

# **Guidelines for a Professional Work Environment**

## **(Department of Economics, February 2019)**

### **Preamble**

The Department of Economics adopts these guidelines in addition to the Code of Conduct of the University of Vienna ([https://intra.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/upload/rektorat/Code\\_of\\_Conduct\\_english.pdf](https://intra.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/upload/rektorat/Code_of_Conduct_english.pdf))

### **Aims of the guidelines**

These guidelines along with the Code of Conduct of the university form a set of principles and procedures that aim at ensuring a professional work environment. An environment suitable for the free sharing of ideas is one in which:

- The members of the department can express themselves freely, in an appropriate manner, and respect the opinions of others.
- The workplace is free from hostile behavior, such as sexual harassment, mobbing, defamation, belittling colleagues/students/visitors, etc. Department members act professionally in all their job-related interactions and use the resources of the university responsibly.

The responsibility for maintaining a respectful environment rests with all department members. They are asked to comply with the Code of Conduct and to go through the appropriate channels should any violations occur.

Neither the Code of Conduct nor these guidelines can regulate every single situation. This set of rules cannot replace individual common sense, basic decency, and careful consideration. The purpose of the document is to provide general guidelines of behavior.

Some principles state norms of behavior which might be obvious, but it is important to remember that misconduct and inappropriate behavior can also be unintentional. Thus, these guidelines should help to identify inappropriate behavior and correct it.

### **Principles**

Creating a collaborative environment: The department aims at creating a friendly and welcoming atmosphere at the workplace, which stimulates academic exchange. All colleagues should be treated with respect and dignity and should feel comfortable to express their opinion at any time. As a department, it is vital to foster inclusive behavior in which everyone's opinions and contributions are valued and encouraged. Challenging unacceptable behavior and contributing to a collegial environment is everyone's task, independent of their position within the department.

Responsible management: Members of the department should be aware of their responsibilities and influence in their relationships with students, TAs, RAs, job candidates, junior colleagues and staff members. Paying special consideration to the power relations that exist, everybody should set a good

example and provide safe communication channels. Any concerns or accusations of any kind that are raised by a victim of unwanted behavior should be handled respectfully and in a professional manner.

Distinguishing personal and professional spheres: Distinguishing between personal and professional sphere and acting accordingly is crucial for maintaining a professional work atmosphere at the department. All work-related activities, including seminar dinners and meals with other departmental guests, and all interactions during the job market fall into the professional sphere and require appropriate professional behavior.

Reflective behavior: The department encourages all members to carefully consider how their actions might be perceived by others. Neither the Code of Conduct nor these guidelines intend to discourage intense discussion, but department members should pay attention to what extent their own remarks might be understood as rude or intimidating. In many cases, it is not the intention to make others feel uncomfortable but it results from a lack of reflection. This holds especially for comments that may reinforce stereotypes based on origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or other characteristics.

## **Procedures**

A person who has experienced a case of misconduct (either in the role of a victim, witness or alleged offender) may decide to take an informal approach or a formal approach to respond to unacceptable behaviour. The University's internal procedures are outlined below.

Informal procedures: It is often possible to sort out matters informally, if a clarifying discussion between the victim and the alleged offender is feasible. For example, such an informal discussion may help the alleged offender to understand that his or her behaviour is inappropriate.

Formal procedures: It is important that all reported incidents are treated in a timely manner and in confidence, and all involved are encouraged to come forward. In case of an urgent emergency, inform the security management (+43 664 60277 12700).

- People who experience a case of misconduct may take the following steps. They should talk to persons they trust and make written notes about the incident (dates, time, location, what did they do before and after). If possible, they should ask witnesses to certify the gathered information. They should inform the Head of Department or directly the Head of the Personnel Department. It is advisable to seek professional support from Beratungsstelle Sexuelle Belästigung und Mobbing (Information Center Sexual Harassment and Mobbing, +43 1 4277 18484).
- People who witness a case of misconduct should be proactive, speak to the victim, and discuss with the victim which course of action should be taken. Whether an incident occurred intentionally or not, there is also a responsibility of the alleged offender to inform the Head of Department. If one is not sure whether an incident should be reported, it is better to err on the side of caution.
- The Head of Department has a particular responsibility in the case of an incident, as he or she has to ensure that appropriate further steps will be taken. The Head of Department will inform the Dean and the Head of the Personnel Department about the incident. The Personnel Department will decide on the appropriate further steps.