

GOOD SCIENTIFIC PRACTICE



at Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg

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Dear students,

You are now beginning your university education. In the course of your studies, you will become acquainted with science on many levels. At first, you will attend academic lectures and seminars, and before long, you will yourselves be reporting on scientific or scholarly issues. Sooner or later you will have to apply the principles of academic work yourselves, which may happen during one of your classes, during the work on your final thesis, or while collaborating on a research project. You will experience the fascination and excitement of exploring correlations and discovering new insights and truths, no matter what field you work in. Whatever academic subject you study, it will have its own appeal, its special challenges, and often its particular scientific practice.

The Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg has committed itself to the implementation of good scientific practice.¹ In this respect the university feels especially responsible for its students and the next generation of scholars. Strict adherence to the general and specific principles of academic work should be communicated to you, but also exemplified to you and demanded of you.

"Honesty and truth have the highest priority in academic work"², in short: academic integrity. However, a constant critical approach to your scientific findings, and openness to critique from your peers and the research community are also very important.

Further principles of good scientific practice will be described here. At the same time, we must draw your attention to the not infrequent infringements, which can have substantial consequences (see below). Always consider: notes, protocols, and experimental data must be documented **truthfully, completely, and in their unaltered form**. Results must always be verifiable, and theoretical deductions must be comprehensible. This includes keeping all documents, original data (e.g. from practical experiments) and research materials. It must be possible, and when necessary permission must be granted, to look into the procedures, so that it is clear **how** the results were obtained, or **how** a final paper was elaborated (e.g. seminar paper, results protocol).

¹ Guidelines for good scientific practice at Carl von Ossietzky University (30.9.2002, in German).

http://www.uni-oldenburg.de/uni/amtliche_mitteilungen/dateien/AM2002-04_Leitlin.pdf

²Cf. Guidelines, 1. Allgemeine Prinzipien wissenschaftlicher Arbeit.

Exact statement of your sources, as well as clear indication of citations, are indispensable to making your findings **verifiable**. Taking passages or ideas from unnamed sources is plagiarism (theft of intellectual property).

The availability of texts, pictures, etc. on the internet poses an increasing temptation to infringe copyrights by borrowing material for seminar assignments, presentations, and examination papers. If teachers discover material without clearly cited sources (for example using a plagiarism search engine), they are required to take measures which may include exclusion from examinations - even from examinations that are prerequisite for graduation -but at the very least deny recognition of completed work or withhold credit. Plagiarism in science is a form of academic misconduct. Further forms of academic misconduct include sabotage and unauthorized disclosure of results. Any suspicion of academic misconduct at the University of Oldenburg will be thoroughly investigated according to the rules of procedure.³ Proven misconduct will result in appropriate legal consequences.⁴

Accuracy in authorship also applies to independently written practical reports. Protocols or other assignments prepared by a group (even a group of two) must be marked as group work and may not be presented as the work of an individual. Concealment of data or supporting documents is also a violation of good scientific practice. Finally, giving false information on an application, for example for a scholarship, is also academic misconduct.

As a **member of a university**, you know that academic work is indispensable for maintaining and developing the cultural and social foundations of our society. Academic work strives to make new discoveries, and at the same time, maintain the respect and recognition of the public. Contribute confidently and actively to the realization of good scientific practice in the course of your studies and throughout your life. Don't allow yourself to be diverted from your path of academic integrity by others including bad examples that occasionally make headlines.

³ Procedure in case of suspicion of scientific misconduct - procedural rule (26.1.2000, in German).

http://www.uni-oldenburg.de/uni/amtliche_mitteilungen/dateien/AM2000-01_Ordwissf.pdf

⁴ Procedural rule, Annex.

If you have questions or doubts, or if you ever observe something that is not consistent with these principles, you can always speak confidentially with a representative of the Humanities⁵ or Natural Sciences⁶ or a member of the Commission for Ethics and Assessment of Research Effects at the University. The commission includes representatives of all groups of university members, including students.⁷



Prof. Dr. Wilfried Wackernagel
Chairman of the Commission for Ethics
and Assessment of Research Effects



Prof. Dr. Karen Ellwanger
Vice-President for Studies, Teaching
and Advanced Training

⁵ Confidential persons of the Humanities:

Prof. Dr. Sabine Doering (Germanics), Faculty III

⁶ Confidential persons of the Natural Sciences:

Prof. (apl.) Dr. Klaus Peter Walcher (Psychology), Faculty IV

Prof. (apl.) Dr. Axel Brehm (Chemie), Faculty V

Prof. Dr. Michael Langenbruch (Mathematik), Faculty V

⁷ Commission für Ethics and Assessment of Research Effects. www.uni-oldenburg.de/gremien/5074.html