

**Regulations  
for Safeguarding Good Research Practice  
at Hochschule Bielefeld – University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSBI)  
dated 17 December 2021**

**as amended in the announcement of 27 September 2023**

**unofficial version**

Based on Section 2(4) sentence 1 of the Higher Education Act of North Rhine Westphalia (*Hochschulgesetz – HG*) in the version of the Higher Education Future Act (*Hochschulzukunftsgesetz – HZG*) of 16 Sep 2014 (GV.NRW p. 574), as amended by Art. 10 of the Act from 14 April 2020 (GV.NRW p. 218b), HSBI has issued the following general regulations:

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## Preliminary remark

The following regulations of Hochschule Bielefeld – University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSBI) are based on the German Rectors' Conference's recommendations on "Good Scientific Practices at German Higher Education Institutions" from May 2013 and the position paper "Recommendations on Academic Integrity" presented by the German Council of Science and Humanities in 2015 as well as the German Research Foundation's "Code of Conduct: Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice" from September 2019. It constitutes the further development of the "Richtlinien zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis und zum Umgang mit wissenschaftlichem Fehlverhalten" published by the university in February 2003.

## Preamble

Good research requires diligence in collecting and selecting data, unambiguous and comprehensible documentation of all important results as well as openness to criticism and the willingness to question one's own results. The basic principles of good research practice apply to all academic disciplines and form the ethical foundations for the rules of academic professionalism and integrity.

In order to live up to its institutional responsibility in research and the tasks directly linked to it in teaching and early career support, HSBI is particularly mindful of imparting the principles of good research practice to students and early-career researchers. Academic integrity is the foundation for trustworthy research. It is an example of academic voluntary commitment that encompasses a respectful attitude towards peers and strengthens and promotes vital public trust in research.

In the present regulations, HSBI defines the principles for safeguarding good research practice and for dealing with allegations of scientific misconduct. These regulations apply to all members of HSBI who are active in research and teaching – all students, doctoral candidates, post-doctoral researchers and professors – and, in addition, to all non-academic staff who work in a scientific context.

## I Principles of Good Research Practice

### Section 1 Commitment to the General Principles, Professional Code of Ethics

- (1) The members of HSBI are obliged to safeguard the principles of good research practice in all work contexts, taking into account the special circumstances of the respective subject area, and in particular to
  - *Work lege artis*
  - Always critically assess and consistently question their own results as well as to allow and promote critical discourse in the academic community
  - Maintain strict honesty regarding their own contributions and those of third parties, in

particular contributions of involved researchers, mentees (students, doctoral candidates and post-doctoral researchers), competitors and predecessors

- (2) Furthermore, HSBI expects its researchers to personally bear responsibility for realising the basic values and standards of research in their actions, for standing up to them and for taking active measures to safeguard good research practice. This includes education in the principles of good research at the earliest possible stage in academic teaching and research training. All researchers who work at HSBI are obliged to regularly update their knowledge on the standards of good research practice and on the state of research in their respective disciplines.

## Section 2 Responsibilities of the Heads of Research Institutions and Working Groups

- (1) HSBI's Executive Board creates the general conditions for scholarly and scientific work. It is responsible for ensuring adherence to and the promotion of good practice, and for appropriate career support for all researchers. HSBI's university management and the heads of the faculties and working groups are responsible for providing their researchers with the necessary conditions for complying with legal and ethical standards. These conditions include clear written policies and procedures for data protection, staff selection and development – in particular, taking into account gender and diversity – as well as for early career support and equal opportunities.
- (2) The head of a working group is responsible for the entire unit. All those responsible for working groups must adequately organise their work area so that the tasks of leadership, supervision, conflict management and quality assurance are clearly allocated. In addition, they must ensure that these tasks are actually carried out. They guarantee that the members of their working group are aware of their roles, rights and duties. They are further responsible for ensuring appropriate individual guidance of early-career researchers and career support for academic staff and research support staff. In doing so, they should grant employees a balance of support and personal responsibility that is appropriate to their career level and corresponding rights of participation within the working group.
- (3) The university must develop suitable organisational measures – both for HSBI as an institution and for individual working groups – to prevent the abuse of power and exploitation of relationships of dependency.

## Section 3 Supervision of Early-Career Researchers

- (1) In compliance with the rules of good research practice, a special focus lies on the education and promotion of early-career researchers (students, research staff who do not pursue a doctorate, doctoral candidates and post-doctoral researchers). The teaching staff at HSBI will inform early-career researchers about the present regulations as part of teaching and research. Everyone working in a working group must have a primary mentor who imparts the principles of safeguarding good research practice at HSBI to them.
- (2) The supervision of doctoral candidates must be organised in a way that the supervisor supports their doctoral candidates in structuring their doctorate process, in building up an academic network and in identifying career opportunities whilst having an overview of ongoing research activities and milestones of the doctorate. This includes regular supervision meetings and monitoring of the candidates' progress, so that early-career researchers are enabled to complete

their theses within a reasonable time frame. The supervision should also include measures to support further career planning and ensure integration into the academic community. Drawing up a supervision agreement within six months of starting the doctorate is recommended.

- (3) Suitable measures will support researchers in developing their careers, in particular also career paths that lead out of academia.

#### Section 4 Dimensions of Performance and Assessment Criteria

- (1) Quality and originality must always take precedence over quantity when assessing the scientific performance in examinations, awarding academic degrees, promoting, recruiting or appointing staff or making allocations. Incorporating quantitative indicators into the overall assessment must be carefully reflected upon and take into account the specifics of individual disciplines.
- (2) In addition to academic performance, other aspects can be considered when evaluating researchers' performance, e.g. involvement in teaching, in academic self-governance or public outreach as well as contributions to the general good of society or knowledge and technology transfer. Moreover, the researcher's individual approach to research, such as openness to new findings and a willingness to take risks, can influence the assessment. Where provided voluntarily, individual circumstances stated in the curricula vitae – taking into account the General Equal Treatment Act (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz) – can be taken into account, such as periods of absence for personal, family or health reasons or alternative career paths.

#### Section 5 Confidentiality and Neutrality of Review Processes and Discussions

When reviewing and assessing submitted manuscripts and funding applications or when acting as members of advisory or decision-making bodies, researchers are obliged to show fair behaviour. They must maintain strict confidentiality, which excludes disclosure to third parties and using third-party content. In addition, they must immediately notify the competent authority of any facts that may indicate a bias or conflict of interests.

## II Good Research Practice in the Research Process

#### Section 6 Responsibilities and Roles

All persons involved in a research project – researchers and research support staff alike – must be aware of their roles and responsibilities. Any necessary adaptations, e.g. caused by changes to the focus of a participant's work or financing, are to be communicated in a transparent manner.

#### Section 7 Quality Assurance Across all Phases of Research

- (1) The research process must be characterised by continuous quality assurance.
- (2) Good research practice requires rigorous diligence in selecting subject-specific methods, tools and processes and in collecting and evaluating data. Researchers should use scientifically sound and verifiable methods to answer research questions. The required know-how on

methodology may also be gained through collaborations. Particular attention must be paid to the establishment of standards in the development of new methods and applications, the collection of research data and the description of research results.

- (3) Researchers should investigate what is the current state of the art in their research area and the standards and applications that are established in practice already during the research design phase in order to identify relevant, appropriate research questions. When interpreting findings, methods to avoid (unconscious) distortions should be used. The importance of gender and diversity must be investigated with regard to the entire research process.
- (4) Researchers should clearly document all information that is relevant to the research process. No selection of results is to take place. Negative results will also be documented. Where available, researchers must follow professional recommendations for the review and evaluation of results. If the recommendations are departed from then the reasons must be clearly documented. Documentation and research results must as far as possible be protected from manipulation. Openness towards criticism, the willingness to question one's own results and giving other researchers the opportunity to replicate one's results are essential components of quality assurance.

## Section 8 Academic Publications and Other Communication Channels

- (1) Researchers must generally publish the research results they have obtained through public funds and make them available as part of academic discourse. Where possible, third parties should receive access to all relevant information that is necessary to replicate the results. In individual cases, there may be reasons against publication, which must be documented. HSBi respects the principle of free choice of publication channels, the special characteristics of different disciplines and authors' individual career situations. The university expressly recommends and supports researchers to make their publications open access.
- (2) Scientific investigations must be verifiable. Consequently, their publication in academic journals must contain an exact description of how the hypotheses were developed, of the methods and analytical steps, of the quality assurance measures and of the results in a way that is clearly understandable to experts. If necessary, the authors must refer to further literature. This is particularly necessary when new methods are developed. The authors must communicate important findings that support their results and hypotheses or calls them into question in equal measure. They must specify their own and others' preliminary work and other authors' relevant publications on which the work is directly based as fully and correctly as possible.
- (3) Even when communicating research findings through communication channels other than the classic academic publications such as books or journals, quality assurance mechanisms must be described adequately.
- (4) Furthermore, the following rules must be observed for publications:
  - If the publication contains personal data – individual information about personal or factual circumstances of a specific or identifiable natural person –, this is only permissible if and insofar the data subject has expressly given informed consent.
  - If the research findings were obtained using third parties' data, organisms, materials or software, their origin must be specified citing the original sources.
  - Inappropriately small publications or unnecessary self-references must be avoided.

- Authors choose a suitable publication medium, taking into account the quality and visibility in their discipline. The scientific quality of a contribution does not depend on the medium that was chosen for the publication. Researchers must also carefully check for which publication bodies they act as editors.
  - In the interest of transparency and to enable research to be referred to and reused by others, researchers make the research data and principal materials on which a publication is based available in (preferably) recognised (specialist) repositories and archives in accordance with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable). This applies to research data from publicly funded research in particular.
  - The source code of publicly available software must be persistent, citable and documented and an appropriate licence must be chosen.
- (5) Disproved hypotheses or misconceptions, errors and inconsistencies must be reported publicly. If these have been published, the authors must promptly request a correction or retraction.

## Section 9 Authorship

- (1) All researchers that have made significant, verifiable contributions to the scientific content of the publication must be considered its authors. In particular, scientific contributions to the
- Development and design of the research project,
  - Preparation, collection, procurement and provision of data, software or sources,
  - Analysis, evaluation or interpretation of data, sources and the resulting conclusions and
  - Drafting of the manuscript.

Appropriate recognition and consideration of the contributions of predecessors, competitors and colleagues are a matter of course.

- (2) Co-authorship is not justified by:
- Acquiring funding
  - Providing standard experimental materials
  - Instructing employees in standard methods
  - Providing purely technical assistance with data collection
  - Providing purely technical support (e.g. equipment)
  - Merely providing data
  - Solely reading the manuscript without contributing substantially to its content or
  - Acting as a supervisor or directing the working group in which the publication was created.

The employment or legal relationships between the contributors are irrelevant for (co-)authorship. People with smaller contributions should be mentioned in the acknowledgements. So-called "honorary authorship" is not possible.

- (3) Authors of a text, data or software publication bear shared responsibility for its content. All authors agree on the order in which the authors are named by the time the manuscript is prepared and agree on the final version of the work that is to be published. Exceptions to the shared responsibility of the co-authors for the publication must be stated explicitly.

- (4) It is against good research practice to terminate the contribution to a publication or to create obstacles for or refuse the publication of results as a co-author without sufficient reasons. Possible reasons include verifiable criticism of data, methods, results or unclear usage rights.

## Section 10 Legal and Ethical Frameworks and Usage Rights

- (1) Researchers at HSBI are obliged to adopt a responsible approach to the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of research, paying particular attention to the rights and obligations that arise from legal requirements and agreements or contracts with third parties. This includes agreements on the use of research data and results as well as funding providers' grant decisions including the ancillary provisions.
- (2) HSBI has established a data protection management system to protect and handle personal and other sensitive data to guarantee the protection of personal data in compliance with legal provisions. HSBI's Directive on Roles and Responsibilities in its currently valid version applies to data protection responsibility.
- (3) Agreements or contracts on usage rights must be concluded at the beginning of a research project, in particular if it is carried out in collaboration with third parties or if it becomes clear early on that one of the contributors is going to leave HSBI.
- (4) Taking into account their knowledge, experience and skills, researchers are obliged to recognise, appraise and assess the consequences and risks of their research projects. They are aware of the danger that misuse of research results poses and pay particular attention to possible dual use, e.g. in the context of security-related research. Special approval or an ethics committee vote must be obtained if it is necessary for carrying out a research project.
- (5) HSBI develops binding ethical guidance and policies and defines procedures to assess ethical issues relating to research projects.

## Section 11 Archiving of Research Results and Research Data

Publicly accessible research data and research results must be adequately archived including their underlying materials, original data and any research software used for ten years from the date of publication. Archiving is carried out in accordance with existing standards in the respective discipline and specific recommendations, where available using existing infrastructure (e.g. data repositories, archives or collections). If co-authors leave the institution before the intended retention period ends, they must clarify with their supervisor who will be responsible for the continued storage of the data. Where personal data must be retained, their permanent security, confidentiality and integrity must be ensured. Shortened retention periods or the retention of only part of the data are permitted, provided that comprehensible, if applicable legally prescribed, reasons for it are documented. If more than one institution is involved in the data collection process, provisions governing archiving and access rights must be contractually stipulated. HSBI ensures that the infrastructure necessary to enable archiving is in place.

## III Non-Compliance with Good Research Practice

### Section 12 Protection of Complainants and Respondents, Presumption of Innocence

- (1) All persons involved in proceedings to investigate scientific misconduct will take appropriate measures to protect both the complainant and the respondent and will maintain strict confidentiality. The presumption of innocence principle shall apply. Neither the complainant nor the respondent (for the latter, at least until scientific misconduct has been determined) may be disadvantaged in their professional and research career, e.g. through delays in ongoing qualification procedures. Sections 186 and 187 of the German Criminal Code (malicious gossip, defamation) shall remain unaffected by these regulations.
- (2) Reports of scientific misconduct must be made in "good faith." Should scientific misconduct not be proven, the complainant must continue to be protected, provided that the allegations were not made against their better knowledge. Reckless allegations of scientific misconduct, in particular reporting knowingly false or malicious allegations, can constitute a form of scientific misconduct itself.

### Section 13 Scientific Misconduct

- (1) Scientific misconduct occurs when falsehoods are stated in an intentional or grossly negligent manner in a scientific context, when the intellectual property rights of others are violated or another person's research work is sabotaged. For example, violations of good research practice include:
  - Inventing, falsifying and concealing data in research proposals and publications
  - Inadequately securing or documenting original data
  - Giving false information in a funding request (including false information on publications)
  - Plagiarising
  - Not citing other researchers' results or findings that were used
  - Having wrongfully obtained authorship in publications
  - Excluding others that are entitled to claim authorship
  - Making knowingly false or malicious allegations (defamation) regarding good research practice
  - Breaching trust as a reviewer or supervisor
  - Arbitrarily delaying publications when acting as reviewer
- (2) Shared responsibility for misconduct may also result from participating in the misconduct of others, from co-authoring publications containing falsifications and from failing to impart the rules of good research practice or from other gross negligence of supervisory duties towards students, doctoral candidates and post-doctoral researchers.

### Section 14 Ombudsperson

- (1) The Executive Board will appoint a contact person with extensive research experience as ombudsperson for members of HSBI who have questions on good research practice or suspect that scientific misconduct is occurring. In addition, a deputy will be appointed to prevent con-



flicts of interest. The ombudsperson and their deputy must not be members of a central governing body at HSBI during their terms of office, which is limited to four years with one additional term of office being possible. The ombudspersons appointed by the Executive Board must have management experience and a high standing. The Executive Board will suggest a suitable person to the Senate. If no objections are raised, the Executive Board will go ahead with the appointment and publish it in the Announcement Bulletin and on the university's website. The appointed person will receive an appointment letter.

- (2) As an impartial and qualified person of trust, the ombudsperson will give advice on questions of good research practice in general and in cases where they learn of suspected scientific misconduct in particular. They will also advise members of HSBI, especially early-career researchers and students who have been involved in a case of scientific misconduct through no fault of their own on how they will be able to safeguard or restore their academic and personal reputation.
- (3) Confidentiality and fairness are the principles of the ombudsperson's work. The ombudsperson is independent and obliged to maintain confidentiality and impartiality.

### Section 15 Procedure in Case of Suspected Misconduct

- (1) Members of HSBI who have objective reasons to suspect scientific misconduct can either turn to HSBI's ombudsperson directly or to the German Research Foundation's "Ombudsman für die Wissenschaft" (Research Ombudsman) committee. As an independent body, the committee is open to all researchers in Germany for questions or conflicts relating to good research practice or academic integrity even if they are unsure whether the behaviour they have observed is scientific misconduct or if they cannot examine the facts themselves.
- (2) HSBI will investigate any concrete suspicion of scientific misconduct in the university that is brought to the attention of the ombudsperson. Anonymous allegations will be investigated, too, if the complainant provides solid facts. The allegations will be examined for consistency and importance, taking into account plausibility aspects. After separate consultations with the respondent and the complainant, the ombudsperson will decide whether to investigate a suspected case. If all three parties agree that the suspicion is unjustified, a procedure will be unnecessary. Otherwise, the information will be communicated to the Executive Board while maintaining confidentiality.
- (3) If the Executive Board decides to deal with the suspected case, it will form an investigating committee to examine the matter. The committee will consist of three experienced researchers from among the university's teaching staff who belong to at least two different faculties. The investigating committee may consult other suitable persons to act in an advisory capacity. A deputy will be appointed for each member, and the deputy will be called in if a member is absent to minimise delays. When appointing the members of the investigating committee, the Executive Board must take into account any possible conflicts of interest.
- (4) The investigating committee's members will serve for the duration of the investigation. The Executive Board will be mindful of a balanced gender ratio in the appointment of the committee members. The investigating committee will designate a chair from among its members. If necessary, it can call in other persons for advice.
- (5) In the further procedure, the following applies to the complainant:

- The person's name will not be disclosed to third parties without their consent. Exceptions are possible if there are legal obligations or a necessity of disclosure to provide the respondent with the opportunity to defend themselves on a factual basis for which they need to know the complainant's identity.
  - If the name of the complainant must be disclosed, they will be notified of this in advance. They will then be able to decide whether they would like to withdraw the complaint.
  - The complainant's identity will be public if they have chosen to make public allegations. In this case, the subsequent proceedings will also deal with how to handle this breach of confidentiality towards the respondent.
- (6) If students of HSBI are alleged to have violated the principles of good research practice in a term or seminar paper or in a bachelor or master thesis, the respective examiner and competent examination committee will examine the case. Violations of the rules generally recognised in academia will be punished in accordance with the provisions of the respective examination regulations.

## Section 16 Work of the Investigation Committee

The committee must observe the following principles in an investigation:

1. The investigating committee's meetings are not public.
2. Decisions are taken by simple majority.
3. The investigating committee is authorised to take all appropriate steps to clarify the situation. It can obtain necessary information and statements for this purpose and may also call in experts from the respective research field on a case-by-case basis. The aim is to ensure that the proceedings are completed within a reasonable period of time.
4. The respondent must be informed of the incriminating facts and any evidence that is available.
5. The committee must give both the respondent and the complainant the opportunity to make an oral statement. The respondent has the right to access the records.
6. If the investigating committee thinks it has sufficient proof of scientific misconduct, it will send a corresponding report to the Executive Board, which will decide upon further measures, which, in addition to disciplinary sanctions, may include the initiation of academic, civil-law or criminal-law consequences.
7. The Executive Board must inform the respondent and the complainant of the decision and of the main reasons that led to the decision in writing.

## Section 17 Sanctions

- (1) Without prejudice to the legal consequences and depending on the severity of the misconduct, HSBI reserves the right to impose sanctions if good research practice is violated. Sanctions may include:
- Issue of a reprimand to the respondent by the President
  - Order to correct or withdraw incorrectly prepared publications
  - Temporary or permanent exclusion from research funding provided by the university
  - Disciplinary consequences
- (2) If a violation of good research practice occurs in a third-party-funded research project, the

third-party funder must be informed. Other third parties who have a justified interest in the decision will also be informed of the result. Depending on the facts of the case, the competent bodies or institutions will initiate legal or regulatory measures with corresponding proceedings.

## IV Final Provisions

### Section 18 Entry into Force

The present Regulations for Safeguarding Good Research Practice at Hochschule Bielefeld – University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSBI) shall enter into force on the day after its publication. At the same time, the Regulations for Safeguarding Good Research Practice at Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences of 17 December 2021 (Announcement Bulletin of HSBI – Official Notices – 2022, no. 4 c, pp. 24–37) shall cease to be in force.

Please note that pursuant to Section 12(5) of the Higher Education Act of North Rhine-Westphalia (*Hochschulgesetz – HG NRW*), a violation of procedural or formal requirements of the regulatory or other autonomous law of the university can no longer be asserted after the end of one year since this announcement, unless

- 1) The regulations have not been properly announced,
- 2) The Executive Board has previously objected to the decision of the committee that decided upon the regulations,
- 3) The university has been reprimanded for the violation in form or procedure in advance and the legal provision that leads to the violation is identified, or
- 4) The legal consequences of the statute of limitations for reprimands was not pointed out in the public announcement of the regulations.

Issued based on the resolution of the Senate of HSBI on 27 September 2023.

Bielefeld, 27 September 2023

The President  
of Hochschule Bielefeld – University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSBI)

Prof. Dr. Ingeborg Schramm-Wölk