the prospective member is not required to make any affirmative disclosures about such matters.
- C. Toastmasters International, clubs, districts, or any officer is not responsible for the background or character of any person admitted to club membership or elected or appointed to a leadership role.

## **3. Harassment and Bullying**

Toastmasters International prohibits all types of harassment and bullying. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual, verbal, physical, and visual harassment and bullying (including electronically).

- A. Creating an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment, which includes conduct, comments, or conditions of an offensive, unwelcome, or sexual nature altering the conditions under which an individual experiences the Toastmasters program is prohibited. Specifically:
  - I. Persistent singling out of a person.
  - II. Shouting or raising one's voice at a person in public or private.
  - III. Not allowing a person to speak or express himself or herself.
  - IV. Personal insults and use of offensive nicknames.
  - V. Repeated criticism of personal matters.
  - VI. Ignoring or interrupting a person at meetings.
  - VII. Spreading rumors and gossip regarding a person.
- B. Unwelcome physical contact or physical abuse such as pushing, fighting, kicking, hitting, or shoving, and threats of physical abuse, are prohibited.
- C. Inappropriate touching, lewd jokes, displaying explicit or sexually suggestive material, and repeated unwelcome requests for a sexual or dating relationship are prohibited.

- D. Unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, and other unwelcome verbal, written, or physical conduct, including obscene gestures, are prohibited.
- E. Making the submission to or the rejection of such conduct the basis of participation or advancement decisions is prohibited.
- F. Retaliating or discriminating against any member for reporting harassment is prohibited.

#### **4. Code of Conduct**

Toastmasters International's core values are integrity, respect, service and excellence. These are values worthy of a great organization, and we believe we should incorporate them as anchor points in every decision we make. Our core values provide us with a means of not only guiding but also evaluating our operations, our planning, and our vision for the future.

The following are Rules of Conduct that apply to any form of communication, including within the Toastmasters online platform and community, as well as any and all club, area, division and district online platforms and communities.

##### **A. Maintain Professional Decorum & Integrity**

- I. The Toastmasters International Code of Ethics and Conduct applies to social media participation, including standards for communications.
- II. As a Toastmaster, it is important that all members conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times in accordance with the core values. This includes the use of social media. Accordingly, it is important that Toastmasters members, Toastmasters leaders and World Headquarters staff, and site visitors be treated with respect at all times. Never engage in personal attacks - threatening, insulting, or intimidating other users, as well as "flaming" (berating another user), "trolling" (posting derogatory, inflammatory or provocative content attempting to bait others into responding). This includes any attacks against moderators or fellow Toastmasters.
- III. Disagreements can and will occur. The proper focus of any conflict should be on the issue at hand and not on the individual. Please remember to be courteous when disagreeing with others. Debate and differing opinions may be appropriate. Personal attacks against others, however, are not allowed.
- IV. Never act dishonestly or unprofessionally by engaging in behavior that is detrimental to the best interests of Toastmasters International by posting inappropriate, inaccurate, objectionable or misleading content.

- V. Do not, under any circumstance, harass, threaten, abuse, bully or harm another person, including sending unwelcome communications to others.
- VI. Never upload, post, email, transmit or otherwise make available or initiate any content, photos and video that:
  - a. Is unlawful, racist, sexist, homophobic, hateful, damaging, false, libelous, defamatory, malicious, vulgar, obscene or discriminatory, contains religious or ethnic bias, or is otherwise objectionable.
  - b. Includes information that invades another's privacy or that you do not have the right to disclose or make available under any law or under contractual or fiduciary relationships.
  - c. Infringes upon patents, trademarks, trade secrets, copyrights or other proprietary rights.
  - d. Includes any unsolicited or unauthorized advertising, promotional materials, "junk mail," "spam," "chain letters," "pyramid schemes," surveys or any other form of solicitation. This includes any content soliciting customers, clients, donors or others on behalf of your business, profession or any organization or cause other than Toastmasters International.
  - e. Includes any private communication between members, moderators or volunteer leaders of Toastmasters International on these pages or anywhere else without express written permission from the individual you are quoting.
  - f. Impersonates any person or entity, or falsely represents your affiliation with any person or entity, or misrepresents the opinions held by your group.
  - g. Supports or opposes any political party, candidate for public office, ballot measure to be voted upon by the public or legislative proposal.
  - h. Harvests, collects, or discloses information about another user without his or her express written consent.
  - i. Transmits any harmful, invasive, or disruptive code or other materials (such as viruses, worms, or web bugs).
- VII. Social media and various official Toastmasters forums tend to involve many participants. They are generally not the best place for members to express frustration with Toastmasters in leadership above, below or at

their level. Communications that contain criticism, complaints, accusations, allegations, etc., are more properly directed through personal conversations, phone calls, or emails through official channels established to address such problems, rather than broadcast via social media and forums. This is the better way to resolve differences while minimizing damage to the goodwill and social fabric of Toastmasters International.

- VIII. You are solely responsible for your content. You may not indicate that your content is anything other than your own observations or opinions. You may not represent that your statements are made on behalf of or are endorsed by Toastmasters International unless you are specifically authorized to do so in writing.
  - IX. ANY behavior that is patently offensive is forbidden, whether specifically identified on this list or not.
  - X. Social media enables opportunities for immediate and easy transmission of information. Users shall always obtain prior written permission before posting the comments, photos, video or work of another. Posting information about other individuals requires prior written consent; examples include but are not limited to: re-posting letters, re-using recommendations solicited using another social medium, videos and photographs.
- B. Comply with all applicable local, state, national, and international laws, including, without limitation, privacy laws, intellectual property laws, export control laws, tax laws, and regulatory requirements.
  - C. Comply with all Toastmasters International governing documents (Bylaws of Toastmasters International, District Administrative Bylaws, Club Constitution for Toastmasters Clubs and Policy and Protocol).

Toastmasters International (inclusive of clubs, areas, divisions and districts) has the right, but not the obligation, to modify or remove any content that appears on any official Toastmasters forum, and to restrict, suspend or terminate the access of any user, that violates this User Agreement, and to take appropriate disciplinary action under the Bylaws, and Policy and Protocol of Toastmasters International.

## **5. Whistle-blower Protection**

A whistle-blower is any individual member of Toastmasters International who reasonably believes that Toastmasters' policies have been violated, or that any Toastmasters activities, policies or practices are illegal (i.e., in violation of any applicable law, regulation or rule), that person is encouraged to follow the procedure below. An individual member may only make a report in good faith that is objectively

reasonable, and not for the purpose of harassing, disrupting or interfering with the affairs of the organization or the participation of other members. An individual member who wishes to express concern about any Toastmasters policy violation, activity, policy or practice may:

- A. Submit a written complaint containing reasonably credible information to the responsible volunteer leader at the next level. (For example, a club member would complain to the club president, a club president to an area director, etc.)
  - I. If the individual is not satisfied with the response he or she receives, or if the next-level volunteer leader to whom the issue would be reported is the subject of the individual's concern, or the individual is otherwise uncomfortable speaking with the next-level volunteer leader, the individual may then make the complaint in writing to the Chief Executive Officer.
  - II. If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer, the individual may submit his or her complaint to the International President.
- B. International officers and directors should submit their complaint in writing directly to the International President, and if the International President is the subject of the complaint, to the Chief Executive Officer.

No individual who has submitted a complaint in good faith shall be subject to retaliation. Moreover, an individual who retaliates against someone who has submitted a complaint is subject to discipline up to and including removal from good standing with Toastmasters International.

Reports of complaints and related investigations shall be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation. Criminal matters should be reported to law enforcement.

Complaints not resolved to the satisfaction of the individual may be reported promptly to the Chief Executive Officer or International President. The Chief Executive Officer or International President will determine if further investigation is warranted and may recommend corrective action.

A whistle-blower who makes a report that is not in good faith may be subject to discipline, up to and including removal from good standing with Toastmasters International, or other appropriate action less than removal, to protect the best interests of Toastmasters International and its members.

## **6. Political Ethics**

- A. No action shall be taken—written, verbal, or otherwise—which interferes with the right of every qualified member to seek and achieve election to office at any level.
- B. No action shall be taken that interferes with the right and duty of every delegate and of every proxyholder to vote according to his or her best judgment.
  - I. No individual member, club, district, or other group shall engage in any activity or campaign by use of threats, restrictions, intimidations, deals, candidate slates, pressures, or other unethical means which might prevent or dissuade any member from competing in an election process or from exercising his or her best judgment.
  - II. No person or entity shall publish or distribute any material which contains defamatory remarks, malicious or derogatory charges, or false or libelous statements.
  - III. Except for district conferences and the International Convention, all meetings of district officers and international directors shall be confined to such activities as assist the district officers in fulfilling their responsibilities and shall not be used for political purposes.
- C. All communications and activities endorsing a candidate, either by the candidate or by supporters of the candidate, shall focus on the candidate's Toastmasters accomplishments and personal qualifications for office. Endorsements shall not be used without the permission of the endorser.
- D. No negative information about candidates is allowed in distributed written communications or in communications at an official Toastmasters meeting.
- E. All activities, publications, letters, speeches, and conduct of campaign participants shall reflect Toastmasters International's values.
- F. No member, other than the proxy signer, shall instruct any proxyholder how to vote proxies at any election.

## **7. Disciplinary Standards**

- A. For the protection of Toastmasters International, its districts, divisions, areas, and clubs (hereafter referred to as "affiliates") and individual club members, certain standards of conduct shall be observed. Violation of these standards may be addressed by appropriate corrective, preventive, and disciplinary action, which may include removal, suspension, or progressive disciplinary action relating to the good standing of an individual member, in the good faith discretion of the Board.

- B. In determining the appropriate corrective, preventative, or disciplinary action, the Board may consider all circumstances it deems relevant including, but not limited to, the following:
- I. The intentional misrepresentation or distortion or misleading omission by the member in dealings with or under the auspices of Toastmasters International, or any of its affiliates.
  - II. The unauthorized use of Toastmasters International property, including copyrights, trademarks, and trade names.
  - III. Threats, intimidation, coercion, or other interference with the activities of other Toastmasters individual members.
  - IV. Conduct which is disorderly or endangers the well-being of others, willful damage to property, or the illegal or improper use of Toastmasters funds while participating in activities sponsored or sanctioned by Toastmasters International or any of its affiliates.
  - V. The violation of Toastmasters International's governing documents.
- C. Violation of this Ethics and Conduct policy subjects the offending club to suspension or expulsion under [Article III](#), Sections 4 and 13 of the Bylaws of Toastmasters International, which may be mitigated if the club expels an offending member and/or removes the person from any club office or ends the club's own violations.
- D. Violation of this Ethics and Conduct policy subjects the individual member to suspension or removal from good standing, or other appropriate action, under [Article III](#), Sections 8 and 13 of the Bylaws of Toastmasters International.