



Visual Language Professionals Ltd

CODE OF CONDUCT

*Policy Approved By The Management Committee On: **28 September 2018***

*Policy Became Operational On: **28 September 2018***

1. Introduction

- 1.1 All attendees, speakers, freelance professionals, sponsors and volunteers involved in all Visual Language Professionals Ltd (VLP) activities, including events and conferences, are required to agree with the following Code of Conduct. The Management Committee will enforce this code throughout activities organised by VLP and the cooperation of all participants is expected to ensure a safe environment for all.
- 1.2 VLP activities are professional events to facilitate training, information dissemination, networking and collaboration for communication professionals. We value the participation of each member of the VLP community and want all individuals to have an enjoyable and fulfilling experience when attending or participating in our activities.
- 1.3 VLP activities are dedicated to providing a harassment-free environment for everyone, regardless of;
 - Sex
 - Gender
 - Gender identity and expression
 - Age
 - Sexual orientation
 - Disability
 - Physical appearance
 - Body size
 - Race
 - Ethnicity
 - Religion (or lack thereof)
 - Technological choices

2. Definitions

2.1 Harassment

Harassment includes offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion (or lack thereof), technological choices, sexual images in public places, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.

2.2 Unwanted, Inappropriate and Offensive Behaviours

Unwanted, inappropriate and offensive behaviours include bullying, harassment and victimisation. These behaviours may involve actions, words or physical gestures that could reasonably be perceived to be the cause of another person's distress or discomfort. Bullying or harassment may be individual or involve groups.

Unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviours have the purpose of violating the recipient's dignity and/or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, and, having regard to all the circumstances, including the recipient's perception, it was reasonable for the behaviour to have that effect. These behaviours may be face-to-face, written, on the telephone or by electronic communication such as by email or on social media.

3. Further Information

- 3.1 VLP will not tolerate harassment, bullying, victimisation, unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviours in any form.
- 3.2 Sexist, racist, exclusionary or offensive jokes, and inappropriate language are not appropriate within any VLP activity.
- 3.3 Sexual language and imagery are not appropriate at any time during participation in, or attendance at, any activity organised by VLP or on social media.
- 3.4 All communication should be appropriate for a professional audience and should take account of, and be respectful towards, all participants.

4. Information

- 4.1 If you are being harassed, notice that someone else is being harassed, or have any other concerns about unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour please contact a member of the VLP Management Committee who will direct you to one of our two appointed representatives who will coordinate VLP's response to any allegations of harassment. Our representatives will assist in any way possible, including contacting venue security, the police or other statutory organisations, providing a 'buddy' for the remainder of the event, or otherwise assisting to ensure a safe environment for the duration of the event or activity.

- 4.2 If you are unsure who to approach, venue staff at events will be able to direct you to a member of the VLP Management Committee.
- 4.3 Participants asked to stop any harassing, unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour by a member of the Management Committee, other attendees, speakers, freelance professionals, sponsors or volunteers are expected to comply immediately.
- 4.4 The VLP Management Committee will deal with all allegations of harassment, unwanted, inappropriate and offensive behaviour and may take any action they deem appropriate (see section 6.8).

5. Procedure for Incident Handling

- 5.1 The VLP Management Committee are prepared to handle any incident that may occur and are informed of the Visual Language Professionals Ltd Code of Conduct Policy and procedures for handling any incidents.
- 5.2 Any allegation of harassment, unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour should be reported to one of the two appointed representatives for coordination. Allegations should be written down, and the Management Committee representative can support you with this. Please try to include the following:
 - Identifying information such as the name of the participant doing the harassing or behaving in an unwanted, inappropriate or offensive manner.
 - The nature of the harassment, unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour.
 - The approximate time of the incident.
 - The circumstances surrounding the incident.
 - Other people involved in the incident.
- 5.3 Information will be passed to the Chair for advice.
- 5.4 For the protection and security of all, allegations of, and information about, harassment, unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour should be treated as confidential and not made public until VLP has had time to investigate and address the situation.
- 5.5 Please do not try to interview people about an allegation; the Management Committee will undertake any necessary investigations and determine what action/s to take.
- 5.6 It may not be necessary to involve security or the police, particularly if everyone is physically safe; however, if the victim requests that security or the police are involved then they should be contacted immediately. If the safety of anyone is in jeopardy, please do not hesitate to contact the police by dialling 999. If you do not have a mobile phone, then a member of the Management Committee or venue staff will be able to assist.
- 5.7 Incidents that violate the Visual Language Professionals Ltd Code of Conduct Policy are damaging to VLP and its community and they will not be tolerated; however, in many cases incidents present the opportunity for offenders, and the VLP community, to learn and develop. The VLP Management Committee request that we are your first resource when reporting any incident at a VLP event or activity so that the Code of Conduct Policy may be enforced, and prompt action taken towards a resolution.

6. VLP Procedure for Handling an Incident

- 6.1 Alert one of the two VLP representatives that an allegation of harassment, unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour has been made.
- 6.2 VLP will support any member who makes an allegation of a criminal nature with reporting this to the police or other relevant authorities. In this situation, VLP will refer authority to the police or other authorities and comply with any investigation. VLP will undertake no further investigation.
- 6.3 The Chair will establish what is expected from the member who is making an allegation of harassment, unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour and establish the following:
- Identifying information such as the name of the participant doing the harassing, or behaving in an unwanted, inappropriate or offensive manner.
 - The nature of the harassment, unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour.
 - The approximate time of the incident.
 - The circumstances surrounding the incident.
 - Other people involved in the incident.
- 6.4 An initial response to the incident will be prepared and depending on the severity of the incident, the following guidelines should be followed:
- If there is any general threat to the safety of anyone at the event or conference, security and the police will be summoned.
 - The victim should be offered a private place to sit and asked if there is anyone they would like with them and if so, that person should be found and asked to assist.
 - The victim should be asked whether there is anything they need immediate help with.
 - If there is no threat to the safety of anyone, security and/or the police will be summoned only at the victim's request.
- 6.5 Please **do not**:
- Ask for explanations.
 - Explain that it is ok to withdraw their complaint.
 - Ask them for advice on how to handle the complaint.
 - Offer the victim any input into penalties or sanctions.
- 6.5 The Chair will document:
- What happened.
 - What action/s VLP has already taken.
 - Who was responsible for carrying out these actions.
 - What further action/s need to be undertaken/completed.
- 6.7 The Chair will communicate with the alleged harasser or those undertaking the unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour and inform them of the allegation. The alleged harasser or those alleged to be behaving in an unwanted, inappropriate or offensive manner will be given the opportunity to explain their side of the story.
- 6.8 The Chair will liaise with the Management Committee and the following actions may be taken:

- If no evidence of harassment, unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour is found, then no further action will be taken.
- Warning the harasser or perpetrator/s of unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour and insisting that they cease the offending behaviour or risk further sanctions.
- Require that the harasser or perpetrator/s of unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour avoid interaction or physical proximity to the victim.
- Ending a session early.
- Not publishing any materials relating to a session that violates this policy and terminating any presenter's further involvement.
- Terminating any responsibilities held.
- Require that the harasser or perpetrator/s of unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour not be involved in any future VLP activities (either indefinitely or for a set period of time).
- Require that the harasser or perpetrator of unwanted, inappropriate or offensive behaviour leave the activity without a refund.
- Termination of VLP membership.

6.9 Inform those involved that they have a right to appeal any decision in writing and that the Management Committee will then discuss the matter and inform them of the outcome.

6.10 Everyone involved in the incident should be informed that official action is being taken; however, the privacy of individuals should be respected, and no further details disclosed. Invite individuals involved to give any feedback in writing.

6.11 If necessary, a public announcement may be made; however, no private or personal information should be disclosed. Participants should be offered the opportunity to give any feedback in writing.