



## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

**The Problem:** Bullying and harassment are unfortunately commonplace at all stages of academia given the intense competition for positions and the extremely hierarchical nature of research groups and university departments. For those same reasons, it can be very challenging for, particularly junior, scientists to recover from episodes of bullying, especially where a potential letter of recommendation hangs in the balance. When bullying and harassment occur, there is often limited intervention in the moment and reporting and grievance policies – whether through an institution or collaboration – can be unclear about both potential protections and potential consequences.

### Recommendations:

- Departments, collaborations, and research groups should have *actionable* codes of conduct, which explicitly lay out expectations for appropriate behaviors and establish guidance for consequences if the code of conduct is violated. There should be clear avenues for reporting misconduct and, ideally, a centralized database for reports, allowing organizations to identify repeated bullying behaviors and track potential misuse of the reporting system.
- One significant challenge in clearing the bureaucratic hurdle of making a formal report or otherwise requesting intervention is that such processes are often opaque and vary institution-by-institution. Universities and departments should ensure that new students and employees are aware of codes of conduct and grievance procedures via robust onboarding processes.
- Departments should encourage and facilitate attendance at bystander intervention trainings, helping individuals identify bullying behaviors and understand how to intervene at the moment they occur. It is especially important that more senior department or collaboration members feel empowered to step in on behalf of their colleagues.
- As letters of recommendation can introduce an opportunity for subjective language in evaluation, hiring committees should both be aware that academic bullying can extend to letters and receive literacy training to help discern when this is the case. Additionally, there should be a standardized mechanism for job applicants to report to hiring committees when they did not – or could not – seek a letter from a direct mentor due to bullying or harassment.
- It would be beneficial to the community to have a external help desk for those experiencing bullying or harassment to confidentially seek resources and guidance from trained volunteers outside of their university.

Picture an Astronomer: Best Practices for Retaining Talent in Astrophysics

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2512.24465>

<https://pictureanastronomer.github.io/whitepaper>