

# Code of Conduct of the University of Vienna

May 2013

## 1. Preamble

- The University of Vienna is a place where knowledge for the present and future is generated, shared and critically reflected upon, under conditions of freedom of inquiry and expression. It therewith contributes to the enhancement of scholarship and to the solution of questions which are relevant to mankind and society. The University of Vienna is conscious of its special social responsibility and of the exemplary functions that come with it. It is for this reason that the conduct of the University of Vienna and of all its members shall be in accordance with the law, with the regulations and guidelines issued by the University of Vienna itself, as well as, in particular, with the highest possible academic and ethical standards.
- The following Code of Conduct (CoC) is to be understood as a solemn affirmation on the part of the University of Vienna, defined as the community of its members, that it will always remain committed to the aforementioned values and ambitions. The CoC lays down a binding framework of conduct.
- The members of the University of Vienna shall familiarise themselves with the applicable regulations and guidelines and be conscious of the share which they personally take in this joint responsibility.

## 2. Good academic practice

- Academic integrity is a value of utmost importance. In order to safeguard academic integrity, the members of the University of Vienna shall observe the Guideline of the Rectorate on Good Academic Practice (*gute wissenschaftliche Praxis*) and shall consult the Ethics Committee (*Ethikkommission*) of the University of Vienna in such research projects as are further specified in the University Charter (*Satzung der Universität Wien*).
- Members of the University shall refrain from any conduct that might, in whatever way or respect, undermine or do harm to the academic integrity of the University of Vienna.
- Members with an executive function shall act as role models to their staff and shall, to the best of their ability, support students and junior researchers in developing a corresponding attitude.

## 3. Relations between members of the University of Vienna

- The University of Vienna conceives itself as a community of all its members: individuals of different age and sex, of different social and geographic origin, shaped by different situations in life and by different experiences, world views, and abilities.
- Hence any dealings between members of the University shall be marked by mutual respect and esteem. Intolerance, discriminating or offensive behaviour, or favouritism, will not in any way be accepted at the University of Vienna; this also applies to third parties (see 4).
- Requests on the part of students or other staff members shall always be answered in an appropriate and respectful manner and without undue delay.
- Members of the University of Vienna shall do their best to resolve conflicts in a problem-orientated manner, in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect, and with objectivity and fairness. The de-escalation measures and similar tools provided in the

conflict control model of the University of Vienna shall be applied at the earliest possible stage.

- Sexual harassment and mobbing of any kind are incompatible with the principle of mutual respect in interpersonal relations; they shall therefore not in any way be tolerated at the University of Vienna, and may prompt sanctions under criminal or labour law. In particular, in relationships of dependency (e.g., executive/staff, teacher/student), it is of the utmost importance to keep an appropriate distance.
- Where there are personal ties between members of the University of Vienna, and in particular where one of the partners finds him-/herself in a relationship of dependency with the other, all appropriate measures shall be taken to prevent potential conflicts of interest (see 5).

#### **4. Relations with business partners and third parties**

- As a public contracting authority, the University of Vienna is subject to the Austrian Federal Public Procurement Act 2006 (*Bundesvergabegesetz 2006*). Contract tendering and awards shall be conducted under conditions of fair competition between providers, observing the four-eyes principle and the defined value limits.
- Business partners shall be treated politely and with respect. No discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion or belief, of sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability shall be tolerated.
- Requests from business partners or third parties shall be dealt with and responded to within a reasonable period.
- Sponsoring, i.e., donations in the form of money, material assets or services by third parties to the University of Vienna, must be transparent and appropriate.
- Personal donations (gifts, invitations or other benefits) which are given in connection with the recipient's activities for the University of Vienna are acceptable only if their value is insignificant, and they are not directly connected with past or possible future business transactions. In case of doubt, the disciplinary superior shall be consulted.

#### **5. Conflicts of interest of a personal and economic nature**

- The University of Vienna will be judged by the conduct and responsibility practised by all its members. Hence the staff (including executives) of the University of Vienna shall be loyal to the University of Vienna and to its key objectives in research and teaching and shall act accordingly. This includes the conscientious fulfilment of duties. In order to prevent conflicts of interest, they shall keep non-university activities and private financial interests separate from their activities at the University of Vienna.
- Any person employed by the University of Vienna shall comply with the provisions on disclosure of information and duties to abstain as stated in the individual employment contracts and in the Collective Agreement (*Kollektivvertrag*) (§ 12), in the Public Service Act (*Beamten-Dienstrechtsgesetz*, BDG) and the Federal Act regulating the rights and duties of contractual employees in public service (*Vertragsbedienstetengesetz*, VBG). They shall also refrain from undertaking any secondary employment that might impair the fulfilment of their obligations towards the University of Vienna.
- Staff members of the University of Vienna shall not provide any remunerated services related to their University activities to students who are enrolled at the University of Vienna where the particular staff member is in any way involved in the assessment of student performance in the relevant degree programme.
- Staff members of the University of Vienna shall prevent conflicts of interest that might arise through close personal relationships (partiality), e.g., concerning application and hiring procedures, evaluations, or the award of teaching and other service contracts. In the event

that a conflict of interest of this kind might arise, the particular member of staff shall disclose the potential conflict in advance and shall, together with the executive in charge, develop a solution that is transparent and fair to all parties.

- Staff members of the University of Vienna shall likewise disclose any potential conflict of interest that might arise in the context of business transactions (in particular cases of "self-dealing") in advance and in a documented manner. No such transaction may be concluded without executive approval, given in accordance with the four-eyes principle.

## **6. Use of resources and the environment**

- The premises and mobile equipment provided by the University of Vienna (furniture, hardware, software, telecommunication equipment, databases, networks, etc.) are for official use only. Members of the University of Vienna shall use the resources and facilities provided by the University for their designated purpose and in a cost-conscious and responsible manner. The house rules of the University of Vienna shall apply.
- Occasional private use of certain ICT equipment will be accepted if such use is minor and provided it does not negatively affect the orderly conduct of University functions, does not serve non-University commercial purposes, or is otherwise of an improper or abusive nature (e.g., the accessing, storing and forwarding of offensive, discriminatory, racist or sexist content).
- The University of Vienna makes efforts to provide a health-seeking working environment. Compliance with the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (*ArbeitnehmerInnenschutzgesetz, ASchG*) shall be verified on a regular basis, in accordance with existing legal provisions.
- The University of Vienna is committed to the principles of ecological sustainability and environmental protection. The members of the University of Vienna shall act according to these principles and make their personal contribution to the preservation of the environment and energy saving. Subject to financial means, the University shall implement a suitable monitoring process and introduce measures to save energy and prevent or minimise waste.

## **7. Handling of data and information (confidentiality)**

- University work involves the handling of classified, confidential or sensitive data. Therefore, the members of the University of Vienna shall make sure they observe the relevant legal provisions when dealing with data and information, during the time of their activities for the University of Vienna as well as after these activities have come to an end.
- Members of the University of Vienna shall treat all data and information with special care and sensitivity, even when not explicitly marked as confidential, during the time of their activities for the University of Vienna and after these activities have come to an end. They shall be mindful of data protection, in particular when passing on information or data to others (within or outside the University).
- The members of the University of Vienna shall make efforts to take appropriate precautionary and protective measures of a technical nature, in particular when processing electronic information and data and when accessing data on mobile devices.

## **8. Executive responsibilities, including financial administration**

- The University of Vienna bears significant social responsibility and also has important exemplary roles in the area of management and financial administration. Staff members of the University of Vienna shall therefore carry out their duties in accordance with the principles of lawfulness, appropriateness, economy and transparency. In financial

transactions, they shall observe the principles of risk minimisation and conservation of value.

- Executives shall take financial responsibility for the unit they are in charge of, bearing in mind the overall interests of the University of Vienna, and shall, together with their staff, ensure the efficient use of resources and seek to serve the commercial and academic interests of the University of Vienna.
- Executives carry duties of an organisational and supervisory nature and bear responsibility for the members of staff entrusted to them. However, this responsibility does not exonerate individual members of staff from their own personal responsibility.
- Executives shall know the legal provisions which are pertinent to their work and that of the unit entrusted to them, or at least familiarise themselves with the legal framework within a reasonable period of time.
- Executives shall confer on their staff as many responsibilities and grant as much freedom as is appropriate. They shall ensure, by way of suitable supervision measures, compliance with the relevant laws and the internal regulations of the University of Vienna.
- With regard to transactions made on behalf of the University of Vienna, staff members shall observe the relevant internal regulations of the University of Vienna including, specifically, the four-eyes principle.
- Executives shall assess the qualification and abilities of staff members, with regard to the tasks entrusted to them, according to objective standards. Subject to the available resources they shall implement measures of human resources development, e.g., training and further education.
- Executives shall encourage their staff to engage in the further development of internal structures and workflows and to make suggestions for improvement. Such suggestions shall always be taken seriously.

## **9. Implementation, reports and complaints**

- It is a joint task of all members of the University of Vienna to take account of the prominent role that universities in general – and the University of Vienna in particular – have in society. Every single member takes a share in the joint responsibility that rules of conduct will be observed. Members with an executive function carry a special responsibility for the implementation of and compliance with the provisions set out in this CoC.
- In the light of this joint responsibility, complaints that the CoC has been breached may be addressed to the direct superior. Where the CoC has been breached, every member of the University also has the right, if necessary, to call on the head of the relevant Faculty or Centre or on the Rectorate. Any individual who is dealing with a complaint (e.g., executive, head of a unit) shall treat the complaint as confidential. Anonymous complaints will normally not be dealt with.
- Individuals who, in good faith, call on their superior, the head of Faculty or Centre or on the Rectorate with regard to a suspected breach of the CoC – regardless of whether the allegations later prove to be justified or not – must not incur any disadvantage because of their action, especially not from their superiors.