

Guidelines for Good Research Practice

Leibniz Institute for Educational Media | Georg Eckert
Institute

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Preamble

Honesty in the search for truthful findings and the fair treatment of all colleagues and people involved in the process of academic work form the basis for a valid and ethically responsible research practice.

These Guidelines for Good Research Practice of the Leibniz Institute for Educational Media | Georg Eckert Institute (henceforth: "GEI") lay out the rules of good research practice for the institute's staff, for both researchers and research support staff alike. It provides appropriate procedures and measures to guard against scientific misconduct or malpractice or unreasonable demands and expectations that may be made of GEI employees. It is also intended to raise awareness of problems in both theory and practice, and to support others in engaging in critical reflection on their actions.

These Guidelines are based on the "Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice in the Leibniz Association" (28 November 2019) and the "Leibniz Code for Good Research Practice" (18 November 2021), and additionally implement the Code of Conduct of the German Research Foundation (DFG), titled "Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice" (September 2019). This English translation of the "Leitlinien zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis am Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsmedien | Georg-Eckert-Institut" (7 June 2021) is provided for information purposes only; the German version is authoritatively binding.

These Guidelines lay out the rules of good research practice, define scientific misconduct, describe the role and task of the decentralised ombudsperson of the GEI, and establish the procedure for dealing with allegations of scientific misconduct at the institutional level. They also include the Leibniz Association's directive on the Central Ombudsperson Committee and its procedures.

The following guidelines are to be acknowledged by the GEI's staff, both researchers and research support staff, in a legally binding written declaration. For new employees, compliance with these Guidelines is defined as a contractual obligation.

Part 1: Principles of good research practice at the GEI

§1 Commitment to the general principles of good research practice

- (1) Both the research staff and research support staff of the GEI pledge to comply with the rules of good research practice, in accordance with the particularities of the relevant academic field.
- (2) Good research practice includes, in particular:
 - working *lege artis*, observing current professional and discipline-specific standards;
 - maintaining strict honesty in recognising the contributions made to a piece of research by all those involved, including the full disclosure of funding bodies;
 - critically and systematically checking the validity of all research findings;
 - respecting, and correctly referencing, the intellectual property of others in all publications.

- taking responsibility, as the author of a publication, for its content or for sections of the content explicitly identified and justified as the responsibility of a particular author;
 - providing appropriate supervision and support to researchers in qualification phases, assessing doctoral and postdoctoral submissions in accordance with transparent academic criteria;
 - collaborating responsibly and conscientiously executing management tasks in the departments, projects and other research work units of the Institute;
 - consistently prioritising originality and quality over quantity as evaluation criteria for recruitment, appointments and resource allocation.
- (3) Employees of the GEI must not accept financial support or enter into contracts or tasks which may compromise their academic independence or infringe any of the principles set out in this document.
- (4) Employees of the GEI must not exploit the work or achievements of others for their own ends or use others' work without attribution.
- (5) Employees of the GEI must not compel others, in particular research subjects, commissioners of projects, junior employees or students, to grant them personal favours or any advantages, whether of a career-related or personal nature;
- (6) In addition to procedures via which to identify and sanction scientific misconduct, the GEI regularly takes appropriate measures towards its prevention. Research staff are obliged to regularly participate in the Institute's internal training programme on good research practice. Participation in the training courses is also possible in individual cases for academic support staff from the research library and administration department.

§2 Responsibility for implementing the principles of good research practice and professional ethics

- (1) The GEI acknowledges its responsibility to convey the rules of good research practice to both its researchers and its research support staff, in particular to scholars in qualification phases. Further, every employee is responsible for ensuring that their own behaviour and actions comply with the principles of good research practice.
- (2) Research associates of the GEI supervising students and scholars in qualification phases pledge to uphold a consistently high quality of supervision in accordance with the GEI's supervision agreement for doctoral and postdoctoral candidates. The rules for safeguarding good research practice are to be incorporated as early as possible in the supervision as a fixed pillar of academic teaching and the scholarly qualification process.
- (3) Researchers of all qualification levels are to regularly refresh their knowledge of the standards of good research practice and the status of research, in a process of continuous and interdisciplinary exchange.

§3 Organisational responsibility of the institute's director

- (1) The director of the institute is responsible for creating suitable conditions and prerequisites for academic work at the GEI, as well as for compliance with legal and ethical standards. The director is equally responsible for the design of an appropriate organisational and procedural structure that enables good research practice to be observed and

communicated, ensures appropriate career development for both researchers and research support staff, and prevents the abuse of power and the exploitation of relationships of dependency.

- (2) The director, together with the heads of department, are to strive for objectivity and fairness in all personnel decisions, in accordance with the applicable legal provisions and the Institute's mission statement. In line with the officially established procedures for the selection of candidates for vacant positions and for personnel development, the equality of all genders as well as principles of equal opportunities and diversity are to be taken into account. The director and heads of department are to ensure the establishment of and compliance with standards that prevent any discrimination on account of age, gender, physical impairment, social or regional origin, ethnic or national affiliation, religious affiliation or political views. The relevant standards are transparent and, as far as possible, unaffected by non-academic factors of influence.
- (3) Both researchers and research support staff are to be supported in their career paths via opportunities to gain further qualifications and given sincere advice by their superiors. Researchers in qualification phases, especially doctoral candidates, are to receive optimised support via institutionally established procedures for structured supervision on both an individual and institutional level.

§4 Responsibility of the heads of research work units

Employees with leadership and supervision duties, particularly the director, heads of department and project leaders, are responsible for leading, monitoring, settling conflicts and guaranteeing the quality of academic work at the GEI within their relevant research work units. They ensure that:

- the objectives, tasks, roles, rights and responsibilities of the researchers and research support staff in the individual research work units are acceptable and reliably established, defined and distributed in accordance with GEI regulations;
- researchers and research support staff benefit from a balance of guidance and personal responsibility appropriate to their career level, and are given an adequate status with corresponding rights of participation,
- researchers in qualification phases receive appropriate training, specialist supervision and support, including on the content of these Guidelines and the importance of compliance.

§5 Dimensions of performance and assessment criteria

The following applies for the evaluation of performance for both researchers and research support staff:

- When establishing performance and evaluation criteria in line with the particularities of the relevant academic discipline and the GEI's regulations, qualitative aspects are to be primarily taken into account. Quantitative indicators are only to be included in the overall evaluation in a differentiating and reflectory function;
- Depending on the evaluation context, in addition to research criteria such as the acquisition of and critical reflection on findings, other aspects of performance such as academic teaching, administrative tasks, membership of both internal and external committees and delegations, and engagements in the areas of knowledge

and technology transfer or contributions in the interests of society as a whole, are to be included in the evaluation.

§6 Ombudsperson of the GEI (decentral ombudsperson)

- (1) The GEI's academic staff elect by secret ballot an ombudsperson and a deputy ombudsperson as points of contact to whom disagreements, suspicions and disputes pertaining to good research practice may be reported (decentral ombudsperson).
- (2) The ombudsperson may not be a member of the Institute's management and should be in a position to act with independence by virtue of, for instance, having a permanent contract of employment at the Institute. The term of office of the ombudsperson is three years, and a candidate can stand for re-election. A deputy ombudsperson is also elected for the same term of office, who can substitute for the ombudsperson in case of partiality or conflict of interests on the part of the ombudsperson, or if the latter is unable to fulfil the office or requires relief. The Institute management is responsible for organising and conducting the election by secret ballot, and is to ensure that all members of staff are informed of the ombudsperson's post. The ombudsperson can be deselected if it is no longer possible for them to fulfil their duties reliably in the long term, or if there doubt as to whether they will fulfil their duties properly. Before a deselection decision is taken, the ombudsperson must be given a hearing. At least two thirds of the Institute's academic employees must agree to the deselection.
- (3) The decentral ombudsperson informs the researchers and research support staff on matters of good research practice and can be addressed, in strict confidence, with queries on related issues. The ombudsperson contributes to solution-focused conflict intervention and, with the permission of the person(s) concerned, can seek advice from other appropriately qualified persons.
- (4) The decentral ombudsperson has the power to launch an investigation into allegations of scientific malpractice or misconduct (see §18). Should the decentral ombudsperson decide in the process of the decentral investigation that the allegations cannot be clarified at the GEI level or that extraordinary circumstances are hindering the investigation, the case shall be submitted to the central ombudsperson committee of the Leibniz Association (see §§19-22).

Part 2: Research Process

§7 Cross-phase quality assurance

- (1) Research associates of the GEI carry out each step of the academic working process in a *lege artis* manner, taking into account the current subject- and discipline-specific standards. When research findings are made publicly available the quality assurance mechanisms used are always explained. This applies especially when new methods are developed.
- (2) Continuous quality assurance during the research process includes, in particular, compliance with subject-specific standards and established methods, processes such as the collection, processing and analysis of research data, the selection and use of software in the research process, as well as its development and programming.

- (3) If a researcher has made findings publicly available and subsequently notices discrepancies or errors, they shall correct them. If the inconsistencies or errors constitute grounds for retracting a publication, researchers will promptly request that the publisher, infrastructure provider, etc. corrects or retracts the publication and makes a corresponding announcement. The same applies if researchers are made aware of such inconsistencies or errors by third parties.
- (4) The origin of the data, materials and software used in the research process is disclosed and their reuse is clearly indicated; original sources are cited. The nature and the scope of research data generated during the research process are described. Research data are handled in accordance with the requirements of the relevant subject area. The source code of publicly available software must be persistent, citable and documented. Depending on the particular subject area, it is an essential part of quality assurance that results or findings can be replicated or confirmed by other researchers.

§8 Stakeholders, responsibilities and roles

- (1) The roles and responsibilities of the persons involved in a research project shall be clearly defined at the beginning of the collaboration or, if appropriate, during the project design phase.
- (2) The project leadership is responsible for ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of all persons involved in the project are clear at all times, and that communication occurs regularly. Roles and responsibilities are defined in an appropriate manner in accordance with the consensus principle, and adjusted as necessary in the course of the project, especially if the focus of the work of one of the participants changes.

§9 Research design, methods and standards

- (1) Research associates at the GEI ensure the quality of research projects from the planning and development phase by means of extensive research into and analysis of the current research status in order to allow relevant lines of inquiry to unfold. In doing so, they reflect on the significance of aspects of gender and diversity for the research. The institute supports its academic staff by providing the necessary framework conditions for researching publically available literature.
- (2) During the phase of project implementation, a special duty of care on the part of the project staff shall encompass compliance with the rules of good research practice, in particular the consideration and proper identification of the intellectual contributions of others.
- (3) When approaching the research questions, scientifically sound and transparently presented methods shall be used, or new methods shall be developed. Care is taken to ensure that the chosen methods or the selection of the research focus do not lead to biased results. If necessary, the project staff may have recourse to appropriate collaboration opportunities should specific competences be required for the application of a particular method.
- (4) Existing standards are used – or new standards are established – as an essential requirement for the comparability and transferability of research results, with regard to methods, the application of software, the collection of research data, and the description of research results.

- (5) When interpreting findings, the relevant disciplinary, interdisciplinary, thematic, theoretical and methodological frameworks are taken into account, as well as findings that do not support the research hypothesis.

§10 Legal and ethical frameworks

- (1) GEI staff shall respect the intellectual property or authorship of academic ideas, theories, results and data, and, when they make use of these, they shall identify them correctly, completely and within the relevant context. Whenever necessary, they shall obtain approval and ethics committee approvals and, in turn, develop binding principles of research ethics and procedures for their assessment. They are aware that research results can be misused and use their knowledge, experience and skills to ensure that risks can be identified, assessed and evaluated.
- (2) Compliance with ethical and confidentiality concerns shall be observed and ensured at all stages of the academic working process. Access rights, property rights and the interests of the researchers as well as other persons involved in the research shall equally be safeguarded.
- (3) In accordance with the Research Data Policy in force at the Institute, GEI staff undertake to handle all kinds of research data generated in the course of their academic activities in a responsible, transparent and sustainable manner. They take into account the special requirements of data protection and copyrights, as well as specifications resulting from contracts with third parties or project-specific regulations as a result of cooperation agreements. The legal framework of a research project includes documented agreements on usage rights pertaining to the research data and results arising from it.
- (4) As far as possible and reasonable, GEI academic staff shall sign documented agreements on usage rights at the earliest possible stage of the research project. Documented agreements are particularly useful whenever several academic and/or non-academic institutions are involved in a research project, or if it is foreseeable that a researcher will change research institutions and would like to continue using the data they have generated for (their own) research purposes. In particular, the researchers who collected the data are entitled to continue using them. During a research project, those entitled to use the data decide whether third parties should have access to them, subject to data protection regulations.

§11 Treatment of research subjects

- (1) Both the individual rights of persons taking part in academic research as subjects and their right to freely choose whether or not to participate are to be respected.
- (2) The participation of research subjects in empirical studies must, as a matter of principle, be based on their consent, obtained having informed the research subjects about the theoretical basis, objectives and methods of the research, in as much detail as possible and as appropriate to the specific research design. Researchers must take particular care to ensure research subjects are informed appropriately when there are reasonable grounds for the assumption that they may be unable, due to their level of education, socio-economic status or language skills, to sufficiently understand the study's intent, process and organisational arrangements without being provided with specific information on these. If informed consent cannot be obtained due to the researcher's well-founded belief that doing so would falsify the findings or produce erroneous data, other acceptable ways of obtaining

consent should be used. This may mean that consent to the use of data or material obtained during the study must be sought after data collection. Research subjects may withdraw their consent at any time during the research process.

- (3) Persons participating in a study as subjects of observation or as survey respondents or in any other way, for example in relation to the analysis of personal information, must not be exposed to any dangers or disadvantage through the research. Participants must be fully informed of all risks of involvement in the study which exceed those encountered in normal everyday life.
- (4) Researchers must respect the personal and individual integrity of the persons they survey or observe in the course of their work. They must, as a general principle, use methods and processes which exclude the possibility of the subject being identified and guarantee their anonymity. Where data is processed electronically, researchers must take care to ensure it cannot be accessed by those not entitled to do so.
- (5) All information collected from research subjects must be treated confidentially by all involved in the research process that have access to it, including interviewers, coders, transcribers and typists. Project leads are responsible for ensuring that all involved in the research are aware of this obligation and for monitoring access to confidential material.
- (6) The project staff involved in the research process are obligated to uphold absolute confidentiality in line with the corresponding regulations for other professions, making use of the right to refuse to testify if it is to be feared that persons affected or involved might suffer disadvantages from the information obtained.

§12 Documentation and archiving

- (1) Researchers document all information relevant to the production of a research result as clearly as is required by and is appropriate for the relevant subject area to allow the result to be reviewed and assessed. In general, this also includes documenting individual results that do not support the research hypothesis. Where subject-specific recommendations exist for review and assessment, researchers create documentation in accordance with these guidelines. If the documentation does not satisfy these requirements, the constraints and the reasons for them are clearly explained. Documentation and research results must not be manipulated and are to be protected as effectively as possible against manipulation.
- (2) Research data shall be collected, documented and processed in compliance with ethical, legal and data protection requirements. The GEI's Research Data Policy provides additional information on the documentation and archiving of research data. Researchers of the GEI back up research data and results made publicly available, as well as the primary materials on which they are based and the research software used, by adequate means according to the standards of the relevant subject area, and retain them for an appropriate period of time. As a rule, research data are kept accessible and traceable for a period of ten years at the institution where they originated or in multi-site repositories. The retention period generally begins when the research data or the research results are made available to the public. Should there be reasonable grounds for not retaining certain data or for retaining them for a shorter period, the researchers must give reasons for this. These may include mandatory legal regulations or contractual or data protection requirements. The GEI shall ensure the provision of archive-capable infrastructure.

§13 Public access to research results

- (1) The GEI promotes and supports open access to research data and research results, insofar as the requirements set out in §10 are met, and provided that these follow the Institute's Open Access Policy and Research Data Policy.
- (2) Researchers decide autonomously – with due regard for the conventions of the relevant subject area – whether, how and where to disseminate their results. This decision must not depend on third parties. Researchers are to render their research results publicly accessible in an appropriate manner. This does not apply, however, in cases where this is not justifiable or would violate the right to protection of confidential records.
- (3) As far as possible and reasonable, the research data, materials and information on which the results are based, the methods applied and the software used shall be made publicly accessible, including the source code. Researchers shall provide complete and correct evidence of their own and others' preliminary work.
- (4) On the basis of "quality before quantity", researchers are to avoid inappropriately small-scale publications. They shall restrict repeating the contents of publications they have (co-)authored to the extent necessary for a contextual understanding. They are to cite results that have already been made publicly available except in exceptional cases, should this be expendable for discipline-specific reasons.
- (5) Quality and visibility in the respective field of discourse should be the primary criteria when selecting the publication channel. This also applies to the appointment of scholars for editorships. In addition to publications in books and specialist journals, specialist repositories, data and software repositories as well as blogs should also be considered. New or unknown publication mediums are evaluated to assess their seriousness. The scholarly quality of a contribution does not depend on the medium in which it is published. A key criterion to selecting a publication medium is whether it has established guidelines on good research practice.

§14 Academic authorship

- (1) The purpose of academic publications is to describe the findings of academic research and the manner of their attainment comprehensively and in a way which makes the findings and their process clear and transparent to others. Text and findings previously published elsewhere may only be included in later publications if this is clearly indicated (duplicate publication, auto-plagiarism).
- (2) Named authors of an original academic publication are those – and only those – who have made a genuine, traceable contribution to the content of an academic text, to data or software, and who have agreed to the publication, thus being willing to take responsibility for it.
- (3) A genuine, traceable contribution is one written by a researcher who has to a considerable extent worked collaboratively on:
 - the development and rationale of the research, or
 - on the development, collection, procurement and provision of data, software or sources, or
 - on the analysis/evaluation or interpretation of data, sources and
 - on the conclusions drawn from these, or

- on the writing of the manuscript.
- (4) So-called honorary authorship is not permitted. A leadership or supervisory position does not in itself justify co-authorship. In instances such as major research projects involving multiple institutions, these rules should be incorporated into cooperation agreements.
- (5) Where multiple authors have produced a publication, all authors involved always share responsibility for the content published. Each individual author is accountable for the publication, identifies with the findings published and vouches for the publication's content. The necessary consent to publish results may, however, not be refused without reasonable grounds. Refusal to give consent must be justified with verifiable critique of the relevant data, methods or results.
- (6) Agreement on the order of authors shall be reached in good time, during the writing of the manuscript at the very latest, on the basis of transparent criteria taking discipline-specific conventions into account.
- (7) Should a contribution not be sufficient to justify authorship, such support should be appropriately acknowledged in a footnote, preface or acknowledgements.

§15 Confidentiality and neutrality of review processes and discussions

- (1) Achievements, work and other aspects to be assessed shall be reviewed completely, carefully, fairly and within a reasonable period of time. Contents to which reviewers or committee members have access are subject to confidentiality, and the disclosure or the reviewer's own use of the material is forbidden.
- (2) GEI staff who review the professional credentials of persons, submitted manuscripts, funding applications or other work or materials are obliged to maintain strict confidentiality. They shall disclose any information that could give rise to concerns of bias or other conflicts of interest. This obligation also applies to members of academic advisory and decision-making committees.
- (3) GEI staff who are asked for reviews or other assessments of scholarly works which they have already discussed elsewhere shall inform the requesting party of this fact. They shall decline to review scholarly works in the creation of which they were directly or indirectly involved.
- (4) External reviewers of submitted manuscripts shall be obligated to maintain confidentiality and to disclose any concern of bias.
- (5) When preparing research-based reviews or studies with recommendations, and when providing other advisory services to non-academic actors, GEI staff shall maintain the independence and neutrality of their academic analytical process and the resulting findings in accordance with the rules of good research practice and the fundamental principle of academic freedom.

Part 3: Procedure in cases of suspected scientific misconduct

§16 Complainants and respondents

- (1) The GEI's ombudsperson and, if necessary with the consent of the person concerned, qualified persons who investigate a suspicion of scientific misconduct shall take appropriate measures to protect both the informer(s) and the person to whom the allegations are directed. They shall explicitly follow the basic principle of the presumption

of innocence at every stage of the procedure, via case-by-case consideration. They maintain confidentiality towards each of the persons involved and only disclose names with their consent, unless there is a legal obligation to do so or the person affected by the allegations cannot defend themselves properly without knowing the identity of the informer.

- (2) The informer's report must be made in good faith and must provide objective evidence of a possible violation of the rules of good research practice. Knowingly false or malicious allegations may themselves constitute misconduct. In case of uncertainty regarding the interpretation of the guidelines, the informer should contact the decentral ombudsperson or the German Research Ombudsperson Committee in order to clarify the suspicion.
- (3) Prior to the formal determination of scientific misconduct, neither the informer nor the person at the focus of the allegations should suffer any disadvantage with regard to their academic or professional advancement. A report should not cause delays in the preparation of doctoral or post-doctoral theses or to disadvantages with regard to working conditions or possible contract extensions, especially for academics in qualification phases.
- (4) Anonymously filed complaints shall be reviewed by the decentralised ombudsperson if reliable and sufficiently concrete evidence is presented.
- (5) Information on the decentral procedure is provided in §18 of these guidelines.

§17 Scientific misconduct

- (1) Not every breach of good scientific practice constitutes misconduct. Scientific misconduct is deemed to have been committed when a researcher, in a scientific context, negligently or grossly negligently or deliberately makes false statements or falsifies research, infringes intellectual property rights, or impedes or negatively affects others' research activities.
- (2) Along with violations of academic ethics, particularly through deceptive actions or those that disrespect human dignity, scientific malpractice and misconduct includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following:
 - a. False statements or falsification of research, in particular:
 - Inventing or falsifying data (for instance by selecting desirable findings, dismissing undesirable findings or selecting methods of analysis that provide desired results without disclosing such actions, or by manipulating diagrams or illustrations),
 - giving incorrect information in lists of publications or grant applications (including incorrect information on names or forms of publications, third party funds successfully acquired or on forthcoming publications),
 - undisclosed duplication of publication of data or texts.
 - b. Infringement of intellectual property rights, in particular:
 - in relation to a legally protected work created by others or to substantive academic or scientific knowledge, findings, hypotheses, teachings or approaches to research generated or formulated by others:
 - › the incorporation into a text or other use, without permission, of passages of text without appropriately attributing authorship to the correct author/s (plagiarism),
 - › the exploitation of research approaches and ideas without consent, particularly when acting as a peer reviewer;

- › claiming or accepting academic authorship or co-authorship without rightful claim thereto, or refusing to be named as co-author where co-authorship exists;
 - › misrepresenting the content,
 - › publishing or making available to third parties a piece of academic work, a research finding, a hypothesis, a teaching or a research approach which has not yet been officially and lawfully published,
 - naming another as (co-)author of a publication without his or her consent.
- c.** Impeding the research activities of others.
- d.** Destroying, deleting or disposing of research data in a manner contrary to legal stipulations or recognised principles of good scientific practice. This includes unlawful failure to destroy, delete or safely dispose of data, particularly personal information.
- (3)** Shared responsibility for misconduct or malpractice may arise, inter alia, from involvement in malpractice or misconduct committed by others, gross negligence in relation to supervision duties, or co-authorship of publications contaminated by malpractice or misconduct.

§18: Procedures for investigations into allegations of academic malpractice and misconduct carried out by the decentral ombudsperson (decentral procedure)

- (1)** In the event of an allegation of scientific misconduct, an investigation procedure shall be initiated at the GEI by the decentral ombudsperson (decentralised procedure), with the aim of conducting the various stages of the procedure – and indeed the entire process – as promptly as possible.
- (2)** The ombudsperson hears the individual accounts of those involved, and is permitted to consult the chair of the Institute’s Academic Advisory Board if he or she feels it necessary. At this stage in the proceedings, the ombudsperson shall treat all information given to him or her, the name of the person against whom the allegation has been made, and that of the informant confidentially and maintain the anonymity of those involved.
- (3)** The ombudsperson shall provide mediation in the case of conflict relating to good research practice as well as in cases of rectifiable misconduct by preparing, structuring and facilitating talks between the parties in order to help them come to a mutually acceptable resolution. Further, the ombudsperson shall minute such meetings, provide the opportunity for further statement and to provide evidence, and document the action agreed upon for the solution’s implementation. Subsequently the ombudsperson shall provide supervision and support during this implementation. Once unanimous agreement or conciliation has been reached, the decentral ombudsperson shall supervise its implementation and then conclude the decentral procedure with a final report, to be submitted to the Institute’s management and, if relevant, the chair of the academic advisory board. The report shall provide information – while maintaining confidentiality regarding the persons involved - on the fundamental facts of the matter and explain how the decision was reached.
- (4)** Should the allegations remain inconclusive, the decentral ombudsperson shall inform the director, as far as possible preserving the anonymity of the person at the focus of the allegations as well as the informer. If the director is affected by the allegation, the ombudsperson shall inform the chair of the academic advisory board.

- (5) Should the misconduct be unrectifiable, should no final clarification of the allegations be possible via a decentralised procedure, or should the process be hindered by extraordinary circumstances, the decentralised ombudsperson shall submit the case to the Ombudsman Board of the Leibniz Association and inform the Director.
- (6) The right of those affected to address their case to the German Research Ombudsman Committee directly instead of to the decentral ombudsperson remains unaffected.

§19 Central Ombudsperson of the Leibniz Association

- (1) Up to four central ombudspersons are proposed by the Executive Board and elected by the Senate of the Leibniz Association. Together, they form the Ombuds Committee of the Leibniz Association. Ombudspersons are elected for four years and may be re-elected once. The ombudspersons should possess the personal integrity and objective power of judgment in matters of good scientific practice required to fulfil their duties.
- (2) The Senate may deselect central ombudspersons if three-quarters of its members vote in favour of the move, in the event that it no longer appears possible for them to fulfil their duties reliably in the long term, or if there is no longer any trust that they will fulfil their duties properly. The ombudsperson in question is to be granted the option of a hearing before such a decision is taken.
- (3) The Ombuds Committee of the Leibniz Association advises ombudspersons and scientists within the member institutions and helps establish a culture of good scientific practice and scientific integrity within the Leibniz Association. It can submit position statements to the institutions, the Executive Board and President of the Leibniz Association. In addition, the Ombuds Committee investigates allegations of scientific misconduct levelled at employees and former employees of member institutions of the Leibniz Association on the basis of the Leibniz Association guidelines. The Ombuds Committee appoints one of its members as a spokesperson and governs other particulars of its working methods independently. Its work is supported by Leibniz Headquarters.

§20 Investigations by the Leibniz Association's central Ombuds Committee of allegations of scientific misconduct (central procedure)

- (1) Notifications and information relating to scientific misconduct that are pertinent to the inquiry must be addressed in writing to the central Ombuds Committee of the Leibniz Association, which will generally confirm receipt within one month.
- (2) The central Ombuds Committee deals with allegations submitted by a decentralised ombudsperson (see §18) or if it is notified by affected persons, third parties, or even anonymously, of a suspicion of scientific misconduct at a member institution of the Leibniz Association. As a general rule, the processing of cases by the decentralised ombudsperson takes precedence. In each case, the allegations must be specific enough to give rise to reasonable grounds for an initial suspicion of misconduct.
- (3) The name of any whistleblower will be treated in confidence. As a rule, disclosing the name to the accused person is only necessary if the accused is not able to defend themselves properly against the allegations in any other way. The central Ombuds Committee also has a duty as far as possible to prevent the whistleblower suffering disadvantages in terms of their scientific and professional advancement, and to protect accused persons against

unjustified allegations. This duty also applies to any additional individuals or bodies involved in the investigation later on.

- (4) If sufficiently specific allegations have been made and there are grounds for initial suspicion of scientific misconduct, the central Ombuds Committee will conduct a preliminary investigation. To carry out this preliminary investigation, it will, as a rule, give a hearing to at least the accused and the whistleblower, either orally or in writing. It can also consult other individuals and seek expert opinions to help clarify the situation. Following the preliminary investigation, the central Ombuds Committee determines whether there is a need to set up a committee of inquiry.
- (5) The accused and the whistleblower are informed of the result of the preliminary investigation by the central Ombuds Committee. As a rule, the result of the preliminary investigation is presented to the Executive Board of the Leibniz Association at its next meeting.
- (6) A committee of inquiry to investigate allegations of scientific misconduct is set up by a resolution taken by the Executive Board. If the Executive Board deviates from the result of the preliminary investigation by the central Ombuds Committee, it must have good reasons for doing so, e.g. consideration of circumstances that were not taken into account in the preliminary investigation, and must disclose this justification to those involved.

§21 Committee of inquiry to investigate allegations of scientific misconduct

- (1) A committee of inquiry to investigate allegations of scientific misconduct has the duty to investigate in full any allegations of scientific misconduct that fall within the scope of these guidelines. The committee is bound by the standards of good scientific practice and the definitions of scientific misconduct set out in these guidelines. It also takes account of established discipline-specific standards that go beyond the scope of these guidelines and its work is guided by the common principles for finding the truth.
- (2) The Ombuds Committee selects the members of the committee of inquiry in consultation with the Executive Board. A designated member may refuse to take part if they have good cause. At least three voting members must belong to the committee of inquiry, including
 - the chairperson of the scientific advisory council of the member institution in question and/or the spokesperson of the Section in question,
 - another member with the expertise necessary to fully understand the scientific facts of the case and who is not an employee of the member institution in question,
 - a fully qualified lawyer.

At least one member of the central Ombuds Committee, usually the spokesperson, is a non-voting member of the committee of inquiry.

- (3) All voting members of the committee of inquiry have the same voting rights. The rules of bias apply, in accordance with the Leibniz Competition regulations.
- (4) The committee of inquiry deliberates in private, oral proceedings. In its first meeting, it agrees on the rules of procedure. It appoints a chairperson from among its members, who is responsible for chairing the meetings. The committee of inquiry also instructs one of its members with suitable expertise to search for exonerating arguments, like a lawyer for the accused, and to contribute these arguments to the committee's discussion.

- (5) The members of the committee of inquiry and the staff from Leibniz Headquarters involved for the purpose of supporting the committee, and all individuals involved in, or informed of, the proceedings are under an obligation of confidentiality.
- (6) A committee of inquiry must be given access to all data and documents it requests from the member institutions and Leibniz Headquarters.
- (7) The committee of inquiry will give the accused person and the whistleblower a hearing and will establish the context of the conduct forming the subject of the complaint. The committee of inquiry may question other people and request expert opinions or bring in assessors in an advisory capacity.
- (8) As a rule, the committee of inquiry should complete its investigation within six months of the meeting called to set up the committee.
- (9) The committee of inquiry will produce a report for the Executive Board of the Leibniz Association in which it assesses whether a case of scientific misconduct exists. If the committee of inquiry concludes that there is a case of scientific misconduct, i.e. if the majority of the committee of inquiry believes there is sufficient evidence of scientific misconduct, the report must, in particular:
 - a. present and evaluate the extent of the scientific misconduct and
 - b. determine and justify whether the misconduct was a result of negligence or gross negligence, or whether it was wilful.
- (10) The report may also record what further steps or measures the committee of inquiry recommends.

§22 Conclusion of the process

- (1) The Executive Board of the Leibniz Association will deal with the committee of inquiry's report in the meeting following receipt of the report. It establishes the existence of scientific misconduct or takes a decision to close the case. If its decision deviates from the opinion in the committee of inquiry's report, this must be adequately justified.
- (2) If the misconduct is the result of negligence, the Executive Board may decide on the following measures against the individual in question:
 - a. a written reprimand,
 - b. a demand to withdraw incriminating publications or – in less severe cases – to correct incorrect information by publishing an erratum.
- (3) If the misconduct was premeditated or the result of gross negligence, the Executive Board may decide on the following measures against the individual in question:
 - a. a written reprimand,
 - b. a demand to withdraw incriminating publications or – in less severe cases – to correct incorrect information by publishing an erratum,
 - c. loss of passive voting rights for Leibniz Association bodies for one to five years (depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct),
 - d. Exclusion of the individual in question from leading roles in projects for which funding applications have been submitted through the internal Leibniz competition process for one to five years (depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct).

- (4) If the Executive Board determines, based on the committee of inquiry's report, that the scientific misconduct may result in the individual being stripped of their academic qualification, it will forward the case to the university that awarded the qualification. The management board of the member institution is responsible for instigating any disciplinary consequences or consequences under employment, civil or criminal law.
- (5) The key reasons that led to the case being closed or to decisions by the Executive Board regarding measures to be taken must be communicated to those involved and to any whistleblowers.
- (6) The Executive Board of the Leibniz Association will decide on a case by case basis whether to pass on or publish its resolutions and the committee of inquiry's reports, taking into account the existence of legitimate third-party interest.
- (7) As far as proceedings within the Leibniz Association are concerned, the decisions taken by the Executive Board of the Leibniz Association on the basis of the report submitted by the committee of inquiry are final.

§23 Disciplinary and legal action in cases of proven misconduct

- (1) Scientific misconduct shall be deemed proven if the existence of scientific misconduct is established as the result of a central ombudsman procedure, e.g. by the Ombudsman Committee of the Leibniz Association or the Committee of Inquiry on Allegations of Scientific Misconduct of the DFG.
- (2) Should the director of the GEI determine, based on the results of a central ombudsman procedure, that the scientific misconduct may result in the withdrawal of academic degrees, they may forward the matter to the awarding university.
- (3) Any disciplinary, employment-related, civil or criminal consequences must be initiated by the GEI institute management. In accordance with the circumstances of the case in hand, and particularly with regard to the seriousness of the malpractice or misconduct deemed to have been proven, disciplinary or legal action may be taken, in some cases cumulatively. Such action may include:
 - a. Action under employment law:
 - issuance of a written warning,
 - dismissal without notice,
 - termination of the employee's contract of employment by mutual agreement.
 - b. Action under civil law:
 - denial of entry to the premises of the institution concerned,
 - civil claims for the return of (for instance) research materials illegitimately removed from the premises,
 - the pursuit of removal or cease-and-desist orders in relation to copyright, rights pertaining to the person, patent or competition legislation,
 - claims for repayment of monies, such as grants, fellowships, third-party funding or similar,
 - claims for damages brought by the institute or by third parties.
 - c. Criminal prosecution.

- (4) Academic publications contaminated by proven academic malpractice or misconduct shall be withdrawn from the review and publication process if yet to be published, or, if they have already been published, retracted (post-publication retraction) or made the subject of an erratum or correction. Where necessary, any cooperation partners involved in the original research shall be informed in an appropriate manner. Authors and book series or journal editors involved in the publication have a fundamental duty to carry out this action. If they fail to act within a reasonable time frame, the director of the GEI or the chair of the Academic Advisory Board shall undertake action as deemed appropriate.
- (5) In cases of serious academic malpractice or misconduct, the director of the GEI or the chair of the Academic Advisory Board shall inform other research institutions or organisations affected by the issue and, where relevant, professional associations.
- (6) In certain instances, the director of the GEI or the chair of the Academic Advisory Board may have a duty to inform third parties affected by the malpractice or misconduct, and/or the public at large, of the malpractice or misconduct found proven. Such a duty may arise where it is necessary to protect third parties' interests, to maintain individuals' or the public's trust in academic integrity, to restore the academic reputation of the Georg Eckert Institute or to prevent further damage arising from the incident, or where publicising the matter is in the general public interest.

§24 Entry into force

These 'Guidelines for good research practice at the „Leibniz Institute for Educational Media | Georg Eckert Institute“ enter into force upon being passed by the Board of Trustees.

Braunschweig, 01. December 2021