Max Weber Stiftung

Deutsche
Geisteswissenschaftliche
Institute im Ausland

MWS Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice

Adopted by the Foundation Board on 13 May 2022.

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PREAMBLE

Scientific and academic integrity is the basis of all research work that seeks to increase knowledge, as well as for society's trust in science and for trust among researchers themselves. Every researcher, but also every research institution, has a duty to take the responsibility resulting from this into full account and embed it in their individual actions as a guiding principle. The Board of Trustees of the Max Weber Foundation - German Humanities Institutes Abroad (Max Weber Stiftung,

MWS) has, therefore, adopted rules that summarise the key standards of good research practice at the institutes of the MWS and describe the procedure to be followed in cases of non-compliance. The institute directors communicate these rules to the researchers and place the researchers under an obligation to comply with them. The Guidelines of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft, DFG) for Safeguarding Good Research Practice, of September 2019, provide a binding framework for formulation and application.

PRINCIPLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. General principles of scientific and academic work

The researchers of the MWS are responsible for putting the principles of good scientific and academic work into practice and advocating for them. In particular, these principles include working *lege artis*, maintaining strict honesty in attributing their own contributions and those of others, rigorously questioning all results, and permitting and promoting critical discourse within the scientific community.

Researchers at all career levels regularly update their knowledge about the principles of good scientific and academic work and the state of research. Experienced and early career researchers support each other in a process of continuous mutual learning and ongoing training and maintain a regular dialogue.

2. Responsibility of the institute directors

The institute directors create the basic framework for good scientific and academic work. They are responsible for an appropriate institutional organisational structure that ensures that the tasks of leadership, supervision, quality assurance and conflict management are clearly allocated and can actually be performed. The procedures and principles for staff selection and development are transparent and fair and take into account gender equality and diversity. At the institutes, suitable organisational measures are taken at the level of the individual scientific work unit, and of the leadership, to prevent abuse of power and exploitation of relationships of dependency.

All researchers receive appropriate career support. Particular attention is paid, in this respect, to supporting early career researchers (interns, scholarship holders, doctoral candidates and postdocs). For this reason, cooperation is pursued with universities where the early career researchers do their doctorate, qualify as professors or otherwise prepare for their further science and academic career. The institute directors ensure that the early career researchers are adequately supervised and have a primary contact person. They are responsible for communicating the content of good scientific and academic practice. Furthermore, honest career advice, training opportunities and mentoring are offered to researchers and to the staff supporting the specific research project (scientific support staff).[1]

3. Stakeholders, responsibilities and roles in the research process

The participants in a research project (the researchers and scientific support staff) define their roles and responsibilities in a suitable way and adapt them where necessary. Adaptations are likely to be needed if, in particular, the focus of a participant's work changes. Regular dialogue among themselves ensures that the roles and responsibilities are clear at each stage of the research project.

RESEARCH PROCESS

4. Legal and ethical frameworks

The researchers adopt a responsible approach to the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of research. This responsibility is not limited to compliance with legal requirements, but also includes an obligation to evaluate in detail the potential consequences of their research projects and assess the respective ethical aspects. The researchers are aware of the risk of misuse of their research; in critical cases, they obtain approvals and ethics votes where necessary.[2] If in doubt, they may call in the ombudsperson or the MWS data protection officer.

[1] See in this respect also the MWS action paper "Karrierewege" of 17 May 2019.
[2] See in this respect DFG's information about obtaining ethics votes in the case of DFG applications.

The institute directors create the basic framework for ethically responsible research. This includes suitable organisational structures, as well as raising awareness of potential risks and communicating essential knowledge about the legal and ethical boundaries of the research.

5. Usage rights

Where research projects involve multiple internal or external participants, the researchers conclude, at the earliest possible stage, documented agreements on usage rights to research data and research results arising from the research project. In particular, the researchers who collected the data are also entitled to use them. The creator's right is not affected by these provisions.

6. Research design

The researchers fully take into account the current state of research when planning a project. A prerequisite for identifying relevant and suitable research questions is careful researching of existing research already in the public domain. The institutes ensure, within the scope of the resources available to them, that the necessary basic framework for this is in place. The researchers use methods to avoid unconscious distortions in the interpretation of findings, and examine whether and to what extent diversity (gender, culture, training etc.) may be of significance to the research project (with regard to methods, work programme, objectives, etc.).

7. Cross-phase quality assurance

Quality assurance takes place continuously and throughout the research process. In particular, it relates to compliance with established standards and scientifically sound, clear methods, the collection, processing and analysis of research data, as well as the selection and use of research software. The origin of the data, materials and software used in the research process is disclosed, and the reuse of data is clearly indicated; original sources are cited. If researchers have made their findings publicly available and subsequently become aware of significant inconsistencies or errors that affect good scientific practice, or they are made aware of such inconsistencies or errors by third parties, they promptly request the publisher, infrastructure provider, etc. to correct or, if there is reason to do so, retract the publication and make a corresponding announcement.

When the MWS institutions make scientific findings publicly available (in the narrower sense of publication, but also in a broader sense through other communication channels), they explain the quality assurance mechanisms used.

8. Documentation

The researchers are responsible for documenting all information relevant to the production of a research result as clearly as is required by and is appropriate for the relevant subject area in order to allow the result to be reviewed and assessed. This means, in principle, that the information necessary to understand the research (including the research data used or generated, the methodological, evaluation and analytical steps taken, and, if relevant, the development of the hypothesis) is made available, individual results that do not support the research hypothesis are also documented, and research software developed by researchers themselves is made publicly available along with the source code and rendered reusable. Third parties are allowed access to this information insofar as possible. 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; they shall be protected as effectively as possible against manipulation.

9. Making available, long-term retention and archiving

The researchers back up research data and results made publicly available, as well as the key materials on which they are based, and, if relevant, the research software used, by adequate means and retain them for an appropriate period of time in accordance with the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Re-Usable) principles. Analogue data are ordinarily retained at the institutions where the data were produced. The retention of digital data and research software is to be defined at the beginning of the relevant research work in agreement with the headquarters. The corresponding institutions and the headquarters ensure that the respective infrastructure necessary for this is available or advise on the selection of a cross-site repository. The retention period begins on the date when the results are made publicly available and is ordinarily ten years.

Where understandable reasons exist for not retaining certain data or for retaining certain data for a shorter period, the researchers explain this to the head of the institute; these reasons are normally documented up to the end of the ten-year period.

10. Performance dimensions and assessment criteria

Researchers' performance, for example in the context of selection and publication decisions, is assessed mainly on the basis of qualitative measures, while quantitative indicators may be incorporated into the overall assessment with appropriate differentiation and reflection. Where provided voluntarily, individual circumstances stated in curricula vitae are appropriately taken into account when forming a judgement. In addition to scientific performance, other aspects of performance may also be taken into consideration in the evaluation process. The researchers' approach to science, such as an openness to new findings and a willingness to take risks, is also

considered.

PUBLICATION AND AUTHORSHIP

11. Providing public access to research results

The researchers decide autonomously and independently of third parties whether, how and where to make their research results accessible to the public. As a rule, they make all results available, fully and clearly described, as part of scientific discourse. In specific cases, however, there may be reasons not to do so.

The researchers avoid splitting research into inappropriately small publications. They limit the repetition of content from their own publications to that which is necessary to enable the reader to understand the context. They provide full and correct information about their own preliminary work already in the public domain.

12. Authorship

An author is someone who has made a genuine, identifiable contribution to the content of a scientific publication of text, data or software. In particular, such contribution is deemed to exist where, in a manner relevant to science, a research has taken part in

- the development and conceptual design of the research project, or
- the production, collection, acquisition or provision of data, software or sources, or
- the analysis/evaluation or interpretation of data, sources and conclusions drawn from them, or
- the drafting of the manuscript.

Honorary authorship where no such contribution was made is not permissible. A leadership or supervisory function does not itself constitute co-authorship.

The researchers should agree, in good time, on authorship and, on the basis of clear criteria, on the order in which authors are named. All authors must approve the final version of the work that is to be published; approval must not be refused without sufficient reason. Refusal of consent must be justified with verifiable criticism of data, methods or results. The authors bear joint responsibility for the publication, unless otherwise explicitly indicated. They also seek to ensure that, as far as possible, their research contributions are identified by publishers or infrastructure providers such that they can be correctly cited.

13. Instrument for publication

The researchers should carefully select the publication medium in which their contribution is to be made accessible to the public, or for which they assume the role of editor. An important consideration in the selection decision is, along with the criteria of quality, free availability and visibility in the field of discourse, whether the

publication medium has established its own guidelines for good scientific practice. Scientific findings can be published in various ways, in analogue and digital form, in recognised scientific media. The different publication options have equal status. The Max Weber Foundation's right to subsequently make all publications by their employees also public in an open-access repository remains unaffected.

14. Confidentiality and neutrality in reviews and consultations
Researchers who, in particular, evaluate submitted manuscripts, funding applications or individuals' expertise are obliged to maintain strict confidentiality in this respect. Confidentiality precludes sharing external content with third parties or making personal use of it. The researchers must immediately disclose to the responsible body any possible conflicts of interest or bias that could be justified relating to the research project being reviewed or to the person or matter under discussion. The duty to maintain confidentiality and disclose facts that could give rise to concern of bias also applies to members of academic advisory and decision-making bodies.

NON-COMPLIANCE WITH GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE

15. Ombudspersons
The Foundation Board appoints for a four-year term of office at least one ombudsperson as a contact person, to whom all MWS members can turn with questions relating to good scientific and academic practice and in cases of suspected scientific misconduct. A re-appointment is possible. An ombudsman can be any research who is experienced and familiar with the MWS and has not been employed at the MWS or held an office there within the Foundation Board, an advisory board, in the preceding two years. The appointment is announced at all institutes and on MWS' websites. If there is concern of bias[3] in respect of the relevant ombudsperson, or if the ombudsperson is unable to perform his role, a substitute is designated. Moreover, the MWS members may alternatively turn to the "Ombudsman for Science" committee, which operates nationwide.

The ombudsperson advises and supports the MWS members confidentially in all matters relating to good scientific and academic practice and suspected scientific

[3] The ombudsperson examines whether, with regard to a process, there are grounds for concern of bias. Where the ombudsperson is of the opinion that this exists, he/she is not permitted to participate in the process. If other participants have concerns of bias regarding the ombudsperson, they can report this to the Foundation Board in text form. The Foundation Board then decides whether to exclude the ombudsperson in this matter on account of the concern of bias.

misconduct, as well as conflict management.

16. Complainants and respondents

If employees or third parties provide, in good faith based on objective reasons, information regarding suspected scientific misconduct, this must not result in any disadvantages to their employment at the MWS or to their own scientific or professional career prospects.

Likewise, the respondents should not experience any disadvantages until such time as scientific misconduct has been formally established. They must be given the possibility to take note of the facts or evidence incriminating them and comment on the matter.

Until such time as scientific misconduct has been established, the details and identity of the individuals involved in the process, as well as the current findings of the investigation shall be treated confidentially. The complainant's identity must not be disclosed to persons involved in the process or to third parties without the complainant's express consent.

17. Procedures in cases of suspected scientific misconduct

In particular, scientific misconduct is deemed to exist where, in the context of scientific and academic work, including the publication process,

- false statements[4] are made deliberately or due to gross negligence,
- substantively unjustified interference causes changes to results[5],
- other persons are illegitimately hindered in their scientific and academic work or in their scientific career prospects
- scientific methods are contravened, or
- others' scientific achievements are claimed as one's own without justification.[6] Co-

[4] Fabricating data and/or research results; falsifying data and/or research results, in particular by suppressing and/or eliminating data and/or results obtained in the research process without disclosing this; manipulating a representation or illustration/figure; presenting an image/graph/table and a statement relating thereto in an incongruous manner; making inaccurate statements in a funding application or within the scope of the reporting obligation (including false statements regarding the publication medium and publications in print), to the extent that they relate to science; claiming another person's (co-)authorship without their consent.

[5] Sabotaging research activities (such as damaging, destroying or manipulating instrumentation, documentation, hardware, software or other items required by others for research purposes); falsifying or removing, without authorisation, research data or research documents; falsifying or removing, without authorisation, the documentation of research data.

[6] Using others' content without indicating the source ("plagiarism"); exploiting research approaches and ideas ("idea theft"); sharing, without authorisation, data, theories and findings with third parties; claiming, or assuming without justification, authorship or co-authorship, in particular if no genuine, identifiable contribution was made to the scientific content of the publication; falsifying content, publishing an unpublished work, finding, hypothesis, teaching or research approach, or otherwise

responsibility for scientific misconduct ensues from active participation in others' misconduct, having knowledge of others' misconduct, or a gross breach of the duty of supervision.

Information regarding a suspicion of scientific misconduct is to be provided to the directors of the respective institute or, where the directors or deputy directors are involved, to the president. Alternatively, the information can be given to the ombudsperson. The process is confidential at each stage, and the presumption of innocence shall be respected. There is an opportunity to comment at every stage of the process.

The person to whom the matter is brought examines the complainant's allegations from a plausibility perspective for accuracy and significance with regard to the possibilities for settling the accusations. To establish the facts of the matter, the ombudsperson may already contact the respondent; this person is to be given the opportunity to comment. If the ombudsperson cannot settle the accusations, he/she requests the opening of an investigation by a committee, consisting of the head and his/her deputy, as well as the chairperson of the respective institute's Academic Advisory Board. The latter then decides on whether scientific misconduct has occurred and determines the further course of action. The committee may take advice from the ombudsperson. Where the accusations concern the head of the institute himself/herself or his/her deputy, the responsible committee is the Foundation Board, which may appoint from its members an investigative commission consisting of three persons. The principle of free consideration of evidence and of speedy conduct of the process applies.
If the committee has established scientific misconduct, it may, in particular, propose to the employee's supervisor:

- consequences under employment law, such as for example a warning, extraordinary or ordinary termination or rescission of the contract
- sanctions inherent to science (e. g. blocks on applications)
- or consequences under civil law, such as for example issuing a ban on entering the premises, claims to recovery of possession against the respondent(s), for example claims to recovery of possession of stolen scientific material, or abatement and cease-and-desist claims arising from copyright law, personality law, patent law and/or competition law, as well as restitution claims arising from third-party funds or the like, and damage claims by the MWS or by third parties.

Scientific publications that contain errors due to scientific misconduct shall be

retracted or corrected without delay. If the respondent does not comply with such request, his/her supervisor may initiate suitable measures. The respondent and the complainant shall be informed of the committee's decision. In this respect, the key reasons that led to the decision shall also be communicated. The committee may announce the decision in a suitable manner. Once inquiries are completed, the result is announced to the science organisations concerned and, if relevant, to third parties that have a justified interest in the decision.

Disclaimer: This English translation of the MWS Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice is provided for informational purposes. The English text was carefully translated and reviewed for accuracy. In the event that the English and German versions permit different interpretations, the German text shall prevail.