Code of Values of the School of Business, Economics and Information Systems

Preamble

We, the members of the School of Business, Economics and Information Systems at the University of Passau, are committed to creating and maintaining a culture of integrity, transparency and responsibility. With this Code of Values, we emphasise our commitment to uphold ethical standards, mutual respect and the promotion of diversity and equality. This Code serves as an instrument for shaping an environment characterised by professional excellence, fair practices and sustainability in all academic and administrative areas. As an educational institution, we endeavour to make a positive contribution to society and actively live the values we stand for in our daily work.

We recognise that the academic system is fraught with inequality, as each position entails different rights and responsibilities. These unequal structures can give rise to logics of action that are both unconsciously pursued and consciously exploited to distribute advantages and disadvantages unfairly.[1] It is a core objective of this Code of Values to prevent inequality from becoming injustice. Our policy criteria include, in particular, (1) open communication about unequal structures,
(2) managing the negative psychological, social and emotional effects of unavoidable structural inequalities and (3) reducing the potential for abuse of these structures by members of the academic system.

We recognise that, in an ever-changing academic world, the ways in which we collaborate and our value system must evolve to meet present challenges. Our values and principles are therefore not static, but evolve with our experience and knowledge. This continuous adaptation is crucial to achieving our common goals of fairness, respect and excellence.

We are all bound by this Code of Values, whether we are professional support staff, academic and student staff, professors, external doctoral students or research affiliates. This commitment continues beyond the end of all formal collaboration until all joint projects have been completed.

(1) Open communication about unequal structures

In our daily work in the academic system, we find that the structures and hierarchies we encounter are characterised by inequalities. These can manifest themselves in different ways, whether in terms of access to resources, opportunities for professional development or perceptions of authority and influence.

As members of this system, we recognise that these structures exist and that they can have an impact on our actions. This is a first step towards bringing about a change for the better. The second step is to communicate openly about the issue and enter into a mutual dialogue.

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[1] Cf. Young, Iris Marion (2011). Responsibility for Justice. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011

(2) Managing the negative psychological, social and emotional effects of unavoidable structural inequalities

Acting responsibly

We exercise our rights and discharge our responsibilities with integrity and circumspection. We take the obligations arising from our rights and responsibilities seriously and integrate them into all our actions.

Respectfulness, strengthening psychological safety, and appraisal interviews

Together, we strive for excellence in research, teaching and knowledge transfer. To this end, we create a supportive environment: Every member of our community is entitled to an environment of psychological safety, where taking interpersonal risks and freely expressing concerns and opinions is not penalised professionally, socially or physically. Psychological safety is indispensable for open communication, obtaining feedback and scientific work itself. In our collaboration, we rely on trust, constructive exchange and mutual appreciation. In our open dialogue, we value and respect the diversity of opinions and encourage critical reflection on our own and others' points of view.

Managers at our School undertake to offer at least one staff appraisal interview[2] per year, which focuses on the quality and further development of the employment relationship and the professional development of employees. This is a space for transparent communication. A constructive and respectful approach to conflicts (e.g. using the DESC method or the Harvard negotiation concept[3] as an aid) is the basis and expression of psychological safety. We justify our positions comprehensibly and, wherever possible, on the basis of scientifically sound evidence. In the event of conflicts, managers are open to bringing in mediators.

Diversity, inclusion and equality

Diversity and inclusion are further core values of our School. We reject all forms of discrimination and value and support our members regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and religion. The promotion and appreciation of unique characteristics, talents and experiences are integral to our School's culture, in which discrimination has no place.

Equal opportunities are particularly important to us and we are committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive and accessible learning and working environment. Our aim is to create optimal conditions for people with health restrictions such as chronic illnesses or disabilities.

As members of the School of Business, Economics and Information Systems, we are committed to gender equality and actively oppose all forms of gender discrimination.

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[2] See https://www.uni-passau.de/bereiche/beschaeftigte/personal-von-a-bis-z under "J" for "Jahresgespräch" (annual appraisal interview)
[3] Cf. Fisher, R., Ury, W., (2012) Getting to Yes: Negotiating an agreement without giving in, Random House Business

(3) Reducing the potential for abuse of these structures by all members of the academic system

Conflicts of interest

We always make official decisions in the best interests of our School and in accordance with the applicable rules. Particularly in the case of conflicts of interest arising, for example, from third-party funding of research and teaching as well as from the mixing of personal and professional relationships, we attach great importance to transparent disclosure and consistent resolution. Where there is mixing of personal and professional relationships, we are aware of the consequences of bias or concerns about bias.

Good research practice

By joining the University of Passau, we have committed ourselves to the principles of good research practice. The DFG Code of Conduct "Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice" (as amended) is binding, as are the University of Passau's Rules for the Ascertainment of Good Research Practice of 25 July 2023. We expect that all members of the School always go about their academic work in accordance with the established guidelines, standards and laws. Our common goal is to continuously ensure and promote the integrity and high quality of our academic work.

It is one of the responsibilities of more experienced researchers to convey the importance of these principles to early career researchers. In particular, we talk about the rules on authorship laid down in the DFG Code (guideline 14) and in the University's Rules for the Ascertainment of Good Research Practice (§ 10) and explain the associated negotiation process. Moreover, we talk openly about the options for organising the supervision of doctoral candidates and further academic work within the framework of the supervision agreement, which should be concluded no later than 12 months after the start of the employment relationship or supervision agreement, as the case may be.

Sexual harassment, stalking and sexual violence

We are committed to the improvement and further development of a confidential and targeted reporting system for sexual harassment, stalking and sexual violence. This reporting system should be open not only to victims but also third parties, such as witnesses. We are aware of the complexity of setting up an anonymous reporting system but nevertheless consider it an important step towards professionalising the system. This reporting system will complement the existing, non-anonymous Threat Management structures at the University, which aid our members in assessing behaviour that is perceived as threatening and support the implementation of protective measures.

Next steps

Training measures

We offer training courses and workshops on the Code of Values to new academics at our School at least once a year to ensure that everyone involved knows and understands the Code of Values, reflects on it and, potentially, contributes to its further development. In these training measures, academic staff are also informed of their work responsibilities and what is expected of them. Professors reflect on the Code of Values and actively seek support if they feel overwhelmed by its implementation.

Sustainability

We see science as a key to overcoming the enormous challenges of sustainable development and the other so-called Grand Challenges[4]. We are aware of the tension between our responsibility for sustainable development on the one hand and the social, ecological and economic impact of our involvement in the international scientific community on the other. We take responsibility and endeavour to act as role models with regard to dealing with this tension. In accordance with Article 5(3) Basic Law, we integrate sustainability into research, teaching, knowledge transfer and self-governance.

[4] Cf. the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.html).