

Statement of Professional Ethics

7 May 2020, endorsed by Departmental Assembly (Institutsversammlung)

We strive to provide an equal and inclusive learning, working, and living environment and recognize that this involves a variety of ethical considerations. By careful, active examination of those considerations we aim to promote professionalism and courtesy in interactions amongst members of staff and in doing so enhance the positive impact of our research, teaching, and service.

A commitment to collegiality

Collegiality is an expression of our ethical commitment to our discipline and to each other. Collegiality requires respect for the opinions and rights of others, a commitment to discussing differences openly and honestly, and refraining from spreading accusations and rumours about colleagues. There are two particular areas in which unethical conduct threatens collegiality and weakens our professional and personal bonds: when discrimination and harassment occur in our workplaces, and when individuals exhibit indifference to the wellbeing of colleagues and of our professional community. We are committed to being good colleagues to one another, and to constantly reflecting on our behaviour and attitudes in everything we do.

Fair employment practices

We adhere to fair employment practices and ensure equal opportunity when evaluating peers and other employees. In our daily work we do not discriminate against individuals or groups using criteria irrelevant to professional performance. Such irrelevant criteria include (but are not limited to) age, class, ethnicity, gender, marital status, nationality, politics, physical disability, religion, or sexual orientation. In addition, we intervene to prevent unfair employment practices whenever they are encountered and we support our peers and other employees in their professional careers.

Zero tolerance for harassment, whether intended or not

Harassment, of any kind, is not tolerated in our department. Harassment occurs when a climate is created that prevents or impairs the full enjoyment of a person's rights and opportunities. It may include (but is not limited to) unwanted sexual advances or demeaning remarks, physical assaults or verbal or written forms of intimidation. This includes acts that insult and humiliate individuals that are not readily connected with criteria of social difference. Harassment is not defined by intent, but by perception and impact.

Ethical teaching practices

In relations with students, our overriding responsibility is to contribute to their intellectual development and to avoid exploitative or discriminatory actions. We endeavour to create a classroom environment that is conducive to learning for all students. This includes considering carefully whether the material we use in class could be considered prejudicial, bigoted, insulting, offensive, or derogatory, and to present it without fostering prejudice or alienating students of a particular background. We aim at creating teaching material that includes a variety of perspectives and expertise from all regions of the world. When we teach on topics that students are likely to find sensitive or discomforting we deal with them in an open, honest, and constructive way.

Taking responsibility for our activities as researchers, teachers and employees

We formulate this statement being aware that no single definition or list could possibly capture the plurality and complexity of the moral concerns relevant to our work. Instead, the statement seeks to highlight such concerns with the goal of encouraging ongoing reflection, debate, and action. In this spirit, the statement affirms our responsibility to consider and take responsibility for how our professional activities—as researchers, teachers, employees – can support an environment that does justice to the equality and diversity of our staff and students.

Source: AAG Statement of Professional Ethics (adapted)