

## **Code of Conduct**

Dear colleagues,

WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business) is a public university offering excellent research and research-led teaching. As an academic community of students and faculty, WU aims for education and individual autonomy through science and research. WU contributes to thought leadership as well as responsible business practice and thereby to solving social, economic, and ecological problems. WU is grounded in a strong belief in academic freedom, especially with regard to the plurality of methods and topics. All actions are guided by academic integrity, justice, and equality, as well as diversity and open-mindedness.

All of WU's employees and external lecturers commit themselves to observe this Code of Conduct – a set of rules based on the principles outlined above, which provides binding guidelines for interacting with colleagues and coworkers, partners outside WU, and students.

The Code of Conduct defines fundamental standards of integrity, dealing with other WU affiliates and external partners, confidentiality, data protection and intellectual property, secondary employment, giving and receiving gifts or benefits, the management of finances, and the use of WU resources.

Maintaining professional and ethical behavior is the responsibility of each and every WU employee. We trust that every person working at WU will uphold the high standards outlined in this Code of Conduct and do what is right and appropriate in every situation. Violations of the Code of Conduct not only damage WU's reputation but may also entail legal consequences.

We kindly ask you to take the time to read the Code of Conduct carefully, and we would like to thank you for your personal contribution to ensuring compliance with all applicable laws and regulations and high standards of responsible and ethical behavior at WU. By following the Code of Conduct, you help to make sure that WU remains an institution we can all be proud of.

Your Rector's Council

## **1 Preamble**

This Code of Conduct is a framework upon which we as WU employees should base our decisions. It defines and explains the standards of responsible and ethical behavior that are expected to be maintained by all WU employees (academic and non-academic staff on all organizational levels and external lecturers).

The Code of Conduct applies not only to relationships and behavior within WU, but also to the many different relationships between WU and its students, external lecturers, external partners, and the general public.

All applicable laws and regulations (e.g. the Universities Act<sup>1</sup>, regulations governing specific professions such as the Civil Servants Employment Act<sup>2</sup>, the Contractual Employees Act<sup>3</sup>, the Collective Bargaining Agreement for University Staff<sup>4</sup>, operational agreements, or provisions in individual employment contracts) remain unaffected by this Code and must be upheld by WU employees. Similarly, this Code does not affect the applicability of WU's directives, decrees, guidelines, and circulars.

## **2 Basic standards of integrity**

As WU employees and external lecturers at WU, we are conscious of the responsibilities associated with working for WU. We perform our duties to the best of our knowledge and belief.

We accept our responsibilities and fulfill the tasks assigned to us with commitment and loyalty, while upholding generally accepted academic standards. For academic, administrative, and service staff, these standards include honesty, fairness, and respect for the rights of others.

While we respect the unconditional validity of the principle of freedom of expression, we will refrain from slandering and/or making false and defamatory statements about WU or individuals employed at WU.

We uphold the basic ethical standards of scientific work at all times while respecting the principle of freedom in research. Plagiarism, fraud, or the falsification of research results are contrary to these basic standards. In the case of joint publications, the names of all contributing authors must be given.

As teachers, we are committed to encouraging and supporting our students while recognizing the principle of freedom in teaching. This includes fulfilling our obligations to impart skills and qualifications and our obligation to provide quality teaching and to conduct examinations correctly.

## **3 Dealing with colleagues and external partners**

As WU employees and external lecturers at WU, we treat each other, students, and partners from outside the University with consideration and show respect for others' personal integrity.

This includes avoiding any form of unobjective preferential treatment or discrimination and refusing to tolerate or support this behavior in others. In particular, discrimination based on ethnic background, religion or world view, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability will not be tolerated.

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<sup>1</sup> Universitätsgesetz

<sup>2</sup> Beamten-Dienstrechtsgesetz

<sup>3</sup> Vertragsbedienstetengesetz

<sup>4</sup> Kollektivvertrag für die ArbeitnehmerInnen der Universitäten

WU prohibits unlawful harassment in any form. This means any and all behaviors classified as harassment, including insults, continued aggravation, bullying, repeated refusal to communicate with an individual, etc.

### **WU management and staff relations**

Employees in a position of leadership are entitled to the greatest possible degree of loyalty and the best possible performance from the employees who work for them. Their instructions, orders, and guidelines are to be followed as long as these are within legal limits (duty of fidelity).

Employees are equally entitled to the greatest possible degree of loyalty and the best possible support from their superiors. This means that management personnel are obliged to help their employees in problem situations and provide the best possible conditions for a positive working environment (duty of care).

In the event of conflicts, both management personnel and subordinate employees shall work together in a positive way to find constructive solutions. Mediation is available in exceptionally difficult cases.

### **Contact with students and external partners**

To the best of our ability, we as WU employees and external lecturers at WU are courteous, prompt, and reliable when communicating with students and external partners, and always attempt to deal with their requests in an appropriate manner.

### **Sexual harassment**

Sexual and gender-based harassment will not be tolerated between employees/external lecturers, between employees/external lecturers and students, or in any other relationship arising from employment with WU, and will have legal and disciplinary consequences.

Sexual harassment can be defined as behavior of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity, or which is unwelcome, inappropriate, degrading, humiliating, insulting, or offensive to the other person.

Because of the dependent and subordinate nature of an employee's relationship to his/her superior, particularly strict standards apply in these cases.

Appropriate distance must also be maintained in relations between teachers and students. It is the teacher's responsibility to keep the dependent nature of the teacher-student relationship in mind at all times. In particular, personal invitations from teachers directed at individual students currently in a directly dependent relationship with the teacher are unwelcome.

## **4 Confidentiality, data protection and intellectual property**

To fulfill its duties to the best of its abilities, WU must handle large amounts of data, including confidential personal data. The owners of this data trust WU's employees to treat this data in an appropriate and law-abiding manner.

Similarly, internal communications, information, and data, as well as information discussed in the various panels, commissions, and other working groups are to be treated confidentially. Data

protection is very important to us as WU employees and external lecturers at WU, and we are obligated by law to maintain confidentiality.

These obligations remain valid even after termination of the employment relationship or freelance contract with WU.

As WU employees or external lecturers at WU, we guard against any violations of WU's intellectual property rights, including for instance trademark, design, and patent rights, and other copyrights. We also guard against any infractions of third-party intellectual property rights and copyrights (e.g. licenses) WU is obligated to protect. We also make sure to avoid any violations of intellectual property rights held by third parties.

## **5 Secondary employment**

Secondary employment is defined as any paid activity WU employees perform outside their employment contract with WU. In the case of civil servants, secondary employment means any paid activity performed in addition to any secondary civil service duties.

Any secondary employment held by WU employees may not be contrary to WU's interests. Employees are required, both by legal regulations and by contractual obligation, to report any secondary employment to the WU Personnel Office without delay, and to have this employment approved in advance if necessary. Employees are also required to report any positions they hold on management, executive, and supervisory boards or other panels of legal entities operating for profit. If secondary employment is considered to be contrary to WU's vested interests, WU reserves the right to forbid the activity in question, stating the reasons for this decision.

WU employees and/or their companies do not provide any paid services to WU students and are not involved in any such activities, unless they have been commissioned to do so by WU. This regulation does not bar activities that are completely unrelated to the scope of tasks and activities performed by WU and its employees, however.

In the case of business contracts concluded between WU and individuals close to WU employees, the partners shall adhere to the principle of transparency and the arm's length principle.

## **6 Accepting and giving gifts and benefits**

As WU employees and external lecturers at WU, we do not offer any benefits (e.g. gifts or invitations) to third parties, nor do we ask or accept any benefits from third parties, especially students, if, upon reasonable analysis, these benefits may be deemed to influence official proceedings, if they go beyond the standards of hospitality that are customary in the region, country, or business area in question, or if they are banned by the applicable legal regulations. Under no circumstances are WU employees and external lecturers at WU to offer or accept any benefits for activities that violate their duties and responsibilities or the duties and responsibilities of others, ask for benefits, or accept or offer benefits that may influence officials in their activities.

This does not include accepting appropriate remuneration for teaching and research activities (if not provided to WU students), or donations or other monetary contributions made to an academic unit for funding research or teaching activities. Contract research or third-party financed research is also not affected by this provision.

## **7 Management of finances**

We are expected to perform our duties according to the principles of legality, efficiency, practicality, economy, and transparency, and to always keep the public interest in mind. Cost awareness and responsible resource management are of key importance.

Accounting, cash management, reporting, document management, and taxation matters are always handled accurately and thoroughly, and documented in a clear and understandable manner.

## **8 Use of WU resources**

WU resources are provided for the University's use. These resources include IT and telecommunications services, software, hardware, databases, spatial resources, and the working hours and labor of WU employees, external lecturers, and students.

Using IT and telecommunications services, software, and hardware including email and internet programs for private purposes is acceptable to a certain degree. The same applies to the storage of personal data and files in folders indicated to be private. Personal use is forbidden if it is abusive, impairs efficient working conditions, or represents a risk to the security and performance capacity of the available infrastructure. Emails and files remain accessible to WU and may be viewed for forensic purposes.

WU resources may be used for third-party financed contract or basic research if costs are reimbursed. It is expressly forbidden to use WU resources for the storage or distribution of pornographic, racist, violent, or otherwise offensive materials.

As WU employees and external lecturers at WU, we treat WU's property and resources with care and according to the principles of economy and efficiency. We take complete responsibility for any equipment or materials in our possession that are provided by WU (e.g. laptops or books, also when working at home).

## **9 In Case of Doubt or Infractions**

Not only the guidelines laid down in this Code of Conduct, but also the spirit of ethical and professional conduct it is based on should be guiding principles for all WU employees and external lecturers at WU.

Any violations of applicable legislation governing employment relationships or offenses under criminal law will entail the appropriate legal consequences as defined in the applicable statutes.

In cases of ambiguity or doubt about the interpretation of the Code of Conduct, you can turn to your immediate supervisor or a member of the Rector's Council.

You can find all WU directives, regulations, and guidelines online on SharePoint (<https://swa.wu.ac.at/richtl/SitePages/Homepage.aspx>)