

ETHICAL TRANSPARENCY TOOL

Organizations & people leading to create a norm of transparency

Overview Briefing Packet

Updated 12.13.2022

Ethical Transparency Tool (ETT) Overview Briefing Packet Table of Contents

1. Overview: Purpose and Key Design Principles

Brief overview of the ETT's purpose and three design principles that minimize legal and enterprise risk, while treating everyone ethically. Focus audience includes lawyers and others who want a one-page narrative overview.

2. 2-Slide Process Diagram and Steps

Visualization of how the ETT works. Focus audience is anyone who wants a high-level overview of the tool.

This can also be downloaded as presentation slides (segmented presentation and combined presentation) [here](#) or a 1-page combined process diagram and notes handout [here](#).

3. Benefits Statements: ETT-Registered Entities, Individuals, and Education-Research Ecosystem

Topline benefits for each main stakeholder affected by the ETT process. These can be used together or in any combination depending on the focus audience.

These resources can be used in combination or as standalone documents. Each society, institution, and organization can decide which resources will be most useful for its different audiences. Focus audiences are additive – to expand, not to limit, who might benefit from each resource.

The Societies Consortium and the Ethical Transparency Tool (ETT)

The [Societies Consortium on Sexual Harassment in STEMM](#) (2nd “M” for medicine) is a collective of over 100 academic and professional disciplinary societies co-originated by AAAS, AAMC, AGU, and EducationCounsel. As part of its core mission of ethics and inclusion, the Consortium, with practical guidance from its Advisory Council Working Group of four societies, five research universities, and three higher education and research organizations, has been working collaboratively on the development of a tool — the Ethical Transparency Tool (ETT).

ETT is designed to support [AAU’s harassment prevention principles](#) and the recommendations of [NASEM’s June 2018 report on sexual harassment of women in academic science, engineering, and medicine](#) by helping to create a norm of transparency about findings of misconduct against a person, across the higher-education and research ecosystem of societies, institutions of higher education, and other research organizations.

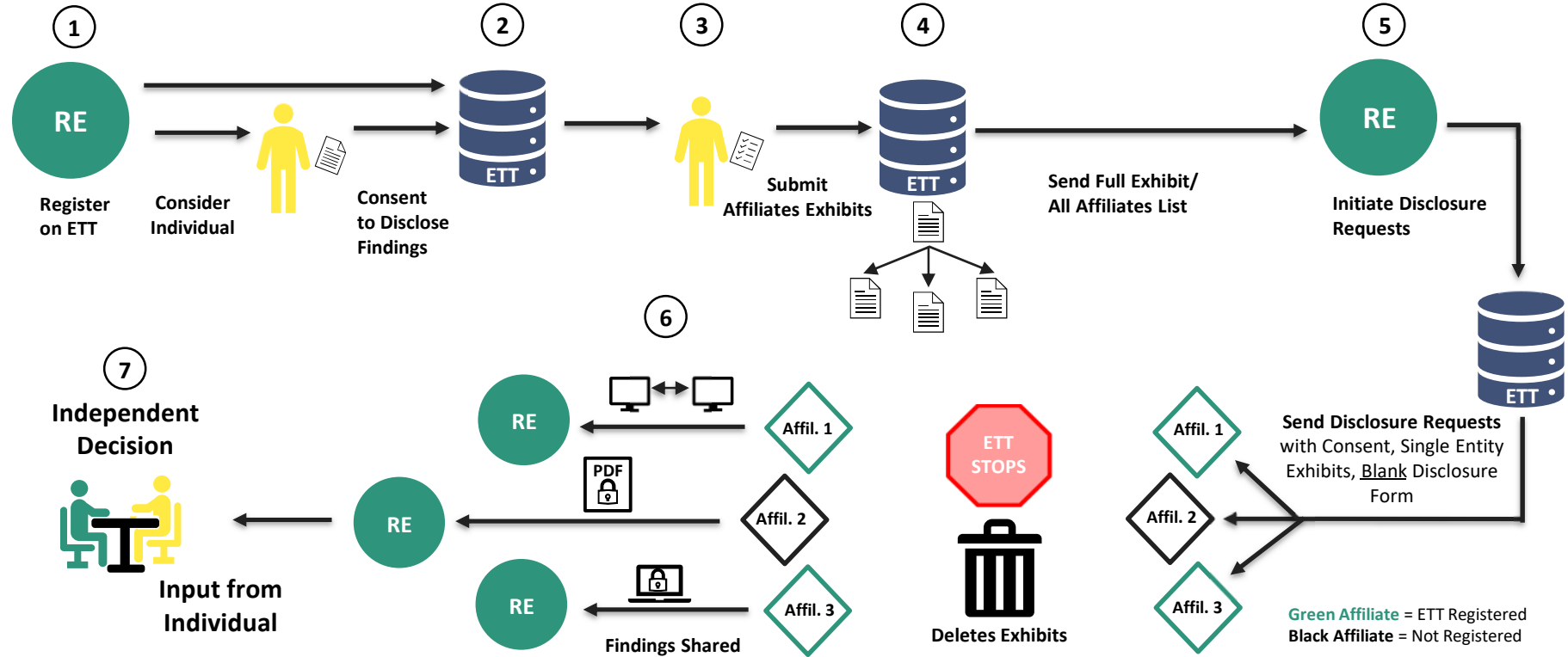
This tool covers sexual, gender, and racial misconduct—as well as professional licensure, financial, and research misconduct to maximize its utility.

How ETT Creates Ethical Transparency About Findings (Not Allegations)

Three key design principles, reflecting sound ethical and legal practices, ease access to findings of misconduct:

- **Creating a healthy climate for all.** ETT is intended to reduce **unwittingly** passing the harasser, while enabling recognition that a person may learn lessons, change conduct, and regain trust.
- **Ensuring the ethical treatment of everyone.** ETT is designed to ease the burden of fact-sharing among institutions, societies, and other organizations without creating shame lists or whisper campaigns.
- **Minimizing legal and enterprise risk.** ETT supports adequately informed decision-making about employment, governance, leadership, honors, privileges, and other roles, with three key design elements:
 1. ***Preserving each organization’s independence.*** ETT guards each organization’s independence in policymaking, when it elects to use ETT **and** other tools, how it gains a person’s input, how it assesses qualifications, and all decisions.
 2. ***Automating a person’s consent authorizing disclosures; One consent having field-wide impact.*** A person’s single consent has a 10-year life (subject to a rescission right). Throughout that period, that consent authorizes **disclosures by all a person’s professional affiliates** (i.e., employers, membership/honorary organizations, appointing authorities), **when requested by any ETT-Registered Entities**. One entity alone cannot create a norm of transparency when a person works in many settings.
 3. ***Automating disclosure requests; easing disclosures by an efficient form; and maintaining privacy by never sending disclosures to the ETT database.*** An entity that made findings (which is the most reliable source) makes disclosures **directly** to an ETT-Registered Entity when it initiates an ETT-automated request. ETT provides an efficient “check the box” Disclosure Form Template, which minimizes labor for a disclosing entity to make disclosures and for a receiving entity to review disclosures. When completed, the Disclosure Form discloses the existence and year of a finding and the type of misconduct—or that there is no finding of the types covered by ETT. A person’s input and these facts can be sufficient to inform an ETT-Registered Entity’s independent decision-making in many situations. A disclosing entity retains sole custody of its records. ETT never receives disclosures or conduct records and cannot create a central repository of them.

Full Ethical Transparency Tool (ETT) Process Diagram



Ethical Transparency Tool (ETT) Full Process Steps

- ① IHEs, societies, other research orgs. register to use ETT. A Registered Entity (**RE**) may require an Individual (**Ind.**) to complete a Consent Form on ETT (if not already submitted) as a condition to being considered for certain honor, privilege, employment, leadership, or governance roles. (A RE-society may ask Ind. to complete a Consent Form voluntarily anytime to help populate the ETT database and contribute to a norm of transparency.)
- ② Ind. registers and completes a Consent Form on ETT. A single Consent Form: has a 10-year life but can be rescinded or renewed; can be used by any RE(s) when it considers an Ind. and seeks disclosures of **findings** of misconduct against the Ind. (sexual, gender, racial—also licensure, financial, research); and authorizes all of the Ind.'s professionally affiliated entities, past, present, and future (**Affiliates**) to disclose any such findings that they made to any RE(s) that makes a request throughout that period. (**Affiliates include the Ind.'s employers, societies, and appointing entities.**)
- ③ Upon RE's request, Ind. enters Ind.'s private ETT page to complete **Exhibit Forms** (a Full Form listing all of Ind.'s Affiliates, prior or current at the time—and Single Entity Forms, one for each Affiliate listing only it), with a contact for each. Exhibit Forms pair with Consent Forms to confirm Ind.'s Consent Recipients for authorized disclosures. An Ind. completes new Exhibit Forms, with up-to-date Affiliate listings and contacts, each time the Ind. is considered by any RE.
- ④ Upon Ind.'s submission and direction, ETT sends the Full Exhibit Form to RE. RE has 60 days to initiate Disclosure Requests to all of Ind.'s listed Affiliates via ETT. If not timely initiated, ETT deletes all of the Exhibit Forms (Full and Single Entity). **ETT is only a conduit for Exhibit Forms, not a repository.**
- ⑤ If timely initiated, ETT (on behalf of RE) sends separately to each Affiliate, the Ind.'s Consent Form, a Single Entity Exhibit Form (listing only the Affiliate that is receiving it), and a blank ETT Disclosure Form, asking the Affiliate to complete the Disclosure Form. ETT sends 2 Request Reminders to the Affiliates in the 21 days after the initial disclosure request. ETT then deletes all Exhibit Forms. This marks the end of use of ETT in the RE's process.
- ⑥ Each Affiliate checks the box and inserts the year for any covered kind of finding that it made against Ind. or checks "No Finding" or "Will Not Be Responding." It chooses its own secure method for **directly** sharing with only the requesting RE, the completed Disclosure Form. (E.g., screen sharing, password protected PDF, password protected website page.) **Affiliates do NOT send completed Disclosure Forms to ETT**; there is no central repository or shame list.
- ⑦ RE gains Ind.'s input, by its chosen means. Applying all facts that RE determines relevant, RE independently makes a decision under its own criteria and policy.

Benefits of Participating in the Ethical Transparency Tool (ETT)

ETT's Transparency Driver

Research and principles on the importance of transparency. The [2018 NASEM Report on the Sexual Harassment of Women in Academic Science, Engineering, and Medicine](#) and [AAU's Harassment Prevention Principles](#) prioritize creating healthy climates and ending **unwittingly** passing the harasser. This does not mean that, once found responsible for misconduct, a person cannot learn, change conduct, and regain trust – but it does require transparency for well-informed, independent policy- and decision-making.

ETT's Benefits for Participating Entities

- **Reliable facts for a healthy environment and reduced enterprise risk.** See all individual benefits. Not knowing that a misconduct finding has been made about a person from the entity that made or adopted the finding—and being unable to assess its relevance before making a decision—create unnecessary enterprise risk. The existence and year of misconduct findings of the generic kinds covered by ETT, in addition to hearing from the person, may be all an entity needs in many situations to inform its independent decision that will maintain and enhance its excellence and reputation, reduce its enterprise risk, treat the person ethically, and benefit all in its campus, membership, and broader community. One entity can't relitigate another entity's finding in any event. It's hard to legitimately object to this kind of transparency.
- **Minimized legal exposure; focus on what's really needed.** ETT is a tool (not a uniform policy) that guards each entity's independent policy- and decision- making (with no joint policy or decision), provides consents to authorize disclosures, and limits disclosures to the most useful, reliable, and hard to dispute facts. A disclosing entity made the finding and retains sole custody of its records.
- **Increases ease and efficiency of sharing misconduct findings.** ETT reduces labor and time for both the disclosing and requesting entities. The disclosing entity need not review and redact – and the requesting entity need not read – voluminous records as frequently. By focusing on what's really needed in many situations and automating individuals' consents and entities' disclosure requests, ETT makes it easier and more likely for entities that made a finding to share it when requested.
- **ETT and other tools are “and” not “or” propositions.** ETT can be used with an entity's other transparency tools. Self-disclosures are one way to gain an individual's perspective about a misconduct finding; they can also fill in gaps when an entity won't provide *any* facts. But a self-disclosure only reflects the person's characterization. And if a person is not forthright, they may harm a community before being found out. In some situations, an entity may want a consent for a full file disclosure. But, even with a consent, full files can be hard to obtain and are often time-consuming to produce and review. ETT can help avoid full file production when not needed. Even in jurisdictions where a full file review is required by law or an education system, they can be limited to the presumptive single finalist (or a short list), who will already have been preliminarily identified taking into account disclosures using ETT.

Benefits of Participating in the Ethical Transparency Tool (ETT) (continued)

ETT's Benefits for Individuals

- **Ethical, secure sharing of misconduct findings for a healthy work and learning environment.** ETT is a transparency tool that treats all people ethically and is sensitive to security needs. Individuals consent to disclosures of misconduct findings before a disclosure is made and can rescind a consent. ETT does not create a “shame list” or central records repository. There is no physical or digital transfer of misconduct records; the requesting entity just views or receives a check the box Disclosure Form via the disclosing entity’s secure means.
- **Sharing that is not over-broad.** A misconduct finding is only disclosed by the entity that made or adopted the finding directly to—and when requested by—an institution of higher education (IHE), academic-professional-honorary society, or other research organization that is registered to use ETT. The ETT database never receives a disclosure. Disclosures may only be used by the requesting IHE, society or organization in connection with its independent decisions or policies about honors, employment, leadership, governance, other roles, and/or privileges that may affect a healthy environment or enterprise risk. Disclosure is not automatic when a finding is made.
- **Limited but useful disclosures only of findings – not allegations.** A person’s ETT consent authorizes disclosure of findings of covered generic kinds of misconduct (sexual, gender, racial—also professional licensure, financial, or research). They are limited to the fact that a finding exists, the covered generic kind of misconduct, and the year. They come from the most reliable source – the entity that made or adopted the finding. ETT can avoid “whisper campaigns” and surprises.
- **Outcomes not dictated; no joint decision-making.** ETT does not dictate or guide decision-making about who is qualified or should be selected for an honor, employment, or any role. These decisions—including when (for what roles) to use ETT, how “finding” is defined, whether/what consequences result if there is a finding, and how to gain the person’s input – are made independently by each ETT-Registered Entity under its own policies, applied to a particular situation.
- **Students not covered.** Volunteers and employees, post docs and residents, may be covered.

Benefits of Participating in the Ethical Transparency Tool (ETT) (continued)

ETT's Benefits for the Higher Education & Research Ecosystem

- **Field-wide transparency in all settings where a person works or leads.** No one entity in the higher education and research ecosystem can alone create a norm of transparency because people engage in multiple settings. But transparency across the ecosystem can improve climate, enable all talent to thrive, and advance excellence, benefiting all of the entities and people in it. Establishing a norm of transparency among a universe of IHEs, societies, and organizations is often both more effective and easier than going it alone.
- **Leadership in creating a norm of transparency.** Each entity that uses ETT is taking leadership action to enable all parts of the higher education-research ecosystem to be better informed before an entity makes its independent decisions that affect its community and the fields broadly.
- **Long-term, field-wide (not just single transaction) utility.** A single ETT Consent Form authorizes *all* of a person's professionally affiliated entities to *make* disclosures of their findings of misconduct about a person when requested by an ETT-Registered Entity – whether or not the disclosing entities also are registered to use ETT. Registered institutions, societies, and organizations can *request and receive* disclosures. Only one Registered Entity requests an ETT Consent Form from a particular person. But, once submitted, that consent has a 10-year life (if not rescinded early) and may be used throughout that period by any number of ETT-Registered Entities to learn of misconduct findings to inform any number of their independent decisions.