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Principles for safeguarding good scientific practice and to avoid violations of the obligations of scientific integrity

Resolution of the Senate of 13 December 2023

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Statutory part

Principles for safeguarding good scientific practice and avoiding violations of scientific integrity obligations

Resolution of the Senate of 13 December 2023

In short: Principles for safeguarding good scientific practice

Preamble

Scientific integrity and good scientific practice are indispensable premises of scientific work and cooperation for the production of valid research results. These are prerequisites for the reputation of scientists and research institutions, but above all for the trust placed in them by society, politics and business. The performance of scientific work is therefore subject to generally applicable and subject-specific legal regulations and/or ethical standards in all disciplines.

The University shall ensure that all members of the academic staff are aware of these principles and observe the associated responsibilities. In cases of allegations or proven violations of the duties of academic integrity, the University shall take appropriate measures to adequately clarify and, if necessary, punish the offence.

The following principles do not replace existing (general or subject-specific) legal regulations and ethical standards in any respect, but rather anchor generally applicable principles of scientific integrity at a university-wide level and form the basis for corresponding measures at an institutional level. The wording of the text follows the guidelines of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity on Good Scientific Practice (GWP Guidelines of the OeAWI, as of 2015, <https://oeawi.at/richtlinien/> "OeAWI Guidelines") and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, as of 2018, ("ALLEA Guidelines", <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/>).

§ 1 Good scientific practice

University members according to § 94, para. 1 UG of the University of Graz are obliged,

1. lege artis, i.e. to conduct their scientific activities in accordance with legal regulations, ethical standards and the current state of knowledge in their subject or discipline, and to select publication media and scientific events in compliance with quality assurance mechanisms.
2. document results and consistently scrutinise all results critically,
3. maintain strict honesty with regard to the contributions of partners, competitors and predecessors,
4. to avoid and prevent violations of the obligations of scientific integrity in their own work and (within the scope of their possibilities) in their environment, and
5. to avoid violations of the labelling obligation of the software used and its type of use and
6. The principles described below must be observed.

§ 2. mediation and shared responsibility in management functions and in teaching

- (1) Each head of an organisational unit and its academic units is responsible for an appropriate organisation that ensures that the tasks of management, supervision, conflict resolution and quality assurance are clearly assigned and actually performed.

- (2) Every supervisor of early career researchers (in particular in the context of supervising Bachelor's or Master's theses, diploma theses and dissertations) is obliged to ensure that they are aware of and comply with the principles of good scientific practice. Every university teacher is obliged to adequately convey the principles of good scientific practice and the obligations of scientific integrity in the curricular training and thus contribute to the development of a corresponding awareness of problems and responsibility.

§ 3 Backup and storage of data/documentation and logging

Data that formed the basis for one or more publications shall be stored on durable and secure storage media in the institution in which they were created for ten years, insofar as this is possible and reasonable, without prejudice to other statutory provisions. Where personal data is involved, appropriate technical and organisational measures corresponding to the respective risk must be taken to ensure an appropriate level of data protection. Whenever legal requirements and the institution's resources permit, preparations with which primary data were obtained, protocols of the scientific procedure and all other documents relevant to the work in question should be retained for the same period.

§ 4 Scientific publications

Scientific publications are a form of research documentation. Research results must always be made accessible to the research community. Where possible, scientific publications should be shared with the scientific community in open access.

(Co-)authors of scientific publications are jointly responsible for their content. (Co-)authors are requested to discuss inclusion or non-inclusion in the list of authors and the order of authors prior to publication.

So-called "honorary authorships" are not permitted, i.e. only the actual significant contribution to the development of the research work in question can justify (co-)authorship. If the nature and scope of the underlying research work or the number of contributing authors allow it, the contribution made by each author must also be indicated.

When selecting publication media (publishers, journals, etc.) and scientific events (conferences), appropriate care must be taken in consideration of quality assurance mechanisms.

§ 5 Violations of the duties of scientific integrity

- (1) Violations of the duties of scientific integrity must be distinguished from scientific error.
- (2) Violations of the duties of scientific integrity are deemed to have occurred if false statements are made deliberately or through gross negligence in a scientifically relevant context, if the intellectual property of others is infringed or if their research activities are impaired or attempted to be impaired in any other way.
- (3) Violations of the obligations of scientific integrity may be considered in particular:
 1. Misrepresentation and faking scientific achievements: The fabrication of data; the falsification of data (e.g. by selecting and rejecting undesirable results without disclosing this; by manipulating a presentation or figure); incorrect information in a letter of application or an application for funding (including false information about the publication organ and publications in print); faking scientific achievements by publishing in fake journals or participating in fake conferences or by reusing an original work or passages of text from it without reference to the earlier publication if this creates a false impression of the novelty of the work (autoplagerism or self-plagiarism).

2. Infringement of intellectual property in relation to a copyrighted work created by another person or essential scientific findings, hypotheses, doctrines or research approaches originating from others: Unauthorised exploitation under presumption of authorship (plagiarism); exploitation of research approaches and ideas, in particular as a reviewer (theft of ideas); presumption or unfounded assumption of scientific authorship or co-authorship; falsification of the content; unauthorised publication and unauthorised making available to third parties as long as the work, finding, hypothesis, teaching or research approach has not yet been published.
 3. All cases of ghostwriting in which texts are written in whole or in part by a third party for another party (scientist, student) and the other party refers to this work as having been written by him/herself or conceals the ghostwriting. Violation of the obligation to label the software used and its type of use.
 4. Sabotage of research activity (including damaging, destroying or tampering with experimental set-ups, equipment, documentation, hardware, software, chemicals or other items needed by others to conduct an experiment).
 5. Removal of data, insofar as this violates legal provisions, disciplinary recognised principles of scientific work or § 3 of the present principles of the University of Graz.
 6. Unfair attempts to diminish the academic reputation of other academics and students.
 7. Concealing actual or potential conflicts of interest (e.g. in selection procedures, in the review of research projects and publications or in the presence of competitive relationships).
- (4) Joint responsibility for violations of the duties of academic integrity may result from, among other things: Active participation in the misconduct of others, knowledge of falsification by others and gross neglect of the duty of care and/or supervision.

§ 6 Commission for Scientific Integrity

- (1) A Commission for Academic Integrity shall be established at the University of Graz for a period of four years. Its task is to draw up a statement on suspected cases of violation of the duties of academic integrity by persons who were in an upright employment relationship with the University of Graz at the time of the suspected violation. Other legal or statutory regulations regarding such violations remain unaffected.
- (2) The composition of the committee should represent the entire university. The Commission shall be composed of 4 representatives of the group of university professors pursuant to § 94 para. 2 subpara. 1 UG, 3 representatives of the group of university lecturers and research and teaching staff pursuant to § 94 para. 2 subpara. 2 UG and 2 representatives of the students as well as one representative of the general staff of the University of Graz. One substitute member must be appointed for each group of persons. The committee is appointed by the Senate. The rules of procedure of the Senate and all Senate Commissions of the University of Graz shall apply in the currently valid version.
- (3) The Commission shall take action if it is called upon by a person or by an anonymous report to clarify a suspected case concerning members of the University of Graz in accordance with § 94 para. 1 UG. If necessary, the person reporting the suspected case will be provided with suitable protective measures to preserve their anonymity.
- (4) The Commission shall carry out its activities under the strictest confidentiality and in compliance with the appropriate technical and organisational measures corresponding to the respective risk of processing to ensure adequate protection of personal data. A copy of reports that disclose the identity of the potential infringer and/or the reporting person is created after receipt and filing of the report, in which the direct identifiers (e.g. name, matriculation number) are deleted as far as possible and - as far as the purpose allows - further processing is carried out in this data-minimised version.

- (5) The Commission investigates the suspected violation of scientific integrity in a procedure of taking evidence while maintaining the greatest possible confidentiality for all parties involved and in compliance with the guarantees of an impartial and fair procedure pursuant to Art. 6 ECHR (European Convention on Human Rights). The Commission collects all information and evidence necessary for its examination of the facts: It may question persons, call in experts, carry out on-site inspections and obtain all relevant information from the competent bodies and departments of the University. If, as a result of its investigation, the Commission considers the suspicion to be unproven, measures shall be taken to rehabilitate the person concerned with his or her consent. If the Commission considers the violation of the duties of academic integrity to be proven after examination or if the suspicion could not be satisfactorily dispelled for one or more persons concerned, the Commission shall decide on a reasoned statement and, if necessary, a recommendation for the body responsible under law or the statutes. The course of the proceedings before the commission must be documented in writing. Documents and findings arising from the proceedings shall be made available to the body appointed to make the decision. The bodies concerned must deal with the Commission's opinion.

Relationship to other responsibilities and procedures

This part of the statutes is the basis for the internal university examination, clarification, arbitration or prosecution of cases of violations of the duties of academic integrity. This regulation does not replace other procedures regulated by law or the statutes (e.g. supervisory procedures under organisational law, disciplinary proceedings, labour or civil court proceedings, criminal proceedings) and does not affect the competences and activities of the responsible bodies or any legal or statutory options for action by the persons concerned.

The Chairwoman of the
Senate: Ehrke-Rabel