

# Code of practice for the considerate and respectful treatment of employees at Saarland University

Please note: This translation is provided for information purposes only. In the event of any discrepancies between the translation and the original German version (*Kodex zum fürsorglichen Umgang mit Beschäftigten an der Universität des Saarlandes*), the latter shall take precedence.

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## Preamble

The special organizational structures of universities and the wide variety of rules and regulations regarding collective pay scales and remuneration, employment legislation and the statutory provisions of higher education legislation place high demands on supervisors, line managers and those working within the university administrative sector. There can be few other fields of employment in which it is necessary to respond more flexibly to increasingly dynamic processes and changes. This is due in part to the increasing specialization of academic and administrative working groups, but also to the key roles of specific individuals, who are also expected to be highly mobile, and to the growing importance of financing academic research through project-based funds. Another factor that illustrates the special nature of the working environment at universities is the very close ties that can exist between employees and their supervisors, who themselves may well enjoy a high degree of independence and autonomy in and around their work as academics. By drafting this code of practice, Saarland University acknowledges its commitment to treat employees in a respectful and considerate manner. This document sets out the University's vision of respectful and considerate conduct and provides supervisors and line managers with guidelines aimed at facilitating a positive, harmonious and productive work environment.

Saarland University seeks to be an attractive place of work for all of its employees irrespective of their specific roles and responsibilities. This code of practice complements the University's efforts in other fields, such as enabling employees to balance work obligations with family responsibilities, offering career development opportunities, and ensuring equal opportunity for all. If problems do arise in individual cases, the University will work with all stakeholders, including staff representative councils, in an effort to find constructive solutions that meet its employees' needs.

## General information

All University employees have gone through a recruitment process. When recruiting personnel, supervisors and line managers undertake to observe the principles of fairness and objectivity when addressing employment-related questions raised in a recruitment process and in the general treatment of applicants. Applicants and employees shall not be discriminated against on the grounds of age, gender, social background or regional origin, disability, religion or belief, political affiliation or opinion, or any other relevant criterion as set out in Germany's General Anti-Discrimination Act (AGG).

Considerate and respectful treatment of employees also covers a responsible approach to the rules governing fixed-term work contracts. Stable employment conditions are to be guaranteed wherever possible. The period of an employment contract is primarily dictated by the purpose of the contract. If the objective is attainment of an academic qualification, the contract period

shall be such that the qualification target can typically be achieved within this period. If employment is a fixed-term appointment due to the duration of a project or to some other determining factor, the employment contract shall cover the maximum term allowed by the project or the period for which the determining factor pertains. Follow-on employment should be offered wherever possible, and breaks in employment, particularly short breaks, should be avoided. If it is not possible to offer a follow-on employment contract, employees affected should be notified of this in good time, where possible at least three months before their contract is due to expire.

If a dispute arises, employees are fully entitled to use the available complaints channels, and, in particular, to contact the relevant staff representative council, without fear of any negative consequences regarding future employment or the assessment or grading of an academic qualification. Supervisors and managers may also draw on the wealth of experience held by members of the staff representative councils when seeking to avoid or resolve problems.

### **Mid-level academic teaching and research staff**

Supervisors are responsible for young academics and early-career researchers under their care. In addition to fulfilling their own professional duties, supervisors undertake to ensure that young academics and early-career researchers receive high-quality education and training. It is important to realize that this particular group of employees are often highly dependent on their supervisors and that supervisors therefore bear particular responsibility for those under their guidance.

Full term positions should be offered wherever possible. Academic research staff and applicants for an academic research position have the option of working part-time.

If the purpose of an academic research position is primarily to enable the holder to attain an academic qualification – and particularly when the opportunity to acquire an academic qualification is used to justify the temporary nature of the employment contract – the employee shall be given sufficient time in which to complete the qualification target. The time allocated for this purpose should not be less than 30% of the contractually agreed working hours. The primary qualification targets are a doctoral degree or a *Habilitation* (the post-doctoral advanced research degree that entitles the holder to teach at professorial level in Germany). Other qualification goals are possible only in individual cases and only after the details of the position and the rationale for the arrangement have been set out in writing and agreed with the employee. Particularly during the period in which employees are working towards their qualification, supervisors shall perform their duties in a responsible and considerate manner and shall schedule sufficient time for appropriate supervision.

Academic outcomes and scientific results benefit from a properly structured qualification phase. Employees should receive regular supervision and advice relating to their research work. A structured research plan and schedule shall be drawn up, the type of supervision (e.g. oral updates/feedback, work reports, frequency of contact) shall be agreed and a regular progress check offered. Such an approach promotes high-quality supervision while also ensuring transparency in combination with the necessary controls and checks.

Employees undertaking scientific and academic research shall be provided with an appropriate environment in which to work. The opportunity for them to share ideas and opinions with

others working in related or relevant areas is both necessary and beneficial. Contacts of this type should be supported and employees encouraged to build and maintain networks within the academic community.

Employees shall have access to a flexible work schedule and family-friendly working conditions so that they can balance work obligations and family responsibilities. Core working hours and the times during which an employee is contactable shall be determined in accordance with official duties and workplace requirements as well as with the employee's private life, while also giving due consideration to statutory provisions. Such rules and arrangements shall be mutually agreed and recorded at the start of the employment contract.

During the qualification phase of an employment contract, young academics and early-career researchers shall be encouraged to perform their teaching obligations, research work and academic administrative duties in a responsible and independent manner. The supervisor undertakes to set career development milestones for the employee, which can typically be achieved in a specified time frame of three to six years. Once the intended qualification has been attained, young researchers are to be supported in their future career paths so that they can plan reliably for the future. The assistance to be provided by supervisors shall include help in acquiring a permanent position either within the University or elsewhere. Letters of recommendation and references for prospective employers shall be formulated favourably and should provide a positive endorsement of the candidate.

The Principles of Good Scientific Practice at Saarland University and the Guidance on Preventing and Responding to Scientific Misconduct at Saarland University (*'Richtlinie zur Vermeidung von und zum Umgang mit wissenschaftlichem Fehlverhalten in der Universität des Saarlandes'*) shall be upheld. By establishing an Equal Opportunity and Diversity Unit, which also manages the family-friendly office (*'audit familiengerechte hochschule'*), Saarland University recognizes the importance of family-friendly conditions for students and employees alike and is committed to providing sustainable support in these areas.