

Directive of the Vice-Rector for Research on responsible research and academic integrity



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1. Preamble

WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business) is renowned for excellent research and research-led teaching, following the ideals of both academic stringency and relevance. The aim of research is to gain knowledge that is as well-founded as possible about problems that are as relevant as possible to the fields of academic research and professional practice, and to society as a whole.

The researchers working at WU represent diverse epistemological, methodological, and methodical traditions. Each of these traditions has developed specific quality criteria for academic work that are applied and further developed in the established academic communities. We regard this diversity as one of the strengths of our university. This Directive respects and supports this diversity.

Academic integrity is seen as an indispensable requirement of academic work, essential to the reputation of researchers and research institutions. In this context, acting responsibly means living up to the trust that society places in WU. Academic integrity and responsible research are understood as an individual commitment by all researchers to carry out their research activities in accordance

with ethical principles. In their academic activities, all researchers are expected to comply with the relevant standards of their academic communities.

2. Object

The purpose of this Directive is to systematically ensure compliance with principles of responsible research and academic integrity at WU and to specify standards in this regard, in particular for planning and implementing research projects and publishing research results.

3. Scope

This Directive applies to all employees of WU (all WU employees, including federal contractual employees transferred to WU and federal civil servants assigned to WU to provide services).

4. Applicable legislation and instruments

Legislation and instruments relevant to universities (such as, in particular, the Copyright Act [*Urheberrechtsgesetz*], the Universities Act [*Universitätsgesetz*] 2002, the WU By-Laws [*Satzung*], the directives adopted by WU with respect to data protection and data security as well as special employment-related legislation and instruments such as the Civil Service Employment Act [*Beamten-Dienstrechtsgesetz*], the Contractual Employees' Act [*Vertragsbedienstetengesetz*], and the Collective Bargaining Agreement for University Staff [*Kollektivvertrag für die Arbeitnehmer/innen der Universitäten*]) remain unaffected by this Directive and must be observed.

5. Basic standards of integrity

WU expects its academic staff members to be open-minded, fair, and respectful when carrying out their activities. Researchers at WU are led by honesty and transparency towards the academic community and the public, as far as the applicable statutory and contractual confidentiality obligations permit. They are themselves responsible for complying with these principles.

6. Planning research projects

Researchers are free to choose the subject, objectives, and methods of their research. However, they have to consider the possible consequences of their choices, ethical aspects and ethical boundaries, and statutory provisions right from the beginning when planning research activities.

Participants of empirical studies (respondents, experimental subjects, surveyed businesses, etc.) have special privacy rights. For researchers, this means they have to consider, and make a responsible decision between, the value of the results obtained and the achievable social progress on the one hand, and the probability that the individual rights of research participants and subjects are infringed on the other hand. WU expects its researchers to show particular sensitivity in this regard.

7. Implementing research projects

At all stages, research projects must be implemented in a manner so as to comply with the basic standards of integrity and good academic practice of the respective academic communities.

To ensure transparency of the results and to avoid/be able to clarify cases of fraud, it is indispensable that the research process is documented on a regular basis (data preparation and analysis processes) and to store the data obtained during empirical research projects. The documentation must be arranged in such a manner so as to ensure the complete replicability of the results. The structure of the primary data and the procedure of operationalization must be described as accurately as possible during the documentation process, without violating any confidentiality agreements. Researchers are expressly encouraged to archive their data, subject to the technical possibilities available, in a data archive provided for that purpose after the end of the research project.

In their research activities, WU employees are required to place special importance on data protection and to comply with all directives and regulations concerning data and information security at WU and rules on the use of data and information that require protection or must be protected with regard to confidentiality.

8. Publishing research results

Publications are an important element in the research process. They make results accessible to the academic community and to the public. Publications follow the ideals of honesty, transparency, and understandability. Researchers must be careful to present results correctly, understandably, and in accordance with the standards of the respective academic communities. In conformity with WU's understanding of research, the aim is to maximize the *insights* published, not the *number* of publications.

Any person who, by his or her personal academic work, has made a major contribution to planning and carrying out the research and/or writing the research paper is to be named as author. It is recommended to agree on who is going to be named as author as early in the process as possible. Solely providing the infrastructure or financing a research project is not sufficient to be named as an author. So-called "honorary authorships" are not permitted.

Any support provided by third parties can be mentioned in separate acknowledgements that may be specifically added to the text (preface, footnotes, or the like). It is also recommended to discuss and specify (in writing) the order in which the authors are to be named among all the researchers involved as early as possible, taking into account the respective academic discipline and its norms and standards.

9. Promoting early-stage researchers

At all WU research units, care is to be taken to ensure appropriate supervision and support of early-stage researchers. Academic staff members are called upon to adequately address the principles of good academic practice and the problem of academic misconduct in their curricular teaching and in supervising early-stage researchers, and thus to contribute to the development of awareness and responsibility.

One of the instruments that apply in this context is the Directive on plagiarism and academic fraud and the resulting legal consequences issued by the Vice-Rector, Academic Programs and Student Affairs, as amended on March 11, 2015.

10. Ethics in the context of further research-related activities and participation in academic discourse

Academic work is not limited to researchers' own research projects and to promoting early-stage researchers. A high degree of integrity is also indispensable for numerous other academic activities, for example work as an assessor or reviewer, editor, member of a jury, host or organizer of academic meetings, mentor, etc. In all of these roles and capacities, WU researchers are expected to act constructively and fairly and in accordance with the standards of the relevant academic communities.

11. Conflicts of interest

A "conflict of interest" means a risk to primary interests, i.e. the academic research of phenomena, posed by differing secondary interests of a personal or institutional nature. Academic integrity and the principles of fairness, honesty, and transparency require that no concessions may be made to such secondary interests. WU researchers are required to act with special sensitivity and transparency in this regard. This means, for example, that the (financial) support of a research project by public or private sponsors (businesses, associations, foundations) must be disclosed in an appropriate manner.

12. Dealing with academic misconduct and advice in cases of doubt

In principle, WU acts on the presumption that its employees display an honest, responsible, and self-critical attitude. In cases of suspected academic misconduct, WU is obligated to investigate any allegations or suspicious circumstances. Academic misconduct includes, for example, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, intentional failure to cite sources, deliberately making wrong allegations and statements, falsification of data or findings, and unjustified authorship.

Any misconduct entails the appropriate consequences as specified in the applicable provisions of employment law, labor law, and criminal law.

In cases of doubt regarding matters of academic integrity, WU employees can contact the Senate's Research Committee. The Committee is available to provide advice, support, and mediation services to employees.

Vienna, January 25, 2017

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The contents of this Directive were compiled jointly by the Vice-Rector, Research, and the Research Committee of the Senate.