

Code of Conduct of COST Action CA24139 (SCALES)

Purpose

The COST Action *Superfluid Condensates in Astrophysics and Laboratory Experiments* (SCALES) aims to create a collaborative, respectful, and inclusive research environment connecting diverse scientific communities working on superfluid helium, ultracold atoms, and neutron stars. The Action focuses on the interaction between these separate communities interested in the same physical processes from very different but complementary research areas to help the development of a common scientific language and framework. In particular, SCALES prioritizes the training of a young generation of students and researchers to develop a multidisciplinary approach to their research and especially encourages Early Career Researchers (ECRs), women and those from underrepresented backgrounds to take leadership roles. In this context, this Code of Conduct (CoC) defines the standards of behavior expected from all SCALES members to ensure a positive, safe, and equitable environment that promotes integrity, transparency, excellence and inclusion in science.

The CoC applies to all members of the SCALES network, including Management Committee members, Working Group participants, Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) fellows, event organizers, invited speakers, and any external or temporary collaborators involved in SCALES activities, whether interactions occur in person, online, or in any SCALES-related context.

Scope

This CoC applies to:

- All meetings, workshops, training schools, and conferences organized under SCALES.
- Online communication platforms (email lists, collaborative tools, social media, etc.).
- Publications, outreach activities, and collaborative research conducted under SCALES.
- All interactions among SCALES members and with the broader scientific and public communities when representing the Action.

All participants are expected to comply with this Code in addition to their institutional and national regulations, as well as to the COST Code of Conduct (2015), as drafted in its latest version (COST CoC - 2015)¹. When in contradiction, COST CoC as well as European regulations shall prevail.

Core Principles

SCALES follows the four fundamental principles established in the COST CoC - 2015:

1. **Integrity** – act with honesty, fairness, and professional courtesy; avoid conflicts of interest; comply with institutional and legal standards.
2. **Excellence** – strive for the highest quality in research, communication, and collaboration; treat colleagues equitably and value diversity of expertise.
3. **Transparency** – communicate openly and clearly, share knowledge responsibly, and respect confidentiality when required.

¹ Available at <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2018/10/COST-081-15-COST-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>

4. **Commitment** – take responsibility for one’s actions, uphold the values of COST and SCALES, and contribute actively to a positive and inclusive community.

Furthermore, SCALES also highlights a fifth fundamental principle of

5. **Inclusion** – being aware of inequitable practices and principles that currently and historically shape our societies and cultures; acknowledge that scientific activities should strive to liberate themselves from excluding and discriminatory practices; promote equity and diversity by actively including members of underrepresented groups and underprivileged backgrounds.

These principles form the ethical foundation of all SCALES activities.

Expected Behavior

All members of SCALES are expected to:

- Treat everyone with **respect, kindness, and professionalism**, regardless of gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, career stage or any other social identity.
- Foster a **welcoming and inclusive environment** that enables open scientific dialogue and collaboration across disciplines.
- Communicate constructively – critique ideas, not people; listen actively; give others the opportunity to contribute.
- Recognize and mitigate power imbalances, ensuring that ECRs and underrepresented groups are encouraged and supported.
- Maintain scientific integrity: provide proper credit, do not commit plagiarism or falsification of data, and follow fair authorship and collaboration practices.
- Respect confidentiality when reviewing or discussing unpublished work or sensitive issues.
- Promote accessibility in meetings, materials, and communication whenever possible.
- Take responsibility for one’s words and actions; apologize and correct mistakes when needed.
- Uphold respect in science, even under strong disagreement, ensuring that scientific debate remains grounded in evidence, civility, and mutual understanding.
- Assume best intentions from all, and prioritize solving conflicts and misunderstandings with civil conversation and mutual respect.
- Use shared datasets, repositories, and numerical tools developed under SCALES responsibly, respecting licensing and citation requirements, in accordance also with the SCALES’ FAIR data and open-software deliverables in the MoU².
- Refrain from using SCALES mailing lists, communication channels, or online platforms to advertise commercial products, promote private services, or pursue any form of commercial solicitation. Appropriate use of SCALES mailing lists includes sharing information directly relevant to the Action and its members, such as meeting links, event announcements, training opportunities, scientific outreach or educational resources, and

² Available at https://e-services.cost.eu/files/domain_files/CA/Action_CA24139/mou/CA24139-e.pdf

job openings aligned with the scientific scope of SCALES. More detailed guidelines on the appropriate use of SCALES mailing lists will be provided separately on the SCALES website.

Members involved in leadership, mentoring, or evaluation have a particular responsibility to model and reinforce these standards as well as to teach them to more junior members.

Unacceptable Behavior

SCALES does **not tolerate** any form of harassment, discrimination, or unprofessional conduct. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Verbal, written, or physical harassment; intimidation; or threats of any kind.
- Offensive comments and jokes, or any other form of discrimination related to gender, race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or other social identity traits.
- Unwanted physical contact, sexual attention, or suggestive behavior.
- The production of photographic or video recordings without consent.
- Bullying, exclusion, or retaliation against those who report misconduct.
- Persistent disruption of talks, meetings, or online discussions.
- Misuse of institutional, financial, or collaborative resources.
- Scientific misconduct such as plagiarism, falsification, or misrepresentation of results and misuse of data.
- Advocating or encouraging any of the behaviors described above.

Reporting and Enforcement

Reporting Channels

All participants are expected to report or act upon misconduct and violation of this CoC when witnessed, within their capacity and safety. Reports can be made:

- To any one of the designated **Points of Contact (PoCs)** for the SCALES Action (see below);
- To the **Action Chair or Vice-Chair** if appropriate;
- Through institutional or national channels when relevant.

Reports will be treated **confidentially** and handled promptly, with fairness and sensitivity to all parties. Retaliation against reporters or witnesses will not be tolerated.

Resolution Process

1. The PoCs, Vice-Chair or Action Chair will acknowledge receipt of the report and, where necessary, consult with the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (**EDI**) Coordinator or other members in leadership positions.
2. If the issue can be resolved informally, mediation or discussion may be proposed, with previous consultation with the affected party.
3. For serious violations during an event, in person or online, the PoCs, in consultation with the affected party, and Vice-Chair or Action Chair may suspend or remove the offender from attendance.

4. For serious or repeated violations, the case will be escalated to the Core Group, which may impose measures such as:
 - Verbal or written warnings;
 - Suspension or exclusion from SCALES activities;
 - Forwarding a request to the Management Committee for removal of the individual from Working Groups;
 - Referral to the participant's home institution, funding agencies, COST Association or other appropriate authorities for opening of additional misconduct processes.

All actions will aim to restore a safe and respectful environment, protect and support the affected party/parties.

Points of Contact (PoCs)

Four individuals, each representing one of the Working Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4, plus the EDI Coordinator will serve as **PoC** for the SCALES Action. They will:

- Receive and handle reports of CoC violations confidentially, only disclosing information to members in other relevant leadership positions (e.g., the EDI coordinator) if necessary, and only after explicit consent from the affected party/parties;
- Receive basic training in mediation, conflict resolution, and confidentiality;
- Be clearly identifiable during SCALES events (e.g. distinct badge colour or meeting slides);
- Report aggregate statistics (without names or details) annually to the Management Committee and Core Group.
- Be a diverse team, including always at least one female representative and one ECR.

The current PoCs will be listed on the SCALES website and at the start of each SCALES-related meeting. Since no dedicated training is provided by the COST Association, SCALES will organise appropriate training for the PoCs, either internally or through external providers, subject to budget availability. Note that CoC violations can be reported to as many of the PoC individuals as the affected party/parties wish, regardless of their Working Group membership. In addition, PoCs have the authority to address CoC violations outside of their Working Group.

Visibility and Reinforcement

- All SCALES members must explicitly agree to respect and reinforce this CoC.
- A summary of this CoC will be displayed at all SCALES meetings, workshops, schools and events.
- The CoC will be included in event registration materials and published on the SCALES website.
- Organizers must remind participants of the CoC at the beginning of each event.

Review and Updates

This CoC will be reviewed annually by the WG4 leaders and the EDI Coordinator, in consultation with the Management Committee and Core Group, to ensure that it remains effective and aligned with community standards and COST policies.

By participating in SCALES activities, **all members agree to uphold this Code of Conduct** and contribute to a respectful, inclusive, and ethical research environment.

Acknowledgments

This CoC was inspired by the COST Code of Conduct (2015), the VERITAS Collaboration Code of Conduct, the SPINS UK Code of conduct and the 2019 Women in Physics Canada Conference Code of Conduct, among others. It also reflects the hard work of many members from underrepresented backgrounds to educate our community throughout the years.