

Rules for ensuring good scientific practice at the Senckenberg Nature Research Society (Gesellschaft für Naturforschung SGN)

Preamble

1. The foundation of all scientific work is the scientists' honesty with themselves and others. It is the ethical standard and basis for the rules of good scientific practice. One of science's core responsibilities is to ensure the validity and application of these rules. The Leibniz Society passed the guideline "Leitlinie gute wissenschaftliche Praxis in der Leibniz Gemeinschaft" (Guideline good research practice in the Leibniz Community) in its general meeting on 28 November 2019. The Nos. 2): Rules of good scientific conduct and 3): Scientific misconduct of this guideline also apply directly at SGN with the introduction of the following rules.
2. The following rules including the aforementioned Nos. 2 and 3 of the Leibniz Society guideline became part of the staff rules when they were passed and are therefore binding for all employees. Violations against these rules can be considered a breach of duty and are punishable by all sanctions permitted under labour law. Further academic honours proceedings are not affected by this fact and are handled according to common practice of the competent universities and scientific authorities.

§ 1 Organisational structures

1. Responsibility for compliance with the rules of good scientific practice lies with the section and department heads, who are supervised by the Directorate in this regard. The responsibility covers the function owners' respective areas of competence as defined in the staff rules.
2. The individual function owners must pay particular attention to instructing junior scientists on the rules of good scientific practice. The problem should be recognized and discussed in the work groups.

§ 2 Data

1. Research data of taxonomic research beyond what is purely collection data must be adequately secured and stored for a period of at least 10 years. Research data by this definition are any statements which were used in a publication as the basis for further conclusions and statements (e.g. colour documents, sounds, etc.).
2. In non-taxonomic disciplines (sedimentology, ecology, etc.) all research data that led to or could lead to scientific conclusions must be secured and stored for at least 10 years. This applies in particular to raw data, which may not be adjusted to fit a particular hypothesis, but not to statistical processes to identify and remove outliers. Relevant data sets as defined by this section are those which are scientifically evaluated and at least partially published by the work groups. There is subsequently no compulsion to store all data sets, even ones that were collected incidentally and are irrelevant.
3. The respective function owners (section, division, and department heads) are responsible

for ensuring lasting and permanently accessible data storage. They must oblige their group members accordingly and supervise them. Special attention must be paid to exam candidates and other young professionals, who may not yet have acquired the necessary skills to plan and implement relevant data securing processes.

§ 3 Ombudsperson of SGN

1. The ombudsperson is the first contact and responsible for settling and adjusting any disputes or discrepancies, suspicions, and issues. Accusations of scientific misconduct must generally be addressed to the ombudsperson in writing. The ombudsperson acts independently.
2. The ombudsperson and a substitute are elected by the scientists of SGN for a term of four years. Further details are defined by an electoral regulation.
3. The name and availability of the ombudsperson and substitute are made public in an appropriate manner.
4. The ombudsperson must evaluate whether an anonymous complaint is to be investigated. Generally, an expedient enquiry requires the identification of the complainant.
5. The name of the complainant must be kept confidential. On a case-by-case basis, it may be necessary to reveal the name to the accused person, if that person can otherwise not provide an adequate defence. However, the name of the complainant should only be revealed if this does not pose a threat to the complainant's own scientific and professional career.
6. The ombudsperson will confirm receipt of a complaint to the complainant within one week of receiving the complaint.
7. The ombudsperson reports to the Directorate. All personal data is to be anonymised.
8. The ombudsperson conducts a preliminary enquiry. As part of this preliminary enquiry, the ombudsperson should at least question the accused person and if necessary also the complainant.
9. The ombudsperson may question further persons.
10. As a result of the preliminary enquiry, the ombudsperson decides whether the proceedings should be closed or whether it is necessary to deploy an enquiry commission (see § 4).
11. The ombudsperson informs the complainant in writing about the result of the preliminary enquiry.
12. Die Ombudsperson informs the directorate in writing of the result of the preliminary enquiry and the reason for the decision.
13. If the ombudsperson decides to close the proceedings, the directorate will discuss the decision and the reasons for the decision no later than in its next meeting (after receiving the information). If the directorate does not agree with the decision to close the proceedings, the directorate can also initiate the deployment of an enquiry commission according to § 4.

§ 4 Enquiry commission

1. The enquiry commission is composed of the following members: Chief Executive (Chairperson), competent department head, if necessary competent section head (if an employee of the section is affected), Chairperson of the Scientific Commission. If a management employee is affected, the Scientific Advisory Council takes on the role of the enquiry commission, with the president of SGN presiding.
2. The enquiry commission may involve experts from the field of the scientific situation in question as well as experts on the handling of such cases as additional advisory members on a case-by-case basis.
3. Bias of a member of the enquiry commission can be asserted at any time by the members themselves, the affected persons, or other persons involved. In case of bias, the member is excluded from the proceedings; the decision is up to the enquiry commission.
4. All persons involved are obliged to keep the documents of the enquiry commission and the insights from the proceedings in strict confidence.
5. The enquiry commission applies due discretion to determine whether the case at hand is an incidence of scientific misconduct. The commission questions the accused person and the complainant and investigates the context of the conduct in question. The commission may question other persons and assign experts and solicit their advice.
6. As a rule, the investigation by the enquiry commission should be completed within a period of no more than six months from the initial meeting of the enquiry commission.
7. The enquiry commission may decide to close the proceedings.
8. The enquiry commission prepares a report which either justifies closing the proceedings or stipulates a case of scientific misconduct.
9. If the enquiry commission decides that the case at hand is an incidence of scientific misconduct, i.e. the majority of the enquiry commission considers the presence of scientific misconduct sufficiently proven, the report should in particular:
 - determine whether the conduct at hand was grossly negligent or intentional, and
 - assess the severity of such scientific misconduct.
 - The report also describes the enquiry commission's recommendations for further action (involvement of other institutions and organs, initiation of appropriate measures, etc.). The report is presented to the Directorate, the Chairperson, or the Chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Council and the President of SGN. Together they decide on any necessary further measures based on the report by the enquiry commission on the incidence of scientific misconduct.
10. The affected persons are informed in writing about the results of the enquiry commission's investigation.
11. A formal complaint process does not take place; however, the affected persons have the option of submitting a written statement to the Chief Executive or the President within 2 weeks of being informed about the results of the enquiry commission.

§5 Conclusion of the proceedings and consequences

1. The Directorate of SGN decides on the initiation of any disciplinary, labour-related, civil, or criminal consequences.
2. Scientific publications which contain errors related to proven scientific misconduct must be withdrawn if they are as yet unpublished, and corrected if they have been published (revocation). Cooperation partners must be informed in an appropriate manner if necessary. This is the responsibility of the author(s) and involved editors; if they do not act within an appropriate amount of time, the assigned member of the Directorate initiates appropriate and suitable measures as far as this is within his/her competence.
3. In cases of severe scientific misconduct, the Chief Executive informs other affected research facilities or research organisations, if need be also professional organisations.
4. For the protection of third parties, to preserve the trust in scientific integrity, to restore the scientific reputation of its institution, to prevent subsequent damage, and in the general public interest, SGN may be obliged to inform affected third parties and the public. The SGN Directorate consults and decides on such measures after questioning the presidium.

Enclosures:

Guideline "Leitlinie gute wissenschaftliche Praxis in der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft"
(Guideline good research practice in the Leibniz Community)