XEP-0458: Community Code of Conduct

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This document describes the XMPP Standard Foundation’s Code of Conduct.
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1 Introduction

The XMPP Standards Foundation provides a number of venues, both physical and virtual, for discussion and community activity. These include email lists, chatrooms, in-person Summits, and so on. It also produces much output designed for the general public, such as the XEPs themselves, the website, and kiosks or stands at actual events. Collectively, these are the XMPP Standards Foundation Activities.

The Members of the Foundation, and the wider community of participants in the XSF Activities, are diverse in viewpoints and goals. We see this as a benefit - we wish the maximize the applicability and quality of our protocols, and therefore we wish to maximize the pool of potential participants who might offer their unique viewpoints and help us achieve our goals. It makes sense that there is a Code of Conduct that applies to the behaviour we expect both of ourselves and any other community members when participating in XSF Activities, especially for the sake of that public output.

2 The Code of Conduct

2.1 Welcome

You are welcome at XSF Activities. Ensure that you are also welcoming of others. We want everyone to feel welcome no matter what the colour of their skin, where they live, or where their ancestors came from. We want to welcome people from all cultures, and religions, and of all sizes and shapes. We want people to be welcome no matter their sexual identity or orientation. We want you to feel welcome no matter your level of experience or ability. And we want you to help us make everyone else feel welcomed, too.

2.2 Assume Good Faith

We are a diverse community, working often to multiple goals. We assume the best intent from each other, and do not ascribe malice to others. Assume that if someone is complaining about your conduct, it is because they either genuinely feel it is exclusionary to them, or they genuinely believe it is exclusionary to others - simply take it as a learning experience, correct your conduct and move on. If possible, assume, too, that bad conduct from others may derive from a misunderstanding or a lack of that learning experience rather than a deliberate attempt to exclude - simply correct them and move on. Do not, however, use this as an excuse for your own bad conduct or a reason to ignore bad conduct by others.

2.3 Pick Your Words

A small amount of effort in ensuring your words are professional and polite, and avoiding subjects and expressions that may offend, goes a long way. If you’re unsure, it’s often useful
to limit your comments to the point you wish to make. Additionally, because participants in XSF events and venues typically do not all share a common native language or culture, take extra care to ensure that your words can be understood clearly and without offense. Attempting to say something humourous does not excuse a poor choice of words. It is very easy for humourous statements to miss the mark. Examples of what to avoid:

- Racist language, whether intentional or not.
- Threats of violence, or violent language directed against someone else.
- Sexually explicit imagery, language, or behaviour.

2.4 Be Respectful

Disagreements are normal and common. Sometimes, there are conflicts or tensions among the different goals we have in our shared endeavour, and it is important that we are able to explain why. Criticism is essential to find the best solutions to the problems that face us. However, it is vital that while we are open and honest in our criticism, we do so with the calm respect we expect of others and with tolerance for other points of view.

- Try to be open regarding your point of view, intents and interests when expressing critique: this helps to discuss the different points of view in a constructive way.
- Try phrasing comments as an invitation to explore an issue.

Examples of what to avoid:

- Personal insults.
- Ad-hominem attacks.

2.5 Be Friendly and Supportive

We are, fundamentally, a community of people working to share technology with each other. We should be friendly toward each other, and act to support each other’s efforts. Examples of what to avoid:

- Impersonation of other people (copying their nickname, avatar, and so on).
- Privacy breaches, including doxxing etc.
- Unwelcome sexual attention.
4 WHO THIS APPLIES TO

- Encouraging poor behaviour in others.
- Harassing others.

As a rule of thumb, if you find yourself dividing the community into an "us" and a "them", you are risking breaking this Code of Conduct.

2.6 About the Examples

The examples in this document of "what not to do" are intended to be just that - examples. They are not intended to be exhaustive.

Many of the terms used in these examples have formal definitions, either in law or elsewhere. In general, the strict interpretation of such a formal definition is not a strong basis for the acceptability of a certain behaviour. Instead, please try to follow the spirit of this document, perhaps more so than its letter.

3 Governing Principles

The governing principle of this Code of Conduct is that all participation in XSF Activities is solely by permission of the XMPP Standards Foundation. No person has any automatic right to join a XSF chatroom or mailing list, or contribute to XSF documents such as the XEP series. Naturally, under normal circumstances, the XMPP Standards Foundation welcomes and encourages participation in XSF Activities. Nevertheless, the XSF does reserve the right to partially or completely exclude anyone from any Activity, for any reason.

The final decision on such exclusions is made by the Board, who may from time to time appoint a Work Team, called the Conduct Team, to act on their behalf. If the Work Team has not been appointed, the Conduct Team is the Board.

There are exceptions to this - in particular, any right of elected members of the Foundation under the Bylaws cannot be curtailed by the Board, though the Board (or any other any member) could start the process to eject a member. This means that members are trusted by the other members to a higher degree than other participants; something that should be considered during elections.

4 Who This Applies To

This Code of Conduct applies to anyone who:

- Acts in a capacity which could reasonably be expected to be acting on behalf of the XMPP Standards Foundation or the wider XMPP Community.
- Participates in any XSF Activity.
4.1 Acting in a Capacity

Although on the face of it the first case may seem to be extremely broad, in fact the proviso of “reasonable expectation” ensures that this Code of Conduct will not be applied more often than necessary. The intent here is that while good behaviour which might be associated with the XSF and its community reflects well on us, the opposite is also true. By explicitly stating that this Code of Conduct applies when someone acts on behalf of the XSF, the XSF may sanction bad behaviour outside of XSF Activities should the need arise.

Note also that this is not intended to mean that any XMPP developer’s behaviour will be scrutinised constantly - using, for example, racist language in a talk about your XMPP project would be problematic, but using sexualised language in your erotic fiction hobby is unlikely to be relevant to this Code of Conduct.

However, higher standards may be applied to those seen as representative of the community, such as XSF Members and, in particular, members of the Board or Council.

5 How We Handle Bad Conduct

5.1 Reporting

If you witness bad conduct by somebody - that is, if you feel someone’s behaviour does not live up to this Code of Conduct - please do express your concern (calmly and gently) to that person at the time, but only if you feel comfortable and competent to do so. This allows the person to recognise that their behaviour may be problematic and to correct it at the time without undue escalation. However, if you feel uncomfortable expressing your concern, that is perfectly fine and it will not affect further handling of the incident.

Whether or not you expressed your concern at the time of the incident, you are encouraged to do one of the following:

- Let the Conduct Team know.
- Let the Board know.
- Let at least one member of the Board, and preferably more, know.

Who you report it might depend on who was involved in the incident - you may feel that members of the Conduct Team or the Board were involved or present and therefore wish to report the incident to people who were not involved.

In some cases, people may prefer to report an incident informally; while reporting “properly” is preferred, if possible the Conduct Team should strive to handle informal reports in the same way as formal reports, while at the same time not encouraging unverifiable reports such as gossip or hearsay.

Importantly, even if someone else expressed concern or said to you that they would report an incident, please report it anyway. This helps to ensure that the Conduct Team have a clear understanding of what happened and who saw the conduct, and allows the Conduct Team to
identify any longer term patterns.
When you report the incident, include the place, date and time, and report it as calmly as possible.

5.2 Consideration
The Conduct Team will then discuss the incident. This should be done quickly, and in private. The Conduct Team may ask for further information from the person reporting the incident, the person or persons directly affected, the person accused of bad conduct, or others who were present.
Finally, the Conduct Team will make a decision on whether sanctions or other actions should be taken, and determine the exact form of such sanctions or actions.

5.3 Sanctions and Actions
The purpose of a Code of Conduct is to ensure that our community is as welcoming and inclusive as possible. Sanctions are by their nature exclusionary, and many Actions are unlikely to be welcoming to those involved. Therefore the Conduct Team must consider how to ensure the Actions they take and the Sanctions they impose resolve the concerns proportionally, balancing the needs of the community with the individuals that form it, always keeping in mind the goal of maximizing inclusion and promoting positive behaviours.
The Conduct team will normally have its authority to make decisions delegated to it by the Board. In some cases the Conduct Team may choose to hand its recommendation on Sanctions or other Actions to the Board even if authority has not been delegated. The Board will discuss and vote on these “in camera” (i.e., not in public and not minuted).
Finally, the result will normally be explained to the person accused of bad conduct, and may be explained to the complainant.
Any announcement of Actions or Sanctions is an Action in and of itself, and should be considered carefully. In general terms, any announcement should be proportionate to the bad conduct and the size of the audience which witnessed it. In high profile cases, therefore, the Conduct Team may decide the result will be announced publicly in order to restore trust. Sanctions may consist of having the ability to participate reduced or removed from some or all XSF Activities. Actions may include discussion with the Conduct Team. These are only examples and are non-exhaustive.
Many minor incidents will, therefore, not be reported publicly at all, and - even if there is an agreement that bad conduct occurred - may not result in any visible Actions at all.

5.4 Appeal
If you disagree with the decision made by the Conduct Team or the Board and you were either the person affected by bad conduct or the person subject to the Actions or Sanctions, you may
appeal in writing by sending an email to the Board (or to the Board via a particular member). The Board will consider your argument as written and will normally respond. The Board’s decision after appeal is, however, final.

5.5 Situations Requiring Immediate Action

The foregoing process assumes that there is time for reporting, consideration, and well-reasoned decision-making "in a quiet hour”. However, two very different kinds of situation might require immediate action:

1. Clearly offensive, threatening, or disruptive but somewhat minor behaviour, for example “drive-by” comments in online chatrooms.

2. Behaviour that poses a clear and present threat of physical harm, for example a fist-fight at an in-person event.

In both kinds of situation, venue moderators are empowered to use their best judgment and take immediate action (in the first example, moderators might ban the sender from a chatroom; in the second example, moderators might break up a fight or call building security). However, the actions of venue moderators are always subject to appeal.

6 Security Considerations

It is possible for almost any behaviour to seem justified - there could be an argument that the behaviour is not, in fact, exclusionary, and that someone someone took offence too easily. It also is possible for the Code of Conduct to be weaponised for exclusionary purposes, by using the complaints mechanism to stall or silence valid debate. Both of these are cases where the very existence of a Code of Conduct could be used for exclusionary purposes, perverting its very intent. Obviously, don’t do either.

In particular, the principle “Assume Good Faith” opens the possibility of an endless argument over how much good faith to assume, and where the burden of proof lies - the phrasing in Section 2.2. is intended to minimize ambiguity in this regard, but cannot eliminate it entirely. There are no simple answers to these concerns. Future Boards and Conduct teams are advised to be wary of both cases.

7 IANA Considerations

This document has no considerations for IANA.
8 XMPP Registrar Considerations

This document has no considerations for the XMPP Registrar.

9 Acknowledgements

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