

**Guidelines to Ensure Good Scientific Practice at the University of Natural Resources
and Applied Life Sciences**



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Preamble

Scientific work serves the purpose to gain knowledge. In accordance with our mission statement, the activity of researchers at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences is guided by the principle of an elevated sense of responsibility for fellow human beings and the environment. Research activity that contributes to ensuring life necessities for future generations and to sustaining the use of natural resources is guided by the consistent use of the precautionary principle. Besides this, it is a necessary basic element for the probity of the scientist and the high ethical value of scientific activity. In contrast to the sometimes difficult to demarcate error, improbity in scientific work contradicts the essence of science and the scientist's responsibility towards society. A body of rules and regulations cannot replace probity. However, with the following system, the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna would like to provide a framework for good scientific practice, to be able to hinder wrongful conduct, or respectively to be able to intervene with regulation and reconciliation in the event of such actions becoming apparent.

A) Scientific Misconduct:

1) It is considered to be scientific misconduct at any such time when a conscious or severe negligent misrepresentation takes place, intellectual copyright is violated, or any other instance which compromises scientific activity, especially by

a) Misrepresentation such as

--contriving data

--falsifying data, e.g. through selecting and rejecting undesirable results, without acknowledging these, or through manipulation of a representation or illustration

--wrongful data in an application or a grant proposal (including misrepresentation to a publishing agency and to publications in print)

b) infraction of intellectual copyright relating to copyrighted work or someone else's fundamental scientific discoveries, hypotheses, teachings or research basis such as

--unauthorized utilization by claiming authorship (plagiarism),

--exploitation of research basis and ideas, especially as assessor (idea theft),

--staking claim or unreasonable claim to scientific author- and co-authorship,

--falsifying content,

--unauthorized publication and making available of such to a third party, as long as the work, the result, the hypothesis, the teaching or the research basis is not yet published, or

c) claiming (co)authorship without the other party's permission,

d) sabotage of research activity, including damaging, destroying or manipulating testing regulations, equipment, documents, hardware, software, chemicals or other things necessary for undertaking an experiment, as well as

e) elimination of primary data, in so far as it violates laws or discipline-related recognized fundamentals of scientific work

2) Scientific misconduct also consists of conduct, from which co-responsibility for the misconduct of others occurs, especially through active participation, knowledge of falsifications, co-authorship of publications containing falsifications, or grave negligence in supervision duties.

B) General principles for scientific works

The scientists of BOKU (University for Agriculture and Forestry) are fundamentally committed to act according to general principles of good scientific work.

This includes, amongst other things:

- to work lege artis,
- to document results,
- to consistently question results,
- stringent honesty regarding the contributions of partners, competitors and predecessors,
- cooperation and performance responsibility in work groups,
- supervision of scientific progeny,
- to secure and maintain primary data

For this point, we would also like to refer to points 1-5 of the guidelines for good scientific practice set by the Austrian Rector Conference.

C) Highest principles of the ombudsman center

- 1) Protection of dignity and good reputation of all participants must have the highest priority. Legal requirements must naturally be considered.
- 2) The ombudsman center must be accessible to all of the members of BOKU, as well as for others who feel affected by violation of good scientific practice.
- 3) Initiation of an investigation procedure may not depend upon the position of the accused.
- 4) The accused should be offered the opportunity to comment in every phase of the proceedings.
- 5) Any bias towards the accused from someone involved in the investigation must be immediately reported.
- 6) The accused must have the possibility to be alerted about a possible bias against him/her of one of the judges in his/her case.
- 7) Until culpable misconduct is proved, statements on the participants of the proceeding and present insights must be handled in a highly confidential manner.
- 8) Internal proceedings do not replace any relevant legal proceedings (e.g. civil or penal trials)

D) Agencies to be set up:

Setting up an ombudsman center at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna

1) The ombudsman center is led by an ombudsman. The ombudsman serves as a contact for university members that have to report scientific misconduct. The ombudsman counsels those that inform him of suspected scientific misconduct or fraud, and personally takes up pertinent evidence that he is informed of.

2) Only a professor with scientific experience can be elected ombudsman.

3) Two representatives are made available to the ombudsman, in case of bias or absence.

4) Members of the rectorate and heads of departments cannot be appointed as ombudsman or representatives. The ombudsman and his/her two representatives are elected for three years by the senate based on the recommendation of the rectorate and the senate chairperson.

5) Set up of an investigation commission.

The investigation commission reviews whether scientific misconduct exists and makes a recommendation for further proceedings, also in relation to the protection of the rights of others. The investigation commission is assembled ad hoc for the respective case (subject-specific) by the ombudsman and his/her representatives. The commission is made up of four qualified university teachers. A minimum of two must be professors, and one chairperson. The ombudsman, or respectively the representatives, heads the commission.

E) Procedure:

I) Preliminary investigation:

1) The ombudsman receives the accusations of scientific misconduct or fraud. Anonymous accusations are not investigated. Under special circumstances, the ombudsman center can itself initiate an investigation, or respectively by request of the rectorate, senate and the research work group (research speaker of the departments).

2) Determination whether there are justifiable indicators of scientific misconduct. (See point Scientific Misconduct).

3) If there is reasonable suspicion, the rectorate is contacted, which initiates the investigation of the case through the investigation committee.

4) Should the suspicion turn out to be unfounded, the investigation is closed. However, if the accused would nevertheless want the investigation committee to be implemented, the request must be provided for.

II) Investigation by the commission:

1) The accused must be given the possibility to comment on the accusations within three weeks. In case of absence, the commission must extend this term accordingly. The incriminating and exonerative facts and evidence must be documented in writing.

2) The commission meets for discussion at the latest 14 days after the end of this term.

3) The commission's discussion takes place orally and is not accessible to the public.

- 4) The commission may call upon experts on the subject to take on an advisory function.
- 5) The accused must be given ample opportunity to justify him or herself.
- 6) The accused may call on a trusted person for support.
- 7) The investigation committee has the authority to take all steps appropriate for the clarification of the circumstances of the case. For this, it can gather all of the necessary information and statements respective to the case.
- 8) A simple majority forms the commission's decisions.
- 9) If misconduct is ascertained, the rectorate and the senate must be informed. Decisions regarding penalty and consequences are decided upon respective to the individual case.