

Johann Wolfgang Goethe University policy regarding good scientific practice

The Senate policy on good scientific practice initially approved on 22.10.2003 has now been extended with the following principles, which were passed by the Senate on 18.5.2005. They are based on recommendations made at the German Rector's Conference of 6.7.1998.

Preamble

The prerequisite for the recognition of scientific work, both in the public realm and in the scientific community is the observation of, and compliance with basic principles regarding good scientific practice. Any non-compliance not only runs counter to the notion of scientific research but also undermines the public's trust in science, as well as among scientists themselves. The following basic principles cannot of course altogether prevent the occurrence of individual cases of unprofessional conduct but they are intended to engender an awareness of good scientific practice and go some way towards limiting the potential for scientific misconduct.

Part One: Rules of good scientific practice

§ 1 General principles

1. Scientists working at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University are obligated to
 - work according to the standards of good professional conduct
 - document all their experiments and to critically question their own results
 - maintain a strict policy of honesty, regarding the contributions of their colleagues, competitors and predecessors
 - make every effort to prevent misconduct and
 - observe the following regulations

2. Alongside taking measures to ascertain and deal with cases of scientific misconduct, scientists are obligated to take every precaution to ensure that it does not arise in the first instance. As a place of research, learning and for the promotion of young researchers, the University has a responsibility to see that the following measures are complied with:

- The commitment to conform to these regulations will form part of each University appointment and any extension to an existing contract.
- Faculty Deans are obligated to see that within the sphere of work for which they are responsible, the rules of good scientific practice are promoted and met.

3. Group leaders should act in an exemplary manner. Students and junior scientists must be aware that it is in their own interest and that of their scientific future to avoid possible misconduct in their field.

4. University departments are expressly encouraged to address the issue of 'scientific misconduct' in the curriculum and to teach students about the University's policy in this respect.

5. Members of the University and those affiliated with it are urged to contact the University's Ombudsman at once if they suspect a case of scientific misconduct.

§ 2 Collaboration and responsibility within groups

Group leaders should appoint members of their group to be responsible for guidance, supervision, the settlement of disputes and quality control. All group members should be made aware of the person responsible for each of these areas.

§ 3 Supervision of junior scientists

Group leaders are responsible for ensuring that graduates, PhD students and students receive adequate supervision. Each of these should have a key person in the group who is responsible for conveying to them the rules of good scientific practice.

§ 4 Criteria for measuring achievement and performance

The two criteria used for measuring achievement and performance are originality and quality. These apply in the awarding of academic qualifications as well as to new appointments. The University also uses the same criteria in evaluation processes.

§ 5 Back-up and storage of primary data

Primary data that forms the basis of a publication is to be stored for a period of ten years on permanent and secure files in the institution in which it originated. Wherever possible, the preparations with which the data were gathered should also be stored for the same period.

§ 6 Scientific publications

Each author of a scientific paper is jointly responsible with the other authors for the content of the paper. A so-called “honorary authorship” is therefore not permitted.

Part Two: Avoiding scientific misconduct

§ 7 Procedure in the case of suspected scientific misconduct

1. In the case of suspected scientific misconduct the University will act according to the recommendations of the German Rector's Conference of 6.7.1998. This is a binding agreement and forms part of the basic statutes of the University for ensuring good scientific practice.

2. In compliance with, and according to the ‘CII’ recommendations made at the German Rector's Conference, the University Senate will appoint:

- an Ombudsman and a deputy Ombudsman, who will act independently of all departments and the University administration. All information gathered by the ombudsman will be dealt with in strict confidence. He/she alone will be responsible for deciding which of the cases of suspected professional misconduct should be brought before the

commission or communicated to the University president or vice-president.

- a commission, in accordance with the 'C III' recommendations of the German Rector's Conference. The commission's members will be comprised of a representative from each of the following disciplines: Law, Natural Sciences and Medicine, as well as a representative from a non-scientific discipline. They will be appointed to serve for three years, with the possibility of a further two-year extension to their appointment. The commission will also co-opt a further member from the department where the misconduct is alleged to have taken place. The Ombudsman and the deputy Ombudsman will be invited to participate in the commission to act in an advisory capacity.

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